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Psychiatric Motive?

Subway suspect tells cops he pushed woman to get mental help

By Sean Gardiner
STAFF WRITER

Was it an angry man's lashing out or an ill person's cry for help?

The man who witnesses said pushed a nurse's assistant in front of an oncoming subway in Grand Central Terminal initially told detectives he did it because he didn't like her, using an expletive to refer to the woman, police sources said Friday.

Later, however, the man switched his story, telling investigators he was tired of life on the streets, sick of sleeping on trains and going hungry and unshowered. He told them he pushed Latchmie Ramsamy off the platform because he was desperate for psychiatric help, the sources said.

Jackson Roman, 38, whom police said has an arrest record dating back to 1987 and has been in and out of psychiatric wards since 1988, was undergoing psychiatric evaluation Friday at Bellevue Hospital Center. He is expected to be arraigned sometime next week on charges of attempted murder, assault and reckless endangerment, officials said.

Ramsamy, 41, a mother of two from Brooklyn, suffered a broken neck and fractured skull and had her left foot crushed so severely that doctors at Bellevue later had to amputate it, police said. She was listed in serious condition Friday and was expected to survive.

Ramsamy was waiting on the platform as a northbound No. 6 train entered Grand Central Terminal around 7:45 p.m. Thursday. Jackson allegedly approached her from behind, and without saying a word, pushed the 5-foot, 5-inch woman beneath the second car of the 10-car train. The push was so violent that Ramsamy was pushed out of the clogs she wore, which remained on the platform, police said.

At the time, Officer John Lehnert of the Fairhaven, N.J., police force, was in the city to attend a memorial in Battery Park City for the police officers killed in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. He and three other Fairhaven officers, all in their uniforms, were heading uptown on the No. 6 to go to the ESPN Zone restaurant in Times Square.

Their train pulled into Grand Central, but the doors didn't open and "there was pandemonium on the platform," he said.

Lehnert and the other officers opened a door between the train's cars. A man named Alex Sanchez ran up to them, Lehnert said, exclaiming that there was a woman under the train. Sanchez climbed under the subway himself.

"He [Sanchez] came out and said 'She's dead, oh, man, she's dead. You've got to go under there,'" Lehnert said.

Lehnert jumped onto the trackbed and saw Ramsamy "all crumpled up like a rag doll."

"She had a pulse, but she was having trouble breathing," he said. "As soon as I straightened her head out, she started breathing more normally and her eyes started fluttering."

Lehnert and fellow Fairhaven Officer John Waltz held Ramsamy's hands until help arrived. Every time they told her she was going to be all right, her eyes would flutter as if she was hearing them.

As the out-of-town officers were lending a hand, Roman took off running, police said. Renell Davis, 44, a man waiting for the train, saw what had happened and tackled the fleeing Roman. A Metropolitan Transportation Authority cop then helped Davis subdue Roman, police said.

NYPD detectives assigned to the Transit Division interviewed Roman. According to police sources, Roman ini-

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Subway Pushing Incidents

Noted pushing incidents in the city subways:



Rivera

April 28, 1999
Edgar Rivera, a Bronx father of three, loses both legs when he is pushed into an uptown No. 6 train at 51st Street and Lexington Avenue in Manhattan. Julio Perez, 43, a homeless man, was convicted of attempted murder and sentenced to 25 years.



Webdale

Newsday File Photos

Jan. 3, 1999
Kendra Webdale, 32, of Manhattan, killed when she is pushed into path of an N train at 23rd Street in Manhattan. Andrew Goldstein, 30, of Howard Beach, a released psychiatric patient, was convicted of murder and sentenced to 25 years. In August 1999, Gov. George Pataki signed "Kendra's Law," allowing courts to force psychiatric patients into treatment.

Jan. 4, 1995
Soon Sin, 63, dies when a man pushed her in front of a Queens-bound F train at Herald Square.

Sept. 11, 1992
Crystal Stevens, 30, loses a leg and parts of both hands when she is pushed into a G train at Classon Avenue in Brooklyn.

Oct. 22, 1985
Catherine Costello, 23, an accountant, survives after she was pushed into a D train by a former psychiatric patient.

June 7, 1979
Music student Renee Katz, 17, loses her hand when she is shoved into a train at 50th Street and Eighth Avenue in Manhattan. A student at the High School of Music and Art, Katz had her hand reattached but was unable to play the piano or flute.

Compiled by Carl MacGowan

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