

Massachusetts woman sentenced for role in sex trafficking conspiracy

"Massachusetts woman was sentenced today in federal court in Boston for her involvement in a sex trafficking conspiracy.

Muriel Close, 42, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Patti B. Saris to 12 months of home detention. In April 2021, Close pleaded guilty to two counts of conspiracy to commit sex trafficking.

Close was charged in July 2020 with co-defendant and serial sex trafficker Bruce Brown. On Feb. 10, 2022, Brown was sentenced to 138 months in prison on charges arising from his exploitation of multiple victims in operating a sex trafficking enterprise for more than 15 years.

"As a prosecutor, some of the most difficult cases are those in which harmed and victimized individuals inflict trauma and harm on others," said United States Attorney Rachael S. Rollins. "Ms. Close was herself a victim of brutal physical and psychological abuse at the hands of her co-defendant, Bruce Brown. However, her recruitment and involvement with other victims in Mr. Brown's enterprise caused others to experience the same force, fraud and coercion she did. Ultimately, it was Mr. Brown who ran his enterprise that inflicted inexplicable pain and trauma on numerous victims for his own financial benefit. For that, he is exactly where he deserves to be – behind bars for at least the next decade. But Ms. Close, although a victim herself, engaged in egregious conduct which requires consequences. Ultimately, people who prey on the vulnerable and engage in sex trafficking will be held accountable. We remain steadfast and dedicated in our fight on behalf of trafficking victims and survivors."

“While Muriel Close conspired with Bruce Brown to commit sex trafficking, it’s important to remember that she too is a victim who suffered physical and psychological abuse at his hands. Today’s sentence reflects that, and while nothing can wipe away the trauma inflicted upon the victims in this case, we hope it helps them heal,” said Joseph R. Bonavolonta, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Boston Division. “With a victim-centered approach, FBI Boston’s Child Exploitation – Human Trafficking Task Force will continue to investigate and bring to justice those who commit these reprehensible crimes.”

Close aided Brown’s sex trafficking operation through recruitment efforts and by monitoring victims on behalf of Brown.

U.S. Attorney Rollins and FBI SAC Bonavolonta made the announcement today. The Newton Police Department provided valuable assistance in the investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Mackenzie A. Queenin and Mackenzie J. Duane of Rollins’ Civil Rights Enforcement Team prosecuted the case.

If you believe that you or someone you know may be a victim of human trafficking, please contact the National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 or text 233733.” Massachusetts Department Of Justice.