

# ‘House of horrors’: Police find apparent sex slave chained to stripper’s pole in Detroit home

By [Peter Holley](#) April 6

## Police find apparent sex slave chained to pole in Detroit 'House of Horror'

When local police arrived at this house in Detroit during an ID theft investigation, they realized they were dealing with something more serious. (WDIV-TV)

When police searched the run-down, two-story house on Tuller Street in Detroit, they found something that took even longtime cops by surprise: a woman chained to a stripper’s pole, with a padlock around her neck.

She’d been there for weeks, she told police — a form of punishment for trying to escape the residence.

The 25-year-old woman told investigators she was a sex slave, one of four living in the home that authorities say was a prison-like brothel run by Ryon L. Travis, 32.

He called them his “wives,” but prosecutors have accused Travis of treating the women more like slaves who were marketed online for profit. After being unchained, the woman told police that she had known Travis since she was 19, and that over the past year and a half, he had forced her and the other women into sex work.

The woman noted that Travis had been pocketing her \$700 Social Security disability check each month.

“She said that the defendant posted advertisements online and in chat rooms that he had four girls for sale,” Assistant U.S. Attorney Sara Woodward said at a March 23 detention hearing whose audio was provided to The Washington Post. “And she said that if she or the other women refused to dance or perform sex acts, the defendant would be violent with them, and that he would hit them with a closed fist, kick them or push them down.”

Police called the home a “house of horrors” — and not only because of the sex slaves Travis is believed to have kept.



Police executing a warrant said they discovered child pornography and sex slaves in this Detroit home. (Fox 2 WJBK)

Investigators also seized two cellphones that belonged to Travis, according to a criminal complaint. The phones contained graphic images of a man sexually abusing children, the complaint states.

In one of the photographs, the child was lying on a sheet with a “distinctive blue and white pattern,” according to the complaint. Police executing a search warrant photographed the same sheet on a bed in of Travis’s bedroom, the complaint states.

Travis faces multiple charges, including sex trafficking by force, fraud or coercion, and producing, possessing and transporting child pornography, according to an indictment. He has pleaded not guilty.

At the detention hearing last month, Travis told the court that he wanted the case dismissed. NBC affiliate WDIV reported that one of Travis’s “wives” said he considers himself a “sovereign citizen.”

In addition to believing they shouldn’t be forced to pay taxes, adherents of the sovereign citizen movement maintain that should be able to decide which laws to obey and which to ignore, [according to the Southern Poverty Law Center](#).

“All laws are commercial in nature, and I’m a natural-born human American man,” Travis said during the hearing. “So since all laws are commercial in nature and I choose not to do business with this court, I ask that this case be dismissed.”

Magistrate Judge Mona Majzoub denied his request and ordered him detained until trial.

“You are a danger to children,” the judge said. “You are a danger to women. And you are a danger to people who are helpless in your presence.”

Police initially investigated Travis for fraud and identity theft, after he charged more than \$50,000 to a local business’s credit card, according to WDIV.

“While I can’t comment on the charges themselves, I can say that sex trafficking is a bigger problem than I think people realize,” U.S. Attorney Barbara McQuade said in a statement. “Traffickers use violence, threats, drugs and shame to coerce their victims to comply with their demands to provide sex for cash.”