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Hiding in Plain Sight: How a Convicted Sex Offender Slipped Under the Radar and Gained Prominence in the USVI

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Bridges Randle, also known as Dr. Oluwafemi Banjoko, was arrested Tuesday by federal agents on his way to work at the University of the Virgin Islands.

Bridges Randle, known in the Virgin Islands by the name Oluwafemi Abiola Banjoko, is described by U.S. Attorney for the Virgin Islands Delia Smith as a serial sex offender with a propensity for fleeing from justice.

A motion filed on Tuesday requesting Randle be denied bail while he awaits trial argues that he poses a serious flight risk, outlining a narrative of subterfuge and deceit intertwined with predatory behavior towards women and girls.

Apart from summarizing the sexual assault in Memphis twenty-odd years ago that is at the heart of this new federal case against him, prosecutors note that Randle is alleged to have assaulted another victim a year later. In that case, according to court documents, Randle used his position as a police officer to sexually assault a woman who called police. In this incident, the woman called police to report her husband for domestic violence, however when Randle arrived on the scene and under the guise of taking the woman somewhere safe, he took her to an apartment complex clubhouse used by the Memphis Police Department, according to court documents.

There, Randle placed his firearm on a table near the woman and began touching her despite her repeated efforts to make him stop, court documents say. Randle then forced the woman's legs open and sexually assaulted her as she struggled against him. He would later plead guilty for the crime, court documents show.

While awaiting sentencing for his guilty plea in that matter to “official oppression”, a name change occurred — Bridges Randle became Ajamu Abiola Banjoko. Before the court for sentencing in 2002, Randle/Banjoko said that the change was not intended to obscure his sex offender past, but rather had to do with philosophy. The court did note at the time that his new name would make it more difficult to learn about his history of sexual misconduct.

The court’s prediction seems to have been borne out, as Banjoko went on, according to the motion for detention, to seek out and gain employment at several universities, in their Upward Bound programs. These programs are for high school students, aimed at supporting them academically as they graduate and hopefully transition to college enrollment. Banjoko, the U.S. Attorney says, was fired in 2012 from Georgia State University’s Upward Bound program, for several incidents of sexual harassment of minor girls. He is alleged to have inappropriately touched one high school student, smelled the hair of another, commented to other students on their attire, and told others “if you were a little older.” Other minor children reported that he showed off photos of his bedroom, saying “that’s where the magic happens.”

Even after this behavior at GSU, Banjoko reportedly managed to get hired at the Boys & Girls Club of Atlanta, losing that position only after his 2014 arrest for the rape of a crime victim in 2000. The Consortium's Regional News Desk reported Wednesday that the trial ended in 2018 with the jury returning a not guilty verdict to a defendant who was absent from court and whose whereabouts his attorney professed not to know.

After his acquittal, Ajamu Abiola Banjoko became Oluwafemi Banjoko, and moved to the U.S. Virgin Islands. Here, he reportedly submitted false information on his application for a driver’s license, as prosecutors allege his current license lists the VI as his place of birth, instead of Mississippi. Other apparently false information exists on his LinkedIn profile. Prosecutors say the Departments of Education, Labor, and Health & Human Services all disavow any knowledge of Banjoko being employed at the agencies, although he lists all of them as places where he works as a grant reviewer.

Apart from merely listing out Randle/Banjoko’s alleged offenses and subsequent actions that could be taken as intent to flee from or evade the consequences of those events, the narrative laid out by the prosecutor’s motion to detain him before trial raises other questions about due diligence by both private employers and government agencies.

How was Banjoko able to get a driver’s license that listed a false place of birth? How was Banjoko able to gain employment at the University of the Virgin Islands, even surviving a background check? Is a simple name change enough to stymie people paid to investigate an individual seeking employment, or government agencies such as the Department of Motor

Vehicles?

UVI has promised to investigate the issue. It remains to be seen whether the government of the Virgin Islands will vow to do the same.

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