

Virginia News

Richmond Lesbians kill housemate

by M. Jane Taylor

In what is likely to become one of the most bizarre murder stories in recorded Gay history, a grand jury indicted three women in Richmond, Virginia, on Monday, September 15, for the murder of their new female housemate because she had become romantically involved with one or more of them.

According to Associated Press reports and court documents obtained by the *Blade*, police in Chesterfield County said the three women, and a fourth suspect, have all admitted to roles in the slaying of Stacy Hanna, 19. Hanna had moved to Richmond from Lynchburg, Va., on July 4. According to the indictment, the slaying occurred on or about July 27.

Hanna's body was found face down in the mud, according to AP. Police said she had been severely beaten, her skull frac-

tured, and her throat slashed.

Tracy Lynn Bitner, 19, Kelley Ann Tibbs, 18, and Domica Chantel Winckler, 18, were indicted on Sept. 15, and charged with capital murder, abduction, and robbery, according to AP. If convicted, police said, the women face possible death sentences.

A fourth housemate, Stephanie Cull, 18, has been charged with murder and abduction. A hearing for her is scheduled for Nov. 6.

According to AP, Chesterfield County Detective Dave Zeheb testified at a pretrial hearing that the women said Hanna "was interfering in their relationships and had told lies to them."

Shirley Lesser of the statewide Gay group Virginians for Justice said she was acquainted with the four suspects but did not know them very well. She said the women were active with the Richmond Organization for Sexual Minority Youth (ROSMY).

"They're extremely young," Lesser said. "It's a horrible thing. It's just absolutely horrible."

"I think it speaks to needing to educate youth — whether Gay or straight — on other ways to handle difficulties and on domestic violence," Lesser said.

Police said the suspects drove Hanna to a remote wooded area near the Chester-

field County airport, on the pretense of drinking beer, according to AP. (It is illegal in Virginia for people under the age of 21 to buy and drink alcoholic beverages.)

Reportedly, the four women originally planned to beat Hanna up but then decided to kill her to keep her from going to police, according to police reports.

After assaulting Hanna, police said, the women forced Hanna into the trunk of Cull's 1993 Ford Tempo and drove her out to a dirt-logging road where they attacked her again, according to a report by the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.

According to AP, police said Winckler and Bitner admitted to stabbing Hanna with a box-cutting knife. Police said Hanna had been stabbed several times in the chest. Winckler reportedly admitted that she threw a cinderblock at Hanna's head, and Bitner allegedly admitted to cutting Hanna's throat.

Police said Winckler also admitted to taking Hanna's watch, which police said they recovered from Winckler during their interrogation of her, according to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.

On July 27, after police received a tip, investigators said they went to the women's house and questioned Bitner and Tibbs. According to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Bitner agreed to cooperate and took police to Hanna's body. ▼