

Written by Kathy
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Pictured is disgraced R&B Singer R Kelly

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By Kathy Wray Coleman, associate publisher, editor-in-chief

BROOKLYN, New York- Disgraced R& B and pop superstar R. Kelly was sentenced to 30 years in federal prison on Wednesday following convictions last year in a federal racketeering and sex trafficking case that drew international attention and highlighted the extent to which famous men can use their celebrity status to sexually exploit and victimize young Black women and girls with impunity.

Once dubbed the the "King of Pop-Soul" and the "Pied Piper of R&B," Kelly continues to deny any wrongdoing, and he faces several civil lawsuits. His sentencing comes less than a week after the U.S. the Supreme Court overturned Roe v Wade and women and advocacy groups took to the streets nationwide to protest.

U.S. District Court Judge Ann Donnelly sentenced the "I Believe I Can Fly," singer, whose legal name is Robert Sylvester Kelly, without hesitation, Kelly dressed in prison garb and showing no emotion.

The judge chastized him, saying that his criminal actions and sexual escapes, including the deliberate rape of women and girls, left an avalanche of "broken lives." And in addition to issuing a decades-long sentence, the judge also fined him \$100,000.

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His attorneys have vowed to appeal.

Survivors of his abuse held hands and prayed outside of the Brooklyn, New York federal court room, much like they did when the renowned singer and songwriter was convicted in 2021 of longterm sexual rafficking.

Kelly, 55, had been charged with one count of racketeering and eight counts of violating the Mann Act. It prohibits transporting people across state lines for prostitution. When he was convicted women's advocacy groups across the country were ecstatic.

When the jury verdict came down last year, the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center applauded Kelly's convictions on all nine counts by a federal jury of seven men and five women, convictions that followed a closely watched five and half week trial.

"Today's verdict rightfully acknowledges the experiences of dozens of women abused by Kelly and sends a clear message that sexual harassment, misconduct and abuse cannot and will not be tolerated even years after the event," said Cleveland Rape Crisi Center President and CEO Sondra Miller after Kelly was convicted. "The stories of this case sadly revealed that for African-American women, sexual assault, violence, and systemic racism are incredibly pervasive issues that routinely go unreported and under-addressed. "

Miller said that "for every 15 Black women who are raped, only one reports her assault and disturbingly one in four Black girls will be sexually abused before the age of 18.

She went on to say that "this is further exacerbated when acknowledging the unique cultural nuances of young girls in marginalized communities."

The Brooklyn, New York jury that determined Kelly's fate, which was largely male, deliberated for a day before reaching its celebrated verdict. Kelly did not take the stand at his own trial, which was his constitutional right.

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Prosecutors accused the famous singer of sexually exploiting dozens of women and underage girls over a period of some 25 years.

He did not show any emotion when the verdict was read.

A few of Kelly's female victims looked on from the court's overflow room as the verdict was read.

Kelly is one of the most prominent people tried on sex charges during the #MeToo movement behind movie producer Harvey Weinstein and actor and comedian Bill Cosby, whose rape and other convictions were overturned in June by the Philadelphia Supreme Court.

In Cosby's case the state Supreme Court said that the trial court erred in failing to dismiss the charges against him and that the case was not properly before the trial court because prosecutors reneged on a decades-old settlement agreement not to prosecute him on the charges that were before the court.

"We hope that today's verdict brings some measure of comfort and closure to the victims," acting U.S. District Attorney Jacquelyn Kasulis told reporters relative to Kelly's convictions.

Prosecutors said Kelly used his fame and charisma to recruit his victims while his defense counsel told jurors at trial that it was his fame and fortune that made him an alleged victim of the system as a Black man.

Kelly's 30-year music career, which includes the 1996 Grammy-winning hit "I Believe I Can Fly," gave him entree to young Black women and girls looking for stardom, and he took complete advantage of them, prosecutors said.

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The late singer Aaliyah, whom he illegally married in 1994 when she was 15, was among his purported victims.

That marriage was short lived and Aaliyah later died in a plane crash in 2001.

Kelley's lawyers argued at trial that accusations included in the January 2019 Lifetime documentary "Surviving R. Kelly," contributed to what they say is a prejudicial jury verdict.

One witness testified that Kelly locked her up for days and denied her food, and another said he allegedly sexually abused her in front of his friends.

Some Blacks remain torn over the Kelly and Cosby cases, their allies and supporters saying they are both victims themselves of a racist legal system in America that has a double standard for Black men across socioeconomic lines.