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Judge Kills Nun's Sex Suit

By Stuart Vincent
Newsday [New York]
January 11, 1995

A \$ 3.75-million civil suit filed by a Long Island nun who said she was sexually abused by her mother superior in a Sea Cliff convent more than 25 years ago has been dismissed because the statute of limitations for bringing that charge expired.

The lawsuit was filed last July by Sister Jean Patricia Henninger, who is on a leave of absence from the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, in Connecticut. She charged in her suit that she was abused several times between September, 1968, and February, 1969, by Sister Gloria Czarniewicz, then mother superior of a convent for nuns who worked at St. Christopher Otilie children's services in Sea Cliff.

Henninger had claimed that Czarniewicz would go into her room while she was asleep, lie on top of her and fondle her.

The statutes of limitations for both criminal and civil actions in the matter expired about 20 years ago, but Henninger's attorney, Michael Montesano of Glen Cove, had argued that the statute should be measured from the time Henninger took her leave of absence in 1989. Until then, he said, she felt she was powerless to report the abuse because she was still a member of the order and under the supervision of Czarniewicz and other members of the order.

But in November, State Supreme Court Justice Alfred S. Robbins in Mineola dismissed the suit, saying that "New York law does not recognize psychological trauma or repression as justification for avoiding the statute of limitations." Even if the statute had been extended to the maximum 10 years allowed by law under an insanity disorder, that would have stretched the time for bringing legal action only to February, 1979, Robbins wrote, and the case still would have been filed more than 14 years too late.

Sister Janice Kobierowski, provincial for the Monroe, Conn.-based Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, declined comment.

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