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## American Nightmare: Muller Gets 4th Life Sentence.

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Matthew Muller has received a sentence of seven years to life in Contra Costa County Superior Court for a previously unreported 2015 kidnapping-for-ransom case, his third life-related sentence this year, while already serving a 40-year federal term and two life sentences in Santa Clara County. The conviction stems from a San Ramon kidnapping-for-ransom incident in spring 2015, two weeks after the Vallejo abduction of Denise Huskins, and came to light after Muller confessed while incarcerated.

The newest life sentence, handed down in Contra Costa County Superior Court, is for a 2015 aggravated kidnapping that took place shortly after Huskins' ordeal. Muller, who pleaded no contest to the charge, will serve life without the possibility of parole. The case came to light only recently, after renewed investigations were launched with the cooperation of survivors and several law enforcement agencies.

According to court records, Muller entered the victim's home through a second-story window, later discarding a ladder in a nearby ravine, details he admitted in a 2024 jailhouse interview in Arizona. Detectives confirmed the account after recovering the ladder from the exact location Muller described. This interview also led to his confession to other violent crimes, including a 1993 kidnapping and sexual assault near Folsom, California.

In that older case, Muller was convicted and sentenced to life in June. Earlier this year, he received two additional life terms for a pair of violent home invasions in Santa Clara County. Muller is already serving a 40-year federal prison sentence for the kidnapping of Huskins, a crime that law enforcement initially dismissed as a hoax, casting doubt on the victim's account and mishandling the investigation. That misstep sparked public outrage and later drove reforms in interrogation practices and victim treatment.

The flawed handling of the Vallejo case not only delayed justice for Huskins and her partner, Aaron Quinn, but also allowed Muller to continue his crimes. El Dorado County District Attorney Vern Pierson criticized the original investigation, stating: "It's a shame it has taken 10 years to correct the mistakes made in the original investigation that permitted Muller to terrorize two additional families." Pierson emphasized the importance of science-based interviewing and credited Huskins and Quinn for their persistence.

The reinvestigation of Muller's crimes was spurred in large part by the couple's advocacy and collaboration with authorities. Their efforts are now being formally recognized, and both are set to receive the Witness of the Year Award from the California District Attorneys Association later this month.

While the justice system is finally correcting past oversights, the delay raises broader concerns about public safety and prosecutorial competence. In cases like these, where institutional failure allowed a dangerous individual to roam free, accountability and transparency should not be optional.

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