



Stop doubting California woman on kidnapping, Michelle Knight says

By **Michael Pearson**, CNN
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(CNN) -- Stop judging the California woman who walked away from her alleged captor after a decade, an angry and emotional Michelle Knight told CNN's "New Day" on Friday.

"Unless you were walking in her shoes, you have no reason to talk, none at all," said Knight, one of three women freed from years of brutal captivity in a Cleveland home in 2013.

Knight was referring to the case of a California woman who approached police after contacting her sister on Facebook, saying -- according to police -- that she had been abducted by her mother's boyfriend at 15, then raped, beaten and forced to marry her alleged captor, Isidro Garcia.

In the days since the woman's story came to light, Garcia's attorney and some of her neighbors in the Bell Gardens neighborhood where she lived with Garcia and their 3-year-old child have questioned the abduction story, saying she appeared to be happy and well cared for.

"She never showed a sad face or worried face," said a neighbor who identified herself only as Erika.

"She had plenty of time to actually escape so it's hard to believe this is really going on because she had a lot of free time."

Authorities have acknowledged that the woman said she reached out to her family before she went to police.

A photo posted on Facebook purports to show her with her mother and sister on Mother's Day -- one week before she went to authorities.

A post in Spanish that accompanies the photo on Facebook reads: "After almost 10 years after not seeing my mom and little sister."

CNN cannot confirm the date of the photo, and police and the prosecutor's office declined Friday to comment further on the details of the case.

Garcia's attorney, Charles Frisco, said Friday he hasn't had much time to talk to his client but said stories such as the neighbor's make him doubt the state's case.

"If you listen to what they have to say, it sounds like he's not guilty and it's all fabricated," Frisco told CNN.

Knight has just one answer to those doubting the woman's story: You couldn't possibly understand.

"Just because you're not chained up and you're not locked in the basement doesn't mean you ain't trapped," she told CNN's Kate Bolduan. "I know exactly what it feels like to be trapped in your own mind, your emotional mind, and told you can't do anything about it, nobody will care about what you say."

Knight was held in Ariel Castro's Cleveland home from August 2002 until May 2013, when her fellow captive Amanda Berry summoned help from a neighbor to break out of the locked house.

Sometimes chained, frequently brutalized, Knight said the worst part of her decade of captivity was the isolation and the psychological manipulation her captor held over her.

"I was threatened to be killed. I was threatened that nobody cared about me," she said.

"For a girl like her, the emotional torture is so painful that she chose not to hurt other people," Knight said. "Because he may have threatened to hurt her, he may have threatened to hurt the people that she was talking to."

Elizabeth Smart, who also was abducted, had a similar message in an interview Thursday with Chris Cuomo on "New Day."

"Well, as a survivor who has been chained up in physical chains and also had the chains of threats held over me, I can tell you firsthand that threat is so much stronger than physical chains," said Smart, who was abducted from her Salt Lake City home in 2002.

"Now, I don't have intimate details on what threats he was holding over her head, but I understand that he was holding her family, that he was threatening her family and, for me, that was the strongest threat anyone could have ever made to me," she said.

Knight said she worries that questions such as those raised about the California woman's case will keep other people suffering from abuse from coming forward and seeking help.

"You're making people not want to come out, not want to say anything," she said, her voice breaking. "You're making people want to sit there and keep it to themselves and go through the abuse when you say stupid crap like that."

The California woman's alleged captor, Garcia, 42, was arrested during a traffic stop Wednesday.

He is charged with a felony count of forcible rape, three felony counts of lewd acts on a minor and a felony count of kidnapping to commit a sexual offense.

If convicted of all three crimes, he could face life in prison.

CNN's Kyung Lah and Elliott C. McLaughlin contributed to this report.