



Black market for body parts exists in America... funeral home operator just charged in criminal scheme

Description

USA: A black market for human body parts exists in America. A Colorado funeral home was able to traffic body parts for nearly a decade. From 2009 to 2018, Megan Hess and her mother Shirley Koch operated a “nonprofit organization” called the Sunset Mesa Funeral Foundation. Now these operators are being charged in a federal court with mail fraud, illegally trafficking body parts and giving clients fake ashes.

Families who sought cremation services from Sunset Mesa Funeral Foundation would receive fake ashes, as their loved ones were dissected and sold limb-for-limb through backdoor, mail-in Donor Services. Families who did consent to organ donation were also lied to, as the funeral home sold more body parts than what the families consented to.

Funeral home gave out fake ashes while selling body parts on the black market

Megan Hess and Shirley Koch offered cremation services to families for \$1,000 or more. However, many of the cremations never occurred and families were given concrete mixes or ashes taken from other incinerated bodies. Behind closed doors, Hess and her mother picked apart the dead bodies in search of viable organs and limbs. After procuring the body parts, Hess and Koch would offer the limbs to third parties on the black market. Many of these third parties included medical research, surgical training and other educational outlets. There is [communications evidence](#) that Hess and her mother may have worked with hospice wards to identify specific organs that buyers demanded.

Hess and her mother were arrested in 2020 on six counts of mail fraud and three counts of illegal transportation of hazardous materials. Hess has only plead guilty to mail fraud. Several of the charges have been dropped as part of a new plea deal. Hess now faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in a federal penitentiary, but she is realistically looking at 12 to 15 years, according to prosecutors.

Hess admitted in court that she and her mother defrauded at least a dozen families who paid to

cremate their deceased loved ones. Authorities also accused the sinister duo of shipping bodies that tested positive for Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV. Some of the body parts they shipped through the mail were procured from people who died of infectious diseases. According to an investigation, Hess and Koch falsely advertised that these body parts were “disease-free” when they offered them to buyers. Additionally, one of Hess’s former employees came forward and accused her of extracting gold teeth from one skull and selling them for \$40,000.

Organ trafficking industry depends on the strategic brain death diagnosis of organ donors

According to communications evidence, Hess would also meet with medical professionals in hospice wards to identify potential organ donors. In a 2014 conversation with a potential body part buyer, Hess wrote that she was “meeting with hospice on the 4th” and that they would be “opening the floodgates of donors.”

Hess said, “They have four or five deaths a day. Get ready!!!!” She offered a deal to the prospective buyer. “How about a deal on full embalmed spines ... \$950?” she wrote.

These communications should open up a full investigation into practices at the hospice ward. If the demand for specific organs is so great and there are high-paying clients, then getting a brain death diagnosis could become a critical step in the body parts trafficking operation. Once a brain death diagnosis is obtained on an organ donor, the family is legally obligated to give their loved one over to organ procurement (albeit religious exemptions are available in most states).

Once a brain death diagnosis is secured, the organs are then harvested in a timely manner. The controversy behind the brain death diagnosis fuels speculation that there is a covert, legal body part trafficking operation happening right within the US medical system, with demand for organs growing worldwide. With this funeral home in Colorado helping facilitate the process, it becomes apparent that there is a very real and sinister body parts industry preying on organ donors and unsuspecting victims alike.

by: Lance D Johnson

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