

Mock Court Case:

The Murder of Victoria Climbe

Victoria Climbié's life was short and tragic. Her murder prompted the largest review of Child Protection Arrangements in the United Kingdom. This trial will be focused around the independent inquiry following the death, neglect and abuse of Victoria Climbié and how we can prevent and avoid such events in the future.

Background on the deceased:

- Victoria Adjo Climbié born 2nd November 1991, murdered 25th February 2000, aged 8.
- Victoria was born in the small African Village of Abobo which is located near Abidjan, the former country capital of the Ivory Coast.
- Victoria's parents were Francais Climbié and Berthe Amoissi.
- Due to Abobo often being torn apart by civil war, having endemic poverty and illiteracy being extremely high among women and girls, Victoria's parents gave their daughter to Great Aunt Marie-Therese Kouao so that she could have a better life in Paris, France.
- Marie- Therese Kouao falsely claimed that Victoria Adjo Climbié was her daughter. Kouao had initially intended to take a different young girl called Anna Kouao, however Anna's parents had changed their minds and declined to allow Kouao access to their child, Anna. Instead, Victoria Adjo Climbié travelled with a French passport under the name of Anna Kouao and was identified as Anna during her stay in the United Kingdom.



Parents

All mothers and most fathers have legal rights and responsibilities as a parent - known as 'parental responsibility'. If you have parental responsibility, your most important roles are to protect and maintain the child and to provide a home for the child. In addition to this, you are also responsible for disciplining the child, choosing and providing the child's education, agreeing to the child's medical treatment and naming the child.



Megan Genevieve Pearson 1900634.
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Victoria's parents, Francis Climbié and Berthe Amoissi gave their daughter to her Great Aunt Marie Therese Kouao on the promise and basis that Victoria would have the best possible life and get a proper education that she wouldn't have received in Abobo. They are clearly not to fault or blame in any part of the murder of their daughter Victoria Adjo Climbié.

'Blinding Incompetence' from Services:

During Victoria Adjo Climbié's life many services were aware of who she was and had contact with her up to her death, these include; The Police, The Social Services department of four local authorities, the National Health Services (NHS), the National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), and local churches. Not only did they have contact with the deceased, they also all noted and recorded signs of abuse. However, all these services failed to properly investigate the case and it can be seen that minimal action was taken to help Victoria Adjo Climbié.

Climbié's story showed that there were flaws between all aspects of the main services involved in her case, especially with child protection protocol and laws. Victoria Adjo Climbié's was known to four social service departments in London, England. These services included; Enfield, Brent, Ealing and Haringey Social services, there were three housing associations, two main hospitals, Central Middlesex and North Middlesex Hospital, two child protection teams, two Metropolitan Police Department and a department headed by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

Victoria Adjo Climbié's death showed that there had been breakdown, faults, corruption and flaws within the multi-agency approach to child protection. Furthermore, Climbié's Case showed that thousands of children who enter the UK every year under private fostering arrangements come from west Africa. Therefore highlighting further matters to do with other children in situations like Victoria's!

National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children:

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) is a charity campaigning and working in child protection in the United Kingdom and the Channel Islands. The NSPCC should have been aware of Victoria's situation. The NSPCC is an organisation that has been put in place to help children and families if needed. Phone lines have been set up especially for children so that they can call the NSPCC for help or advice without it appearing on a phone bill, both parents and children have access to this. **The NSPCC should act so why did they not in this instance?**

The NSPCC aims include, Early intervention is available so that the NSPCC can offer assistance and guidance as issues occur immediately. To promote the best interests of children who make contact with the NSPCC, and that individuals, particularly practitioners working with children, can identify violence and react appropriately, helping children to be confident that their needs would be addressed, believe that they can ask for support, and know that they can trust employees with their problems. Make sure that families are able to seek help without apprehension that it may contribute to stigmatising interventions from public authorities, and to Ensure that families feel able to ask for help without worries that it will lead to consequences from statutory services.

Police

The police are one of the most important contacts everyone has access to. The purpose of the police service is to uphold the law fairly and firmly; to prevent crime; to pursue and bring to justice those who break the law; to keep the Queen's peace; to protect, help and reassure the community; and to be seen to do this with integrity, common sense and sound judgement. Police also follow safeguarding when they are working because they will be in some form of contact with children. They have a responsibility to help and provide as best as possible for the community they work for.

In Victoria Climbié's case, she had been known to two police child protection teams, four social services departments and a specialist centre of the NSPCC. The officers are accused of alleged neglect of duty. They all worked for the child protection teams at Brent and Haringey which came into contact with Victoria. The Police involved in Climbié's case missed at least 12 chances to save Victoria's life.

Below you will find a timeline of Victoria's life, a timeline of her trial, a time of the inquiry and a list of missed chances to save Victoria because we as a government have failed in our duties to save Victoria Adjo Climbié's life.

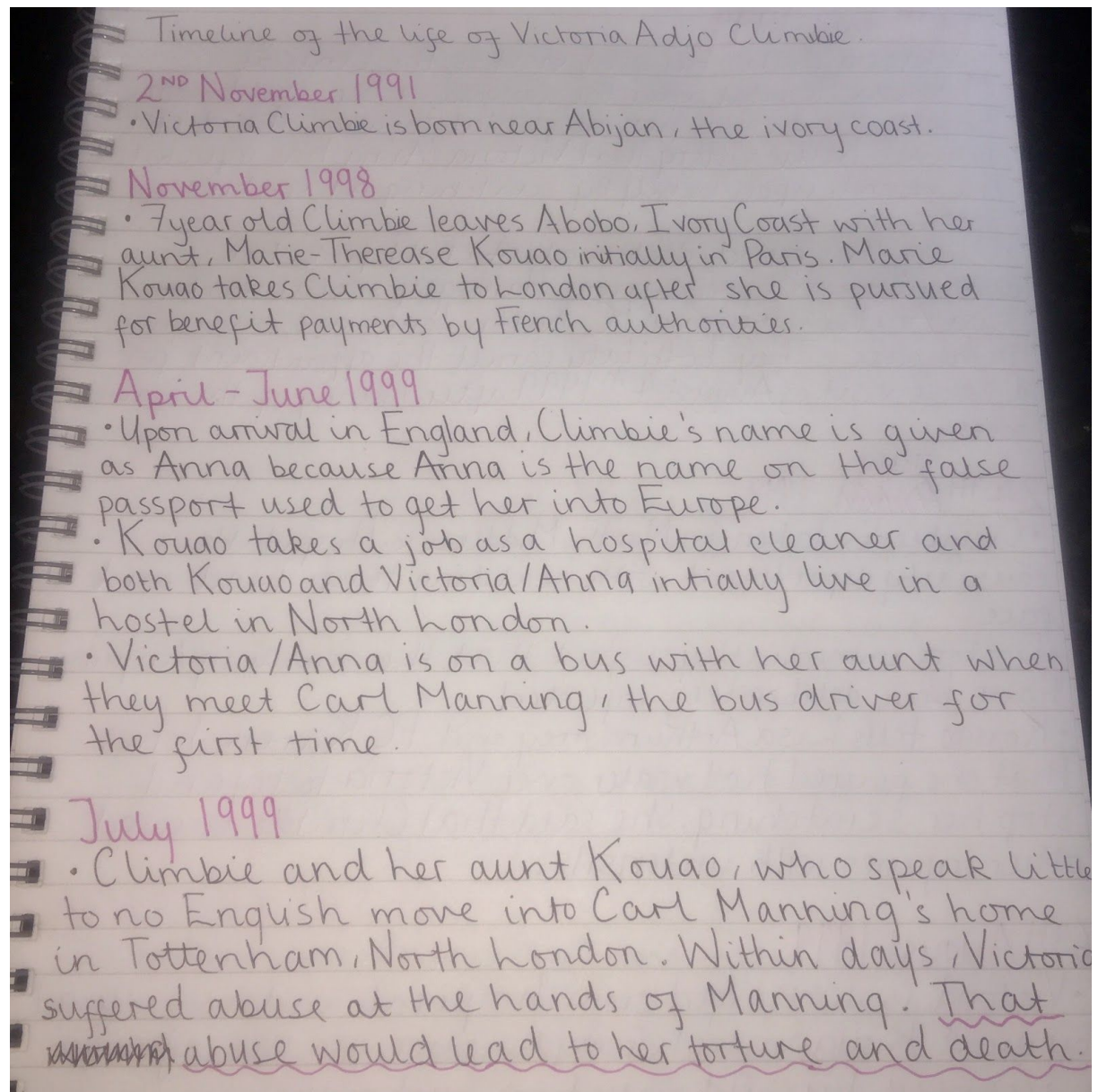
Missed chances to save Victoria.

- Mr Garnham, lead council of the inquiry, described how Victoria was moved between Ealing and Brent social services ~~separately~~, two separate hospitals, and the police being returned to her abusers time and time again.
- Garnham also said it remains unclear whether Ealing social services undertook proper assessment of Victoria Adjo Climbié's needs.
- Social workers have since come forward with concerns over Climbié's physical appearance and her relationship with great aunt Marie Kouao.
- There were no inquiries into Victoria's schooling.
- In June 1999, Brent Social Services received an anonymous call about Climbié's wellbeing and welfare, three weeks later a " cursory home visit was made.
- Doctors at Middlesex Hospital attributed her injuries to scabies and found nothing to substantiate abuse.
- A registrar recorded 'no child protection issues in Victoria Adjo Climbié's notes.

GARNHAM HIGHLIGHTED A CATASTROPHE OF FAILURES BETWEEN SOCIAL SERVICES, METROPOLITAN POLICE AND THE HOSPITALS INVOLVED.

12 CHANCES, ALL OF THOSE CHANCES WERE MISSED!

Megan Genevieve Pearson 1900634.
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14TH July 1999

- Victoria makes her first visit to the Central Middlesex Hospital after the daughter of her childminder suspects the girl has non-accidental injuries. The doctor believes Kouao's story that Victoria/Anna has inflicted the wounds upon herself by scratching at scabies sores.
- During this period, doctors alert child protection authorities as a precaution. Haringey social worker Lisa Arthurworrey and PC Karen Jones are assigned to the case. They both later cancel the appointment for a home visit of August 4th 1999 after hearing of the scabies sores.

24TH ~~July~~ August 1999

- Climbie is taken to North Middlesex Hospital's casualty department with scalding to her head and face.
- Doctors immediately suspect that the scalding/injuries have been deliberately inflicted.
- Kouao tells Lisa Arthurworrey and PC Karen Jones that she poured hot water over Victoria to try and stop her scratching. She said that Climbie caused other injuries with utensils.

6TH August 1999

- Victoria is discharged from hospital and is collected by aunt Kouao after her explanation for the injuries is accepted by child protection authorities.

October 1999

- Trial evidence reveals that from October 1999 until the following January, Carl Manning forces Climbie to sleep in a bin liner in the bathtub every night at his flat.

1ST ~~NOV~~ November 1999

- Kouao tells social workers that Carl Manning sexually assaulted Climbie. Kouao later withdraws the accusation the next day. PC Karen Jones is asked to investigate why but takes no further action after her letter to Kouao remains unanswered.

24TH February 2000

- Victoria is rushed to North Middlesex Hospital suffering from a combination of malnutrition and hypothermia.
- Doctors later transfer her to an intensive care unit at St Mary's Hospital in West London.

25TH February 2000

- Victoria Adjo Climbie is pronounced dead at 3:15 PM at St Mary's Hospital.

AFTER HER DEATH!

- Doctor Nathaniel Carey, the home office pathologist who examines Climbie's body, finds 128 separate injuries and scars, many of them cigarette burns. Doctor Carey describes them as "the worst case of child abuse I've ever encountered."

The Victoria Adjo Climbie trial:

Carl Manning and aunt Marie Therese Kouao are charged with the murder of Victoria Climbie.

During interviews both claim that Victoria was possessed.

November 2000

- The trial begins with the prosecution making it clear that the blame lie not only with Kouao and Manning but also child protection authorities who had been "blindingly incompetent."
- Manning denies murder but pleads guilty to child cruelty and manslaughter.
- Kouao denies all charges.

12TH January 2000

- Almost a year after Climbie's death. Manning and Kouao are found guilty of her murder.
- Sentencing both of them to life imprisonment, Judge Richard Hawkins says: "What Anna endured was truly unimaginable. She died at both your hands, a lonely drawn out death."

THE INQUIRY:

APRIL 2001

- The government announces a public inquiry into the death to be headed by Lord Laming.
- The inquiry is the first in Britain to use special wide-ranging powers to look at everything from the role of social services to police child protection arrangements.
- Ministers make clear that they expect the inquiry to scrutinise the child protection system and not only the Climbié case failings.

MAY 2001

- Lord Laming opens the inquiry and in an unprecedented move calls both Kouao and Manning to give evidence. He says the killers should appear at the inquiry to help it establish where the authorities failed to stop them.
- The inquiry is split into two parts.
- The first part takes the testimony of more than 230 witnesses including neighbours, child protection officers and high ranking social services officials.
- During this phase, the inquiry heard allegations of racism, incompetence and agencies neglecting their duty of care for Climbié. The inquiry hears of 12 counts/occasions when agencies could have intervened and possibly saved Victoria's life.
- The second part during 2002 uses a series of special one day seminars to bring invited experts together to debate the nature of the child protection system and help Lord Laming draw up his conclusions.

July 2002

- Lord Hanning reopens the first part/phase of the inquiry after it emerges that a critical document by social services inspectors had not been released to the team.

August 2002

- Carole Baptiste, one of the key social workers in the case is found guilty of failing to attend the public inquiry and is fined £500.

November 2002

- Two further social workers at the heart of the Climbie abuse scandal are sacked for gross misconduct. Lisa Arthur-Worrery and her manager Angelia Mair are dismissed by Haringey council in north London following disciplinary proceedings.

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