

Jury awards televangelist's granddaughter \$2 million in Trinity Broadcasting molestation scandal



Matt Hamilton June 6, 2017

Wearing thick rouge and her trademark pink wigs, [Jan Crouch](#) was the abiding face of the [Trinity Broadcasting Network](#), offering Christian-inspired guidance to help viewers around the world improve their lives.

But in recent weeks, jurors in an Orange County courtroom saw a different side of Crouch — who co-founded the evangelical network with her husband, [Paul Crouch Sr.](#) — after a granddaughter accused her of turning her back when she reported she was sexually abused.

Carra Crouch said that in 2006, at age 13, she was sexually assaulted in an Atlanta hotel room by a 30-year-old Trinity employee. When she told her grandmother, Jan Crouch blamed her for what happened and never reported the incident to police, Carra Crouch alleged.

On Monday, the jury awarded Carra Crouch \$2 million for her years of emotional trauma and future suffering, finding that Jan Crouch's response caused outrageous harm.

"This is important. Carra Crouch needed someone to say, 'It's not your fault,' " said her attorney, David Keesling. "She was never able to come to grips with the fact she was not to blame."

Michael King, an attorney for Trinity, said the nonprofit organization was "inclined to appeal."

Jan and Paul Crouch have died since the lawsuit was filed in 2012, but they disputed their granddaughter's allegations, which were among a cluster of legal actions that have drawn negative publicity to the Costa Mesa-based televangelism empire.

"It's a shame Jan Crouch is not here to defend herself," King said. He insisted Jan Crouch was not informed of the alleged sexual assault, and instead was told of spurned sexual advances made by the Trinity employee. "Her position was, if she knew something, she would have acted."

Carra Crouch, now 24, said in her lawsuit that in 2006, she was attending a fundraising telethon for Trinity in Georgia when the employee "coerced himself" into her hotel room and ordered wine from room service. Next, he pressured her to drink and then offered a glass of water, which she contends was laced with a sedative.

When she awoke the next morning, she said blood was on the sheets and her body was sore, "which indicated she had been molested and raped," according to the lawsuit.

Shortly after, she went to her grandmother's Newport Beach estate and told her what had happened. The elder Crouch became enraged and upbraided her granddaughter, according to court papers.

“Why would you have that man in your room? Why would you let this happen?” her grandmother said, Carra Crouch testified.

The Trinity employee was soon fired and he was not arrested or charged with a crime.

The lawsuit said that under California’s child protection laws, an ordained minister such as Jan Crouch was required to report the suspected sexual abuse to police.

King, the lawyer for Trinity, countered at trial that Jan Crouch was told about the incident in her capacity as a grandmother, not as a Trinity employee, so the “mandatory reporting” requirement did not apply.

Jurors agreed that Jan Crouch was acting as a grandmother but still faulted her.

“The jury ultimately determined that Jan’s response — by blaming and castigating Carra, by saying words beyond all realm of decency — constituted outrageous conduct,” said Keesling, Carra Crouch’s lawyer.

Jurors found that Jan Crouch was liable for 45% of her granddaughter’s emotional harm, which makes Trinity Christian Center of Santa Ana, the TV network’s parent organization, responsible for \$900,000 of the verdict. Carra Crouch’s mother was found to be liable for 35%, and the man who allegedly assaulted her liable for the rest, but since neither was named in the suit, they will not be forced to pay, Keesling said.

Lawyers said the unusual split of the verdict will likely be an issue for an appellate court.

Founded in 1973 by Jan Crouch and her husband, Trinity gained viewers by preaching the gospel of prosperity — a theology in which material wealth is

bestowed upon the faithful. Today, it bills itself as the world's largest Christian TV network and is run by one of the couple's sons, Matt Crouch.

The network has seen controversy before. In 2010, the network reached a confidential settlement with a broadcast engineer who claimed he was discriminated against because he was gay. In a separate case, it paid a \$425,000 settlement to a former employee who said he had a homosexual encounter with Paul Crouch Sr., who denied the claim.

Five years ago, other family members went public with allegations of fiscal improprieties, which the organization denied.

<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-trinity-broadcasting-trial-20170605-story.html>