

Where's the Justice?

Written by James Randi
Friday, 26 December 2008 00:00

In recent months, there've been a few satisfying examples of how some police departments have moved in on "psychic" scams, arrested the perpetrators, and even obtained penalties against them. In San Mateo, California, Janet Adams, 42, a woman who advertised herself as a psychic was charged with taking \$80,330 from an 85-year-old woman by claiming that both their husbands would die if the woman didn't hand over money. She is being held on \$500,000 bail at the San Mateo County Jail. Adams came up with additional colorful - and false - stories about funeral expenses and a fictional son's medical treatments, and has a history of victimizing women in this way. In 2004, she spent two years in state prison on a theft conviction, while working as a palm reader.

Just in September, 27-year-old Lisa Marie Miller of San Francisco conned a woman out of \$108,000 and talked her into buying her a sports car in exchange for freeing her of evil spirits. She was sentenced to two months in county jail.

Gina Marie Marks, 35, is the latest - local - fortune teller to face fraud charges. The self-proclaimed "medium" told five Broward County women that she would rid their money of demons that brought them bad luck. The clients handed Marks nearly \$65,000 in cash for spiritual cleansing, and never saw the money again, though Marks had assured them it would be returned to them. Under the name Regina Milbourne, Marks co-authored a book titled *Miami Psychic: Confessions of a Confidante*, about her experiences as a medium. She's currently on the run, and being sought.

Of course we must wonder at how anyone with any degree of common sense can believe such utter nonsense, but let's look at the worst that these frauds can expect from the law. As with those who sell phony merchandise for years, come to the eventual attention of the state or federal authorities, and are convicted and put out of business, these con artists might pay a fine or serve short prison terms. Lisa Marie Miller was locked up for two months in exchange for \$108,000 and a sports car. That sounds like a good rate of pay, I'd say. Will Adams or Marks get the same degree of penalty for their heartless scams? If so, what are WE doing, behaving ourselves and acting honestly toward others? The frauds - spoon-benders, fortune tellers, quacks, "psychics," "healers - are doing a lot better than most of us, and the present recession can only improve their fortunes as the grieving, desperate, elderly and naïve suckers continue to flock to be fleeced...