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Shawna Forde



## Tucson Region

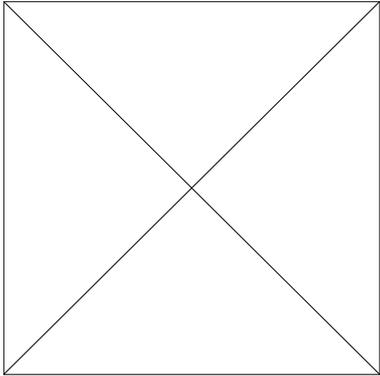
### Newly launched Web site backs murder suspect

Border-watch figure hassled for views, her supporters say

By Tim Steller

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Many members of the Minuteman movement scattered from Shawna Forde after she was accused in the May 30 killing of a dad and his young daughter in Arivaca. But now a handful of hard-liners are rallying to her defense. They've set up a Web site, [justiceforshawnaforde.com](http://justiceforshawnaforde.com), arguing that Forde is being singled because of her race, gender and political views. The site says she's innocent.

"Shawna's become the target of a socialist government's clumsy attempts to marginalize and terrorize America's patriots," a recent posting says.

The woman behind the Web site is Laine Lawless, a longtime anti-illegal-immigrant activist who lived in recent years in Southern Arizona but has left for the Phoenix area. Lawless, 59, founded the local group Border Guardians in 2005 and initiated the burning of Mexican flags in Tucson in 2006.

Local authorities have accused Forde, founder of the group Minutemen American Defense, of masterminding a plan to rob people she suspected of being drug traffickers to fund her group and initiate other activities. She and two co-defendants are charged with killing 29-year-old Raul Junior Flores and his 9-year-old daughter, Brisenia, and with the attempted slaying of Flores' wife during a home invasion at their Arivaca residence. Forde, 41, Jason E. Bush, 35, and Albert R. Gaxiola, 42, are being held in the Pima County jail. All three have pleaded not guilty.

"I'm tired of women getting screwed over by men in this movement," Lawless said.

"Nobody in the Minuteman movement except for me is willing to talk to her."

**Exploitation is claimed**

The man serving as the spokesman for the Web effort, John Lyon, said he was motivated by coverage of her case in a recent Phoenix New Times cover story.

"I'm not condoning any kind of criminal behavior, certainly not murder of a child or even of a drug dealer," said Lyon, 51, a member of the Phoenix-area group United for a Sovereign America. "I'm sensitive to the issue of racial exploitation.

"They exploited her for her race, her sex and her political affiliations," said Lyon, who wrote a 2002 master's degree thesis on racial conflict at the Miracle Valley religious compound during the early 1980s near Sierra Vista. In the news media, he said, "everybody else is protected, but white people are fair game."

Lawless, too, emphasizes a racial theme in her writing about Forde on the Web site.

"What's happened in many parts of the Southwestern states is that illegal immigration has been allowed to go on so long that the MAJORITY of the prison population is Hispanic, as is the Corrections staff. If you are a Caucasian female American, and a patriot, you are seriously outnumbered, and you are treated accordingly. It's 'payback time.' "

Lawless visited all three defendants in jail Aug. 12, according to visitor logs obtained by the Star through a public records request. She visited Forde again on Friday, Lawless said.

Lawless complained that Forde is being mistreated in jail, which she called "The Institute of Misogyny," and that an officer told others Forde is a racist.

The Pima County Sheriff's Department, which operates the jail, is looking into that allegation, said Deputy Dawn Barkman. However, she said, Forde is not being treated differently from the male defendants, as Lawless alleged.

### **Web site is criticized**

The whole concept of the new Web site disturbed two of Forde's biggest critics: her mother, Rena Caudle; and half brother, Merrill Metzger. Both live

in Redding, Calif., and say Forde discussed plans to rob drug traffickers in the months before the Arivaca incident occurred.

"Seems to me they spoke before really looking at her record," Caudle said in an e-mail. She and Metzger suspect Forde, Bush and others of committing a burglary at Metzger's house and a home invasion at the home of friends who live nearby in the 12 days between the murders in Arivaca and Forde's arrest.

Even one of Forde's former comrades in Minutemen American Defense disliked the content of Lawless' new Web site. Chuck Stonex, a New Mexico man who was a member of Minutemen American Defense, was dismayed to see that the Web site makes Forde look "pretty innocent." "I don't know," Stonex said. "I think Shawna made her bed."