

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

In the Matter of: *
 *
 ALLISION WITH STATEN ISLAND *
 FERRY TERMINAL MAINTENANCE * DCA-04-MM-001
 PIER AT ST. GEORGE'S, *
 STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK BY THE *
 FERRY ANDREW J. BARBERI on *
 OCTOBER 15, 2003 *
 *

Thursday,
October 16, 2003

Staten Island, NY

INTERVIEW OF:

AISHA WILLIAMS

PRESENT:

ROB JONES, NTSB
RICHARD GONZALEZ, USCG

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 MR. JONES: This is an interview with
3 with Aisha Williams, who was a passenger aboard the
4 Staten Island Ferry in last night's incident.

5 And Aisha, if you could just take us back
6 where you were on the ferry that night, before anything
7 happened.

8 MS. WILLIAMS: I was on the left side of the
9 ferry, on the upper deck, on the outside. I was
10 getting ready to get off, once it passed the bridge,
11 the Verrazano Bridge, and I got up and I walked outside
12 the doors of the ferry and we get near the gate,
13 because there was one person in front of me and then
14 the gate. And there was some people at the sides, you
15 know, coming out. So, as we were waiting, like, you
16 know, still going, the boat speed, we figured that it
17 would stop because usually, you know, once they get to
18 a certain point, they kind of slow down, and it will --
19 against the thing and that is basically it. Once we
20 were at the top, though, we realized, this guy is like,
21 is he really going to hit this thing? And then we were
22 like, naw, there is no way he is going to hit it. He
23 has got to see it. By that time, he said, oh, my
24 gosh, he is going to hit it. It was too late for me to
25 run inside, so what I did was I ran to the side of the

1 ferry, just like a bar that you could hold on to. I
2 held onto that, and there was like maybe three people
3 in front of me, who also were holding on. Once it hit,
4 from the impact, it pushed me back into another metal
5 part and that is how I got injured on my left side.

6 MR. JONES: Okay.

7 MS. WILLIAMS: And the cops came out like,
8 told everybody to go inside, to go inside and then I
9 went inside. I just went and sat down. It was lot of
10 people panicking and they were grabbing a life vest. I
11 sat down and I had opened up the thing also to get a
12 life vest. At this time, I didn't know what was going
13 on and I held on. And then as I was sitting there,
14 that is when the pain started to like just spread
15 throughout my back from where I had gotten hurt.

16 Being that I have sickle cell, it caused it
17 to go into a crisis mode right away, into my left leg.

18 So, I wasn't able to stand on my left leg. When the
19 cops came and they told everybody to get to the back of
20 the boat, I had got up and I tried to move a few seats
21 down, I moved a few seats down, and then I couldn't
22 walk anymore because it was too much on my leg. I sat
23 down, and the cop came and asked me what was wrong and
24 I had told him that I had gotten, you know, injured to
25 the left side of the back, and not only that, but it

1 started to spread throughout my body and caused a
2 crisis.

3 The detective guy, he had on a badge, came
4 and because I couldn't walk off, he lifted me off the
5 boat with the, with life vest, and brought me over to
6 the hallway of the ferry, and sat me down along the
7 life vests. I started to go into really severe pain
8 because it was cold, so that even, adds to it even more
9 so. I was there, some people from Oregon or something
10 was sitting there with me and they started putting
11 their jackets over me. And the pain was just, just
12 getting worse. I was ready to be taken off the boat or
13 something.

14 MR. JONES: Okay. Aisha, you mentioned the
15 cops, police officers.

16 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes.

17 MR. JONES: Were actually aboard prior to the,
18 after the accident and before it docked?

19 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes.

20 MR. JONES: There were uniformed police
21 officers aboard?

22 MS. WILLIAMS: Right. And there was also an
23 un-uniformed police officers, he had a badge.

24 MR. JONES: Okay. But, this was before the
25 vessel got to the, got to the berth where they could

1 come from the dock. So, they were already onboard
2 while you were transiting.

3 MS. WILLIAMS: Right. Yeah, it was two, three
4 uniformed officers that I saw.

5 MR. JONES: Okay. And that was on the deck you
6 were on, the upper deck?

7 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes.

8 MR. JONES: Okay. And you said when you
9 grabbed that metal rail.

10 MS. WILLIAMS: Right.

11 MR. JONES: Were you outside the doors --

12 MS. WILLIAMS: On that platform.

13 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes. Right.

14 MR. JONES: Just before that wire mesh gate.

15 MS. WILLIAMS: Right.

16 MR. JONES: Okay.

17 MS. WILLIAMS: And because I couldn't run in
18 fast enough, that is why I held onto the bar, just to
19 brace myself for impact, because I didn't know, I
20 didn't realize that it was going to go, you know, into
21 it so fast. I figured he would stop before he went
22 into it and then it was just like kind of bounce off
23 like it usually do, but, he went like really quickly
24 into that thing. So, the whole impact of that threw
25 me onto a part of the --

1 MR. JONES: Okay. Now did you lose your grip
2 on that bar?

3 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes.

4 MR. JONES: Cause of the impact.

5 MS. WILLIAMS: Right. And that is why I
6 slipped back. And that is what happened with me and my
7 situation.

8 MR. JONES: Okay. And any time you need a
9 break, just tell us, you can slow down or stop or
10 whatever, okay.

11 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes.

12 MR. JONES: You are doing great.

13 How often do you ride the ferry?

14 MS. WILLIAMS: I would say like maybe two or
15 three times a week.

16 MR. JONES: Okay.

17 MS. WILLIAMS: Yeah, I used to ride it a lot
18 more, like, you know, going to and from school, you
19 know, about four times a week, but, you know, it is now
20 like two or three times a week now.

21 MR. JONES: Are you a student now?

22 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes, well, I was going to New
23 York Institute of Technology -- that major.

24 MR. JONES: And did you hear any announcements
25 before the impact? Did the crew alert you in any way?

1 MS. WILLIAMS: No, the crew, seeing what
2 happened was, the way that we knew it was going to
3 impact the guy that was in front of me, there was like
4 a guy outside in front of us, and he was like, oh, my
5 gosh, it is really going to hit and that is when
6 everybody kind of like scurrying to try to hold onto
7 something.

8 MR. JONES: And he was a passenger?

9 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes.

10 MR. JONES: Okay. And this was again outside
11 the doors.

12 MS. WILLIAMS: Right.

13 MR. JONES: And did people start running off
14 the platform back into the doors?

15 MS. WILLIAMS: Right, after --

16 MR. JONES: Except for yourself and when you
17 grabbed the rail.

18 MS. WILLIAMS: No, some people didn't even
19 make, they also, because there was maybe about two or
20 three in front of me that also grabbed onto the side of
21 the doors. And, you know, they were like scattering so,
22 it was just crazy. And when we, you know, held on,
23 after that, there was still some out, so this cop came
24 outside, and told everybody to go back inside. I was
25 kind of shocked at first, like I couldn't believe he

1 ran, you know, went into it like that.

2 MR. JONES: Okay. That is all I have right
3 now. I am going to ask Brian if he has any questions?

4 MR. CLIFFORD: Just a couple, Aisha.

5 After you made impact with the cement, do you
6 remember what happened or how long it took you before
7 the boat actually docked or if you, you know, which
8 direction you or how you got from the point of impact
9 to docking?

10 MS. WILLIAMS: Well, I remember, okay, when it
11 hit, after it hit, and the cops came in and told
12 everybody to sit down and go inside, I remember it
13 trying to back up and you could hear that he put a hole
14 somewhere in the boat, because it wasn't just a weird
15 type of noise that, you know, went throughout the boat,
16 because usually, you know, when you hear the engines,
17 but, you can hear something had bust because it was
18 just, you know, going really slow and then trying to
19 turn into the other, the other dock. Some people
20 thought we were going to drown and everything. I don't
21 know what happened at the bottom, but you could just
22 tell it was crazy, because then the cops were like, oh,
23 man, the guy at the bottom, you know, down in the, all
24 of them just ran downstairs. Some lady was like, oh,
25 we are going drown, you know, she was going kind of

1 hysterical.

2 MR. CLIFFORD: Did you hear the engines going?

3 MS. WILLIAMS: Yeah, well, once it had hit,
4 when it backed up, that is when you heard the engine
5 turned off, which is usually how it should have been,
6 you know, when it gets to that point. And that is when
7 you could hear the changing, you know, whatever, the
8 gears or whatever they call them, I don't know. But,
9 and then it backed up into the ferry, the other way.
10 And they said everybody go to the back to get off. And
11 so at that time I was sitting there, because I was just
12 like I can't move because it was really hurting. And
13 then the lady, she came and she was like, like I said,
14 she was like, asked me if I was injured. She was the
15 dressed cop, and I told her yes. Then everybody had
16 gotten off the boat and the undercover people that came
17 onto the boat, wanted to move everybody off of the
18 boat, and he came and asked me if I could walk, I
19 couldn't, so they said they were going to get me
20 ambulance. And then he was like, well, do you think
21 you could try to walk, so I didn't put any pressure on
22 my left leg, because it was really hurting and once he
23 seen that it was really that bad, he carried me off.

24 MR. CLIFFORD: That is all I have.

25 MR. GONZALEZ: Just one question. When you

1 were on the second level, and you did not hear anybody,
2 did you hear anybody say anything, move back, or --

3 MS. WILLIAMS: No, I was on, because I was on
4 the top level.

5 MR. GONZALEZ: Okay. You were on the top
6 level.

7 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes. So, I didn't, the only
8 thing, like I said, the only thing was when we heard,
9 he is really going to hit, it is going to hit and then
10 you have to just grab onto something real quick,
11 because like I can't, so I didn't want to go overboard,
12 you know, so, I was just, that is what I was thinking
13 about when I held onto the thing, you know. And then
14 that is what happened, well, I was like at least I
15 didn't drown because, you know, I was, that was my
16 first thing, because I can't swim.

17 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)