

# TUNNEL GIRLS: WE LIED ABOUT RAPE

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Two teenage girls admitted yesterday they lied about being raped at the trouble-plagued Tunnel nightclub – but their story of consensual group sex in a bathroom and use of the drug “Ecstasy” renewed city anger over the club.

“How can we as a society define deviancy down to where this is acceptable?” asked furious Deputy Mayor Rudy Washington – vowing a renewed court battle to padlock the club.

The girls were not raped and sodomized Sunday night as they originally told cops, prosecutors said yesterday – leading a Manhattan judge to release the two young men charged in the attack without bail. The charges were not dropped.

The girls “admitted that almost all of the sex acts they alleged were performed by force were in fact consensual acts,” Manhattan Assistant District Attorney Jodie Kane said.

The girls – 16- and 18-year-old students at a New York-area school for troubled teens – recanted yesterday after Manhattan prosecutors confronted them with accounts of club patrons and employees who heard no struggle or screams for help.

Law-enforcement sources said the girls may have lied to explain breaking curfew. Already, the parents of the 16-year-old – who was drinking tequila and beer, and who had popped an Ecstasy tablet – want the matter dropped, the sources said.

The suspects, Orette Fiedtkou, 21, and Roddy Caraballo, 19, both of Jersey City, had been held in lieu of \$35,000 bail.

It remains for prosecutors and the courts to determine if the rape and sodomy charges will be pursued.

Peter Gatien, owner of the 12th Avenue club, was relieved, his lawyer said.

“Very often public officials condemn Mr. Gatien before the facts have been fully investigated,” said Gatien lawyer Ben Brafman.

Still, the so-called “King of Clubs” may be in deeper water now than ever, as witnesses describe to Manhattan prosecutors a bacchanalian club scene of underage drinking, drug-taking and public sex in the Tunnel’s second-floor combination bar-bathroom.

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