

The failure of onlookers to save a man pushed in front of a train has led to a bout of agonising by New Yorkers, says Tony Allen-Mills

IT DID not take long for the New York police to charge a suspect with murder after a 58-year-old father was pushed under an underground train last week, but the scars left by an ugly incident on a central Manhattan platform may not heal as easily.

The death of Ki-suk Han, who was crushed beneath a Q line train at the 49th Street station after getting into a fight with a homeless vagrant, has divided New Yorkers over underground train safety, media ethics and what exactly it means to behave as a hero.

A scene that seemed to spring from every New York commuter's worst subway nightmare turned into an international spectacle when a photograph of the stricken victim, moments before he died, was published by the New York Post with the front-page headline: "Doomed".

At a court hearing on Wednesday the man who pushed Han was identified as Naeem Davis, a 30-year-old homeless drifter who scraped a living from running errands for street vendors in Manhattan.

Yet Davis's arrest did little to calm a citywide sense of shame and outrage that nobody had been able to help Han in the seconds before he was struck by a train. "Everyone was screaming," said Leigh Weingus, a Manhattan website editor who witnessed Han's death. "It was horrifying. It was terrible."

Amid conflicting reports of how Davis and Han came to blows — and an admission by the victim's widow that she had fought with her husband earlier that day and that Han had started drinking — there were angry questions from shaken New Yorkers.

Why has New York not got platform screen doors shielding passengers from tracks, as with numerous other underground systems? Should the Post — which, like The Sunday Times, is owned by News Corporation — have published a picture of a man about to die? And perhaps most disturbingly for a city that expects all tragedies to produce a hero, why was no bystander remotely worthy of praise?

It was by chance that a freelance photographer had been standing at the platform when the altercation erupted. R Umar Abbasi told the paper that he heard people gasping, and out of the corner of his eye "saw a body flying through the air and onto the track".

Like many New York photographers, Abbasi keeps his camera to hand. He raced towards the scene, shooting pictures as he ran. He later calculated that it took 22 seconds from his first move to the moment of the train's impact. Yet he insisted it had all happened so quickly he never had a chance to help Han.

His account, and the Post's decision to publish his pictures, earned both photographer and the paper a hail of abuse. Abbasi was denounced on the Post's website as "horrible... greedy... a spineless coward... a selfish bastard who thought only about getting the pictures".

One reader, Steven Fallon, summed up the anger of many: "You could have helped the guy but you decided to take photos instead... you are a useless, worthless human being."

Abbasi insisted that others were much closer to Han than he was; he had also hoped that the flashes from



## Time to take a picture — but not to save a life

his camera would alert the driver of the oncoming train.

Dane Tidwell, a commuter, was among critics who pointed out that "anyone who lives in a major city knows camera flashes do not stop trains. They get photographed constantly by tourists."

There was similar abuse for the Post, which was accused of tasteless exploitation and failing to respect the victim's family. But one reader argued that Abbasi's photograph would "immortalise the flaws in our underground transportation system" in the same way as a famous picture of a child being watched by a vulture came to symbolise African famine.

There were no regrets at the Post, where sources described Abbasi's shot as "a great news picture" that editors would not hesitate to publish

again. Nor could the tabloid-bashing obscure the more awkward questions: if two men are fighting, should you intervene? And when they are on the edge of a precipice, and one of them topples over, what should an onlooker do?

It has long been a cornerstone of "Noo Yawk's" brash image that people should mind their own business. "You talkin' to me?" said Robert De Niro as Taxi Driver's Travis Bickle in one of the most quoted lines from American film history. "Well, who the hell else are you talkin' to?"

Han's death, in front of dozens of people, prompted an agonising bout of municipal introspection, as many commuters wondered how they would have responded: a drunken exchange, an aggressive response, the easily imagined threat of a knife or a gun.

"New Yorkers will know what I mean — you pass crazy stuff every day and it bounces right off you," noted one contributor to an online discussion. The writer added: "I'd like to think if I'd been on the platform I would

have grabbed the guy and tried to pull him up, but you know what? Maybe I would have just stood there too."

A commuter from Brooklyn added: "We all want to be heroes, but sometimes we don't have the time/strength/agility/quick wits. It's a shame no one stepped up to help [Han], but I wouldn't second-guess the non-action of the people on the platform that day."

Others noted reports that after Han died, many passengers started filming the scene with mobile phones. One writer called them "frozen zombies"; another denounced the "obscene indifference to human life and decency".

It was a far cry from the glow that bathed New York when everyone helped everyone else in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy.



Ki-suk Han died after getting involved in a fight with a vagrant on the platform

## Actress digs dirt on herself to prepare for office

Tony Allen-Mills

IT HAS become a strange but essential ritual for outsiders pondering whether to have a crack at American political prominence. First you choose a target. Then you investigate yourself.

For Ashley Judd, a Hollywood star with growing political ambitions, some of the clearest signs that she is getting serious about a possible run for a US Senate seat in Kentucky came with reports last week that she had hired investigators to examine her own past.

"She needs to know what her rivals might try to use against her," one Kentucky insider explained.

Judd's emergence as one of Hollywood's most prominent Democrats has so far inspired a cautious response from the man she may end up challenging: Mitch McConnell, a wily

70-year-old Republican power broker who was first elected from Kentucky in 1984 and will run for re-election to a sixth term in 2014.

"She's great. Love her movies," McConnell said last month of the 44-year-old Kentucky-raised star of films such as Ruby in Paradise, Kiss the Girls and Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood.

Yet Judd's record as an outspoken advocate for numerous liberal causes, from women's rights to the environmental threats from coalmining, is already providing ammunition for McConnell's Republican allies.

Senator Rand Paul, the right-wing Tea Party favourite who is Kentucky's second senator, last week dismissed Judd's views as "way too damn liberal for our country, for our state". Paul also mocked Judd's ties to Scotland, where she keeps a home in Port of Menteith, Perthshire, with Dario Franchitti, her Scottish racing driver husband.

"I heard she lives in Scotland — I thought she was running for parliament," said Paul. "I think she'd fit right into the English parliament."

Yet for all the bluster, Republicans know better than most that Hollywood celebrities make dangerous adversaries. From Ronald Reagan to Arnold Schwarzenegger, actors have ended up confounding their critics; at the same time, prominent Democratic activists such as George Clooney and Warren Beatty have joked they would not run for office because their opponents would dig up too much dirt.

Judd is no stranger to Washington wiles, having

campaigning vigorously for Hillary Clinton in the 2008 Democratic presidential primary. She then switched her allegiance to Barack Obama and has subsequently become one of the president's most fervent Hollywood boosters. She attended this year's Democratic convention as a delegate for the state of Tennessee, where she keeps her main home.

Judd's researchers may already have identified several potential Republican targets, most notably her comments to a Scottish newspaper in 2006 explaining why she did not want to become a mother.

"It's unconscionable to breed, with the number of children who are starving to death in impoverished countries," she said. She remains childless and her views may not endear her to a state where even the Democrats are regarded as being socially conservative.

Judd may also face problems with her past opposition to "mountaintop removal", in which engineers detonate explosions for easier access to seams of coal.

Judd once referred to the "rape" of Kentucky's Appalachian mountains as "a stain on the conscience of America", prompting Paul to retort mockingly: "I say good luck bringing the 'I hate coal' message to Kentucky."

With the presidential election decided, the Senate is beginning to emerge as the main focus of partisan combat. There was surprise all round last week when Jim DeMint, another Tea Party heavyweight from South Carolina, announced he was stepping down to take over the Heritage Foundation, Washington's most prominent conservative think tank.

DeMint's decision to give up a safe Senate seat was widely regarded as a clear signal that the levers of right-wing power are shifting from Capitol Hill to less conventional platforms such as television, radio and other hotbeds of conservative debate.

It also placed another politician with Hollywood-style glamour in the spotlight. Governor Nikki Haley of South Carolina must appoint a caretaker for DeMint's seat pending the 2014 election.

Some analysts suggested Haley may appoint herself and step down as governor — an option she promptly rejected.

Senator John McCain joked last week that the Senate badly needed some more attractive members, but formidable obstacles still remain in the paths of both Haley and Judd.



Ashley Judd is married to the Scots racing driver Dario Franchitti

## 'Khmer Rouge killers raped and stabbed me. I was 14'

Cambodian women are revealing at last how the regime used sex to control them. Michael Sheridan in Phnom Penh hears their stories

DEFYING shame and tradition, Cambodian women are coming forward to reveal an untold chapter of forced marriages and rapes during the country's nightmare years under the Khmer Rouge regime. Their stories, collected in interviews by The Sunday Times and in testimony at a recent public hearing, are so harrowing that many of the victims have kept silent about their experiences for more than 30 years. Their new willingness to speak coincides with a crisis about the future of the war crimes court that is trying leaders of the ultra-radical communist movement that ruled Cambodia from 1975 to 1979. The Khmer Rouge professed to be puritanical and could execute its own cadres for violations of morality. Yet it is

riages, a little-known part of their plan to control every aspect of people's lives.

"My two sisters, Srey Poom, who was 18, and Makara, who was a year younger, came to my mother and told her they were being forced to marry. They didn't want to and for a while they escaped it by pretending to be sick," Hong said.

"But one day the weddings finally took place. There were 20 or 30 couples who were told to hold hands. But Srey Poom and Makara broke away and ran to my mother, clinging to her and begging not to get married. The Khmer Rouge simply stabbed them to death in front of us.

"The corpses of my sisters were thrown into a field where my parents and I could see them from our hut but nobody dared touch them. They were just fertiliser for the fields."

The family were declared class enemies because Hong's father had been a customs official and her mother a translator. One day Hong came back from the fields to find them kneeling and blindfolded to a pit. Weeping, she hugged them. Then they were stabbed to death and thrown in.



Chum Ly, inset, was forced to marry by the Khmer Rouge regime

"The chief said, 'Deal with this one', pointing at me. So three of them took me and raped me. Then they stabbed my arms and legs with bamboo and tied me to a tree. The next day I came round, covered in blood, and was able to crawl to a pond to wash. A

sympathetic guard told me to get away to another village. I was 14 years old."

Hong later gave birth to a son. She still bears the scars of the bamboo spears.

Mass forced marriages became routine. "We had to hold hands and pledge to be

faithful to Angkor," recalled Chum Ly, 62, who was matched with a rural husband after refusing her first two suitors. Angkor was the word that Cambodians used for the movement that imposed its totalitarian will on them. "If girls didn't accept,

they would disappear for 're-education' and we all knew this meant they were killed," she recalled.

"Everybody had to work on the wedding day but Angkor had prepared a special place for us and we were led there. It was a hut partitioned by curtains, with a bed in each room. They wanted to make sure the marriage was consummated."

Being a married woman did not save her from being raped four months later by two cadres, she said.

Sok Samith, 53, said: "My sister was forced to remarry after her husband died. They locked her in a storeroom until she agreed. She was only 24 and the man was over 60. We were all mistreated and abused."

Public hearings on sexual violence were organised by the Cambodian Defenders Project, a legal aid group. One witness, Kim Khem, 80, saw a woman tortured in a sexual assault with a red hot iron bar and branded with it. She later survived the "killing fields" by crawling out of a mass grave.

The Sunday Times interviews were conducted through a female interpreter, and a female psychologist was

present to support the women, who broke down at several points during their stories. All consented to the publication of their names.

"I want as many trials as possible," said Hong, "and I also want the next generation to know what happened. That's why I've left my embarrassment and fear behind."

The war crimes trials are in trouble, however. Only one man, a mass killer known as Duch, has been convicted. The case against three ageing leaders, Nuon Chea, Ieng Sary and Khieu Samphan, is going so slowly that one or more of them may die before it ends.

The Cambodian government has declared itself against hearing any more cases even though prosecutors are preparing charges against five more leaders who are said to be responsible for 150,000 deaths.

Andrew Cayley, the British barrister who is serving as lead prosecutor in the trial of the three former leaders, is lobbying western governments for money and support. "We must finish the job of bringing accountability for these terrible crimes," he said last week.