



# Supreme Court Reverses Johnson Verdict

John Wesley Johnson Jr. spent almost a year in the Clark county Jail without ever going to trial or being eligible for bail.

He had been charged with conspiring to have Sheriff Ralph Lamb assassinated.

Metro investigators said Johnson had made it known he was willing to pay a hit-man \$60,000 to kill Lamb.

A recent decision by the Nevada Supreme Court, however, freed Johnson, after the court ruled Metro had used improper methods - wiretapping and an undercover police officer - to obtain the information.

According to court records and newspapers accounts of

the incident, it all began when Metro heard through its intricate network of informants that Johnson was looking for a hit-man.

Metro set one of its officers up as an out of state hit-man. The officer contacted by telephone a person who represented himself as Johnson. The officer and this person never met face-to-face, although they did discuss the proposed killing.

The officer recruited a second officer, who had two face-to-face meetings with Johnson. The Supreme Court said in its written decision, "According to the second officer, the identity, habits and residence of the propos-

ed victims were discussed at these meetings, and the method to be used in accomplishing their proposed demise and disposition of bodies, as well. Shortly after the second meeting Johnson was arrested, and charged with attempted capital murder and conspiracy to commit murder."

The court said it freed Johnson because "although intent to commit the crime was shown, the discussions testified to by the feigned 'hit-man' were but preparation; they did not constitute the second element, performance of an overt act toward the commission of the crime."

"A conspiracy requires an

agreement by at least two people. When one of the two persons merely pretends to agree, the other party, whatever he may believe, is in fact not conspiring with anyone."

The Supreme Court by this ruling overturned the decision of Chief District Judge Carl Christensen, who ruled Johnson had gone beyond the preparation stages and was in the act of having Lamb killed.

Christensen also ruled that a "co-conspirator can be an undercover police officer if this fact is not known to the prospective wrongdoer."

Meanwhile another story was developing around the

wiretapping part of the case. Somehow, Paul Price, a columnist for the Las Vegas SUN, had obtained and printed part of the wiretapping evidence between Johnson and the undercover police officer.

District Judge Paul Goldman put Price on trial for printing this information.

Judge Goldman had signed the order authorizing Metro to wiretap the phone of Johnson's. The Supreme Court said Goldman had been wrong.

The Supreme Court said the wiretap was illegal in the first place because a deputy district attorney had signed the request order, instead of

the District Attorney, who was Roy Woolfer.

The court said only the district attorney could legally request a wiretap authorization in that office.

Woolfer testified he had known nothing about the wiretap until it was all over.

Johnson, one of the top saxophonists in the state, has said since that this case destroyed his career.

He said after Metro arrested him, they took over \$4,000 worth of recording equipment from him, which has not been returned.

Some people have charged that Lamb used Johnson and this case as a ploy to get re-elected.

(see related story below)

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# VOICE

NEVADA'S  
BLACK COMMUNITY  
WEEKLY **15¢**

## Johnson: They Framed Me

Whatever happened in the great Sheriff Ralph Lamb assassination plot?

In May, 1974, members of the Lamb's Task Force Encircled John Wesley Johnson

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Jr. in the parking lot of the Stardust Hotel.

They said Johnson had been arrested for plotting to have Lamb killed along with Lloyd Bryant, a Black businessman and his wife and daughter.

Johnson spent 11 months in the Clark County Jail without ever going to trial. On March 7, the Nevada Supreme Court freed Johnson, saying improper methods had been used by the Task Force.

Tuesday in a long distance telephone interview, Johnson denied the plot and said he had been used as a stepping stone to get Lamb reelected as Sheriff.

Johnson said the nightmarish experience began when a white friend of his was arrested for stealing diamonds.

His friend supposedly had a lot of his own diamonds when he was arrested. "He called me and said he wanted me to take the diamonds, sell them, and use part of the money to get him a lawyer," Johnson said.

His friend apparently had about 70 large diamonds. Johnson said he asked Bryant, one of the people he supposedly wanted killed, if he knew anyone who could handle that many diamonds.

(Johnson stressed that he was a friend of Bryant and had helped him to raise his daughter. He further added that at the time he was supposedly plotting to have him and his family killed that Bryant and his wife had been separated for over six years and that his wife was not even in Las Vegas at the time.)

Johnson said a few days later he got a telephone call from a person who said he had been told by Bryant that Johnson had some diamonds he wanted to get rid of. This person turned out later to be a member of Lamb's Task Force.

Johnson said he later met with another member of the Task Force, who was posing as the contact of the other Task Force member.

"I was lured to the Stardust the night that I was arrested. The cops came down on me like gang busters in the parking lot. One of them hit me behind the head. I was taken to a room in the hotel and beat within an inch of my life," Johnson said.

Johnson added he had not ever mentioned Lamb in any of his telephone conversations. In addition, he said when he was arrested, he was not even charged with plotting to kill Lamb.

This was verified in the transcript of the Supreme Court. This court mentioned only Bryant and his family.

Johnson swears he does not know the assassination plot ever came up. "I had never mentioned killing to anyone, let alone my friend Bryant and Lamb," Johnson said.

Johnson said when he was arrested, the Task Force took his briefcase which contained over \$4,000 worth of sheet music. "The police department said they have lost this case," Johnson said.

Johnson said he has begun preparations to sue Lamb on about 118 counts. "I want millions of dollars because he kept me in jail for almost a year for nothing, except to use me to assure his reelection," Johnson said.

He said he had been hiding every since he was released from jail because he is afraid that the Task Force is going to kill him.

Johnson said this arrest has almost destroyed his career as a saxophonist and booking agent for bands.

He said he will continue running and hiding until he has his material together to begin his suit.

He said while he was in jail he lost most of his hair

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## VEGAS HEIGHTS IMPROVEMENTS NEAR

The proposed Vegas Heights Offsite Improvements Project is expected to clear its last hurdle Thursday before the Clark County Regional Planning council.

The council, meeting in the Commission Chambers of Las Vegas City Hall at 3 p.m., is expected to approve the final environmental impact statement.

Work is expected to begin

on the \$1.5 million project early next month. The project will include street lights, curbs and gutters and sidewalks.

The Economical Opportunity Board of Clark County (EOB) will also apply for two grants before the council.

It will seek \$48,514 for a special population alcoholism training project, and \$38,000 for Food Stamp transportation support.



**HERO**--Earlier this year Harry Holmes (left) saved the life of Mrs. Ella Council, a handicapped neighbor, when she was trapped by fire in her apartment. Here, Arthur D. Santini, executive

director of the Housing Authority of Las Vegas, presents Holmes an Award of Appreciation for his quick actions. The incident happened in one of the Housing Authority's complexes.