

Three whites indicted in dragging death of black man

Special to Sentinel-Voice

JASPER, Texas — Three white men were indicted on capital murder charges Monday in the alleged hate-slaying of a black man who was chained to a pickup truck and dragged to his death.

Two separate indictments, issued by a Jasper County grand jury, accuse the three suspects of kidnapping and killing James Byrd Jr. on June 7 on a rural East Texas road.

Named in one indictment are John William King, 23, of Jasper and Lawrence Russell Brewer, 31, of Sulphur Springs. A second

indictment names Shawn Allen Berry, 23, of Jasper. The suspects remain jailed without bond in what authorities call a racially motivated crime. All three have prison records and authorities have said at least two wear tattoos of white racist prison gangs. Racist literature also was seized from their homes.

There will be no arraignment hearing for the three. The earliest possible trial date is January 1999, said Jasper County Sheriff Billy Rowles. If convicted, the suspects could face the death penalty.

Jasper County District Attorney Guy James

Gray could not immediately be reached for comment. Attorneys for Brewer and King did not return telephone messages.

Beaumont lawyer Joseph C. "Lum" Hawthorn notified the court Monday that he has been retained to defend Berry at trial. Hawthorn said he expected Berry to plead innocent.

Investigators believe Byrd, 49, accepted a ride from the suspects as he walked home from a niece's bridal shower. But police believe that instead of taking him home, the men drove Byrd to a wooded area, beat him, chained him behind Berry's truck and sped down a bumpy road just

east of town.

Byrd's severed head, neck and right arm were discovered about a mile from where his shredded torso was dumped. A trail of blood, body parts and personal effects stretched for two miles, police said.

According to one court affidavit, Berry told authorities that Brewer sprayed Byrd's face with black paint before he was killed.

In addition to any state charges, federal authorities are considering federal hate crime charges against the trio, which also could make them eligible for the death penalty.

Baptist president pleads not guilty to federal charges

Special to Sentinel-Voice

TAMPA, Fla. — The Rev. Henry Lyons pleaded innocent Monday to charges he used the presidency of a large black Baptist denomination to cheat corporations out of money that went to supplement his lavish lifestyle.



HENRY LYONS

Lyons was indicted by a federal grand jury last week on 56 counts of fraud, conspiracy, money laundering and tax evasion. The embattled leader of the National Baptist Convention USA remained free Monday after his attorney presented documents showing six supporters would post property as Lyons' \$125,000 bond.

Lyons wasn't able to raise all of the bond money himself because the government has frozen most of his assets as part of their case against him, his attorneys said.

About 30 members of his congregation at Bethel Metropolitan Baptist Church in St. Petersburg crowded into the small federal courtroom to show support for the embattled pastor.

If convicted of all the charges, Lyons faces up to life in prison and fines of \$25 million.

Also Monday, codefendant Brenda Harris flew in from Tennessee, where she coordinated meetings for the National Baptist Convention, to plead innocent to eight fraud and conspiracy charges in connection with the alleged schemes. She agreed to post \$6,000 in a court fund toward her \$50,000 bond.

Lyons, 56, is accused of using his convention leadership position to fraudulently solicit contributions, and of promising a life insurance company, a funeral services group and a communications outfit a chance to market services to 8.5 million convention members.

Prosecutors said the membership figure was exaggerated and the promises were false: The money wasn't used for the convention, but for Lyons' own benefit.

Proceeds went into accounts to support a lavish lifestyle, including country club memberships, trips, and the purchase of cars, jewelry and houses, the indictment said.

See Me for All Your Insurance Needs

AUTO HOME
LIFE HEALTH

COUNTRY COMPANIES
INSURANCE GROUP



MELVIN L. WALKER
6160 W. Tropicana
Suite E-9
702-873-6442
Las Vegas, Nevada

Cop brutality rampant, unchecked, unpunished

Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Police departments in New York and other major American cities fail to hold officers accountable for abusive and brutal behavior, much of it targeted at minorities, according to a new report on human rights abuses.

The study, issued Tuesday by Human Rights Watch, accuses local police agencies and the Justice Department of failing to come to terms with police brutality, calling it a "common human rights abuse in the United States."

In New York, the nation's largest police department has traditionally been "unwilling to acknowledge shortcomings and instead dismisses any criticisms as unfounded or as merely 'anecdotal,'" the study says.

It faults Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and his police commissioner for dismissing many allegations of police brutality as isolated criminal acts committed by rogue cops.

At a news conference in New York Giuliani called the report "patently dishonest" and

"We're not saying there aren't a few bad cops, what we're saying is that the report presents an inappropriately broad-brushed impression."

— Gerald Arenberg, head of NACOP

said he gives police officers "the benefit of the doubt," but punishes them "if the facts aren't on their side."

The 450-page, two-year study plows little new ground, but catalogs patterns of police behavior and handling of brutality allegations in New York and 13 other cities: Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New Orleans, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Washington, Portland, Ore., and Providence, R.I.

"In too many cases accountability fails," said researcher Allyson Collins.

However, the National Association of Chiefs of Police called the study "unfair" and "uninformed."

"We're not saying there aren't a few bad cops," said the

head of NACOP, Gerald Arenberg. "What we're saying is that the report presents an inappropriately broad-brushed impression."

The study also called on the Justice Department to produce an annual report on alleged police brutality, as mandated by Congress in the 1994 crime bill.

Deputy Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Tom Perez said that the report was being assembled and defended his agency's efforts to combat police misconduct.

According to the report, police engage in unjustified shootings of suspects, severe beatings, fatal chokings and unnecessarily rough treatment while their superiors and government officials fail to act decisively to penalize the offending cops or to record the

magnitude of the problem.

The study found shortcomings common to all 14 cities: lack of effective public accountability, a persistent failure to investigate and punish officers who commit civil rights violations, and too many obstacles to justice for the brutal cop.

However, researchers did find improvements in the way civilian boards review complaints in Minneapolis, Portland, San Francisco and Los Angeles.

The study also said race continues to play a central role in police brutality in the United States.

Human Rights Watch, which monitors human rights issues worldwide, offered several recommendations for reform, including: making federal aid to police departments conditional on regular reporting of abuse allegations; creating a "zero-tolerance policy" for abuses; and establishing systems to identify "at-risk" police officers and remove those who commit abuses.

Law Firm of Smith & Williams

ATTORNEY AT LAW



TIMOTHY C. WILLIAMS

Timothy Williams is a member of the Nevada & Illinois State Bar, practicing primarily in personal injury cases.

COMBINED 27 YEARS OF LEGAL EXPERIENCE

EMPHASIS ON PERSONAL INJURY CASES

- Automobile Accidents
- Motorcycle Accidents
- Slips & Falls
- Wrongful Death
- Dog Bites
- Pedestrian & Other Bodily Injuries
- Medical Malpractice

892-0000

1785 E. Sahara Ave. Ste. 337
Las Vegas, Nevada

Neither the State Bar of Nevada nor any agency of the State Bar has certified any lawyer identified here as a specialist or expert. Anyone considering a lawyer should independently investigate the lawyer's credentials and ability.