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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

Brawley advisers libeled accusers

Special to Sentinel-Voice
POUGHKEEPSIE, N.Y.

In a raucous trial that reopened the racial tensions of the 1987 Tawana Brawley case, a jury ruled Monday that the Rev. Al Sharpton and two others defamed a white former prosecutor by accusing him of raping the black teenager.

The jury will return Tuesday to begin deciding how much to award the ex-prosecutor in damages.

The verdict came after an eight-month trial and five days of deliberations in Steven Pagonis' \$395 million lawsuit against Sharpton, Alton Maddox Jr. and C. Vernon Mason. All three Brawley advisers are black.

The jury found that the advisers acted with reckless disregard for the truth in many of their statements.

Sharpton was found liable for making seven defamatory statements about Pagonis, Maddox for making two and Mason for one. The jury deadlocked on four of the 22 statements Pagonis had sued over and eight statements were found non-defamatory.

"They hurt race relations," Pagonis said outside Dutchess County Court. "We have enough problems in society, we don't need people like Mason and Maddox and Sharpton screaming out false allegations and creating further

hatred."

Sharpton and Maddox said they would appeal; Mason could not be reached for comment. And Sharpton, the only defendant not in court to hear the verdict, insisted that the decision would not change his civil rights activities.



AL SHARPTON

"I've survived stabbings, indictments, lawsuits," he told WLIR radio in New York City just after the verdict. "If they want to stop me, they need to shoot me, and even then there will be hundreds who will come behind me and stand up."

Maddox, who strode out of the court with his arms raised in victory, maintained his innocence and insisted that the Brawley case "was not a hoax."

The tumultuous trial revived many of the racial tensions that marked the Brawley case a decade ago. Defense lawyers hurled

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Widower, mother deride police abuse

By John T. Stephens III
Sentinel Voice

Metropolitan Police Department officers have a history of abuse authority, often fabricate stories to pin people with crimes and receive lax punishment, if any, when they do wrong, officials with the Las Vegas Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression charged during a Tuesday press conference.

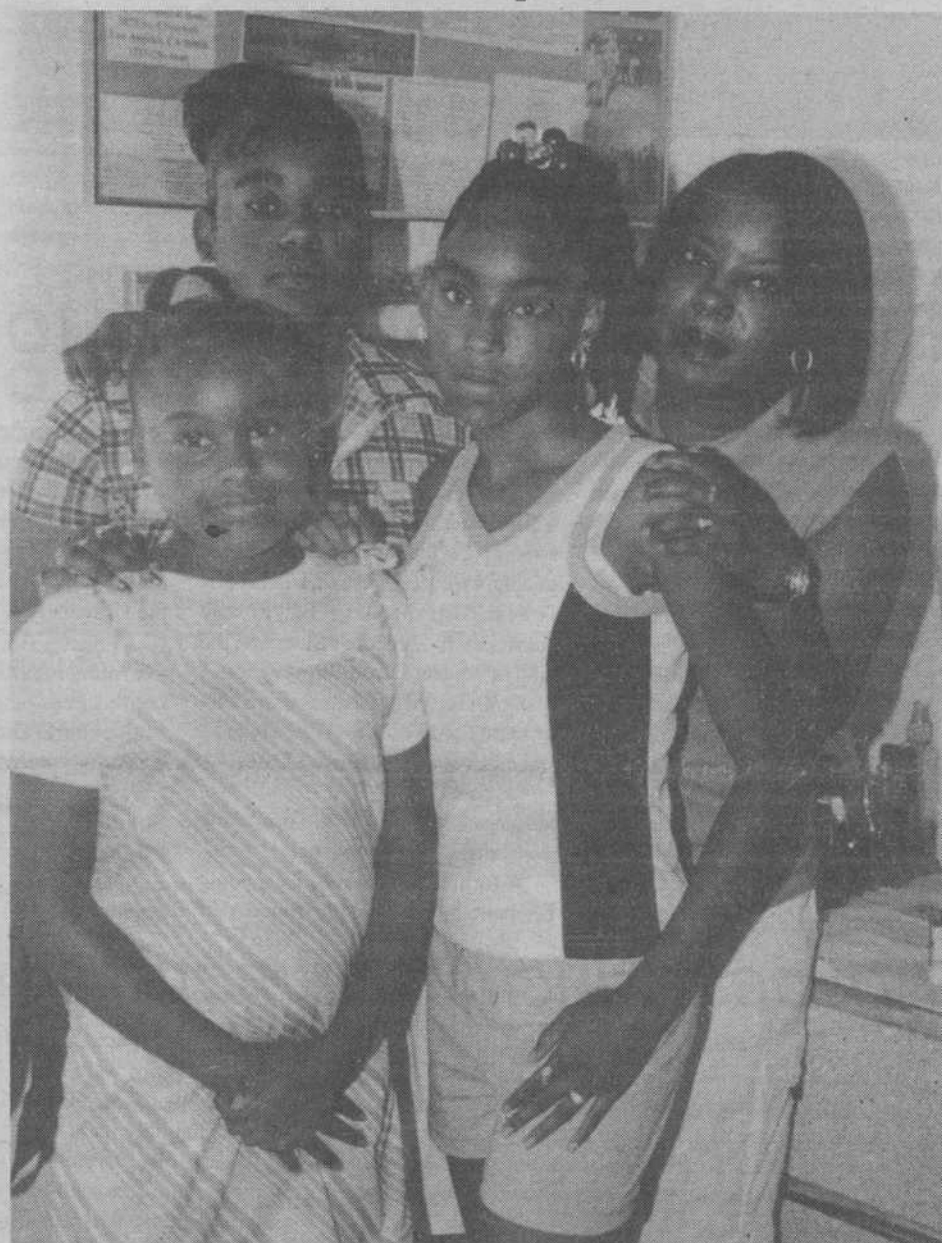
Accompanied by Dr. James S. Tate Jr., the group's president, were Tammie Payton, whose husband Eric was killed after scuffling with Las Vegas police and another woman who said police wrongly jailed her son on a murder charge.

Peace officers Mark Dwiggins, 29 and Jeffery Tabor, 35, fatally shot Eric Payton after authorities said the 40-year-old father of three tried to wrest a gun away from one of the officers. Police had been called to the Paytons' residence after Tammi Payton twice complained her husband was pushing her.

"I called the police because of concern over my husband's cocaine use," Tammie Payton said. "There was no, and I repeat, no domestic abuse."

Tammie Payton said she wanted to police to scare him into getting help for his

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Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Members of the Payton family, daughters Erica, front left, and Sherri, front right, Brandi, left rear and mother Tammie have yet to bring closure to the shooting death of Eric Payton by Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department officers.

Democrats open West Las Vegas office

By John T. Stephens III
Sentinel-Voice

The Democratic Party last week opened a branch office in West Las Vegas amid fanfare.

"It's about time," said Adella Logan, a Democratic candidate for Clark County Treasurer. "We (African-Americans) need to be more involved in the political process."

The office, at 1240 West Owens Ave., Suite 1, inside the D & K Plaza, will serve as an outreach for Democratic candidates to be recognized and get to know the Black community.

"This is a magnificent opportunity," said Shelley

Berkley, who is running for John Ensign's vacant congressional seat. "We have been planning to do this for a number of years. The community being served is pivotal to the success of the Democratic party."

Clark County Commission Chairwoman Yvonne Atkinson Gates agreed.

"This is what Democrats are all about and that is diversity and making sure that African-Americans, Hispanics, and other minorities get out and vote," Atkinson Gates said.

The new headquarters will also be used to register voters. Thirty black college students will work as part-time staff,

according to Vanessa Williams, the office's coordinator. Williams said the black vote is vital for the Democrats but could not say whether the office would remain after the November general election.

Paul Henry, chairman of the state Democratic party, said opening an office in West Las Vegas shows how the two major political parties differ.

"This is how we win our elections," Henry said. "The Democratic party is committed to diversity."

The state Democratic Party has three other offices opened throughout the state, one in Reno, one in Carson City and

another Las Vegas outreach at 1785 East Sahara Ave. Henry said several of the offices will be closed after the November election to contain costs. If activity warrants, the new office could stay open.

"It's very important that the Democratic party be represented in this community," U.S. Senator Harry Reid said. "It can make the difference of whether the Democrats can win their elections."

Jerry Lindsay, who is affiliated with the Nevada Black American Business Group, a group that last week endorsed North Las Vegas

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Photo special to Sentinel-Voice

From left, Democrats Byron Goynes, Adella Logan, Yvonne Atkinson Gates and David Hoggard, Jr. celebrate the opening of the Democratic Party's new office in the D & K Plaza.