



Jurors picked in Strohmeyer trial

By Robert Macy

Special to Sentinel-Voice

LAS VEGAS (AP) — The 12 men and women who were picked Wednesday in District Court Judge Myron Leavitt's courtroom will, in several months at the most, end a saga that has been brewing for more than a year.

The 12 will decide if 19-year-old Californian Jeremy Strohmeyer will die or face prison for the May 25, 1997 sexual assault and strangulation of 7-year-old Sherrice Iverson in a bathroom stall at the Primm hotel in Primm, 43 miles south of Las Vegas. Six alternates must still be picked.

The trial has been beset by delays — most of which stemmed from defense lawyers' contentions that they lacked adequate time to prepare proper counsel for the Long Beach native who was adopted, an admitted drug user and purveyor of pornography.

During jury selection Tuesday, race crept in.

"Do you think my client is a racist?" defense attorney Leslie Abramson asked a fiesty great-grandmother.



Sherrice Iverson

"I haven't thought of it that way," replied the woman, the second black questioned for the jury.

"Do you think race had anything to do with this?" Abramson asked.

"No," the woman responded. Strohmeyer is white. Iverson, a Los Angeles

second-grader is black.

Prosecutors have said race was an issue in the slaying. But District Court Judge Myron Leavitt has ruled that race cannot be raised as an issue during the guilt phase of the trial.

Defense attorney Richard Wright hammered at the issue of pre-trial publicity Tuesday, showing prospective jurors a stack of papers he identified as 284 news stories written locally on the slaying and trial.

Strohmeyer took notes of the proceedings or watched stoically as potential jurors discussed issues such as the death penalty.

"Let the punishment fit the crime," one juror wrote on a questionnaire filled out by panel members in mid-July.

Questioned about the comment, the juror said the death penalty should be considered in "heinous crimes such as mass murders."

Defense attorneys argued without success to have one juror removed because he had written on his questionnaire that the death penalty "is the only solution in warranted situations."

The juror said he didn't know until Monday that jurors would have four sentencing options

if they convicted Strohmeyer — the death penalty, life with or without the possibility of parole, or 50 years in prison.

Some potential jurors expressed the opinion that the death penalty would be more humane than life in prison.

Strohmeyer, who has pleaded innocent, allegedly confessed to police that he killed the Los Angeles girl "to experience death."

Strohmeyer was adopted as a baby, and the defense has learned his biological father is in prison for possession with intent to sell marijuana, and his mother is in a mental hospital.

The case has attracted wide publicity, in part because Strohmeyer's friend David Cash Jr. has said he saw Strohmeyer begin to assault the girl but did not intervene. He also did not tell authorities later when Strohmeyer allegedly told him that he killed the girl.

Cash, a student at the University of California at Berkeley, has been the object of scorn by saying the publicity has helped him get dates and for not showing remorse. University students unsuccessfully pressured administrators to give him the boot.

HIV rates highest in Black women

By Russ Bynum

Special to Sentinel-Voice

ATLANTA (AP) — Young, poor women are being infected with the AIDS virus at a higher rate than their male counterparts, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Thursday.

The finding arises from a seven-year study that looked at HIV tests for 350,000 youths in the federal Jobs Corps program, which provides job training to poor youths and high school dropouts.

Researchers found that the rate of infection among women ages 16 to 21 was 50 percent higher than that of men in the same group.

The highest rates of infection were among black women, with five out of every 1,000 infected with HIV.

"We are continuing to see that the face of the epidemic is changing to populations that are more economically disadvantaged or among racial and ethnic minorities and difficult to reach populations," said George Lemp, director of the AIDS research program for the University of California.

In the one bit of good news, the study reported that the overall rate of infection among all the youths declined from 1990 to 1996, the period during

which the study was conducted.

Researchers suggested the difference between the sexes was because young women are more likely to have sex with older partners, who are more likely to have HIV than younger men.

As the study showed, women aged 16 to 18 were being infected at more than twice the rate of men the same age — 2.4 per 1,000 compared to 1.1 per 1,000 — while infection rates for men and women ages 19 to 21 were roughly equal.

Experts said the data, to be published in the September issue of the *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes and Human Retrovirology*, shows that traditional HIV-prevention programs are not enough to prevent the spread of the virus among the poor.

"We've got to be creative in getting to them," said Linda Valleroy, a CDC epidemiologist and author of the study.

"They're not in school — high school phys-ed teachers are not going to reach them," she said. "They're not employed — AIDS training in the workplace is not going to reach them."

Race also was a factor in

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Gates hopes to stunt recall effort

By Deborah Kohlen
Sentinel-Voice

Clark County Commission Chairwoman Yvonne Atkinson Gates got some help from a friend during a press conference last Thursday in which she presented 500 signatures from people whom she said mistakenly signed a petition to oust her.

California Democrat Maxine Waters, in Las Vegas to encourage voting and support Democratic candidates, backed Gates who criticized the latest missive from Citizens for Honest and Responsible Government as off-target. The group has until Sept. 4 to get enough signatures to force a recall.

Gates also used the press conference at the Clark County Government Center to criticize the Ethics Commission for guidelines she said are confusing. She contends the commission is out to destroy her and other "people who care about this community."

Gates was slapped with ethics violations for asking about leasing opportunities for a daiquiri business in casinos she regulates and for awarding airport concessions to friends.

Citizens for Honest and Responsible Government, led by attorney Charles Bennion, pushed to recall Gates in March only to see Secretary of State rule shuck their effort invalid due to a number of invalid signatures. A second petition, in circulation now, seeks to gain the 4,385 signatures needed to force Gates into a recall election — the number represents 25 percent of the voters who participated in the 1996 election.

At Thursday's press conference, Gates and her supporters presented about 500 recision cards to the election department.

The cards contained names of eligible District D voters who wanted their names removed from the petition. Gates claims that many of the voters were duped into signing the document.

"Ludicrous," said Janet Broderick, a member of Citizens for Honest and Responsible Government, pointing out that "Recall Petition" was printed on every

Yvonne Atkinson Gates and her supporters presented a about 500 recision cards to the election department.



page and next to every blank.

Broderick said the first petition drive failed because National Voter Outreach, a group paid to gather the signatures, messed up. This time, group members are pounding the beat themselves.

"We're being very careful this time, and the accuracy rate is much higher," said Broderick,

who thinks many of the recision cards contain names of residents who never signed the recall petitions.

Broderick and two other District D residents, James McNally and Kristie Lytle,

signed notices launching both petition processes. All are Republicans.

Gates said the citizens' group is "financed by Venetian resort owner Sheldon Adelson."

Adelson, chairman of the Las Vegas Sands Inc., has denied any grudge possibly stemming from Gates' rulings against his property. Bennion said he approached Adelson about the petition drive, not the other way around.

Gates, whose term expires in the year 2000, said last week she just wants to be left alone to do her job until then and that no more taxpayers' money should be wasted on the recall drives.

Waters said she believes in Gates integrity and honesty.



Maxine Waters