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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

NYPD officer Volpe pleads to assault

NEW YORK (AP) — A police officer accused of torturing a prisoner inside a Brooklyn stationhouse pleaded guilty to assaulting a Haitian immigrant last year.

Officer Justin Volpe is the central figure in a case that has seen five officers indicted in on charges of violating the civil rights of a black Haitian immigrant.

News of the plea came after several days of speculation following testimony by four police officers who witnessed Volpe brandishing a stick around the time that he allegedly tortured Abner Louima inside a bathroom of a Brooklyn police station on Aug. 9, 1997.

The case against the four remaining officers was expected to proceed. There was no indication whether Volpe would testify as part of any kind of plea deal.

The maximum sentence for the charge Volpe faces is life in prison without parole.

Volpe, 27, of Staten Island, is charged with ramming a stick into Louima's rectum and mouth in a fit of rage. Prosecutors say Volpe mistakenly thought Louima, 32, punched him in a disturbance outside a Brooklyn nightclub.

Volpe's co-defendants, officers Charles Schwarz, Thomas Wiese and Thomas Bruder, are charged with violating Louima's rights by taking turns beating him en route to the station. Schwarz also is accused of holding down Louima in the bathroom attack.

A fifth defendant, Sgt. Michael Bellomo, is charged with covering up the incident.

Kornberg abruptly stopped cross-examining prosecution witnesses last week, telling reporters he had changed his strategy.

The normally combative Kornberg had implied in opening statements he would try to show that Louima was injured during consensual sex before he got involved with police.

But four former and current precinct patrolmen testified they had seen Volpe wielding a stick on the morning of the bathroom attack.

Louima had told the jury that Volpe put an object in his rectum, pulled it out and put it in his mouth. He testified Volpe "told me if I ever talk to anyone about what happened to me, he kill me and everybody in my family."

Detective Eric Turetzky testified seeing Schwarz lead a handcuffed Louima, whose pants were at his ankles, toward the bathroom. Later, a disheveled and sullen Volpe "was swinging the stick around like a sword and hitting it against the wall," the detective said.

Officer Mark Schofield testified that Volpe borrowed a pair of black leather gloves from him before the alleged attack and returned them covered with blood.

Kornberg, along with other defense attorneys, attacked the credibility of Turetzky and Schofield for coming forward only after it became clear internal affairs investigators would be interviewing them anyway.

The defense went silent last week when a burly sergeant named Kenneth Wernick appeared as a surprise witness. In an account never before made public, he testified that Volpe bragged, "I took a man down tonight."

Volpe then took him into the bathroom to see the 2- to 3-foot stick, which was stashed by a sink, he said.

Kornberg declined to question both Wernick and a second surprise witness, Officer Michael Schoer, who testified Volpe had taunted him by putting the end of an excrement-soiled stick in his face.

EOB targets poverty in Clark County

Catisha Marsh and
John T. Stephens III
Sentinel-Voice

In honor of the 35 year-old Economic Opportunity Act, the Economic Opportunity Board of Clark County convened a conference Tuesday highlighting poverty issues in Southern Nevada.

Joining in the second annual Community Action Conference were officials from UNLV's Department of Continuing Education,

Families Advocating for Community Empowerment and the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension. Residents and activists were present, as were Las Vegas receiving social services or government assistance and those who've made it to self-sufficiency.

The EOB's planning office estimates more than 100,000 Clark County residents live at or below the national poverty line.

Dr. Papa Huluhwazu, a

professor at University of Nevada's Cooperative Extension facilitated a discussion on crime and its relation to poverty-stricken areas.

"Crime isn't just caused because there's something missing at home, or at school, or in society," said the Rev. Jesse Scott. "It's probably a combination of all those things and more. What's missing are what I call the 'two seeds' — lack of communication and lack of

cooperation."

Morris Jackson told a second panel he was a bank executive before losing his job in February. Unemployment pushed his family — he's married with four children — onto the streets.

"In my arrogance, I thought that EOB and these kinds of agencies were for 'other people.' You don't realize how close you are to standing in that line."

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Program eyes end to government dependence

John T. Stephens III
Sentinel-Voice

The Las Vegas Housing Authority is set to launch the Family Self-Sufficiency Program to help individuals to get off government assistance.

The goals-based program is a nationwide initiative borne out of the 1995 Welfare Reform Act.

"Goals are vital in our life," said section 8 FSS Coordinator Denise Moorman. "In order to achieve you must set goals."

Five-year contracts between household heads and the Housing Authority identify employment goals and services available to participants such as job training, child care, education, counseling and

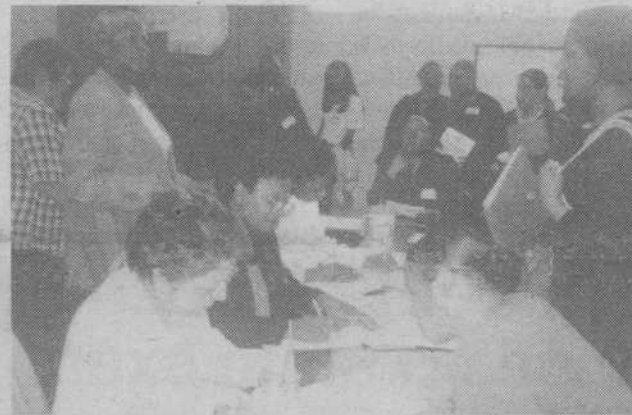


Photo special to Sentinel-Voice

Social workers and participants in the Housing Authority's Family Self-Sufficiency program fill out applications.

case management.

After the contract ends, participants can still obtain Section 8 assistance should they qualify. Completion of the program requires the head of the household be employed and family members must be off public assistance for at

least 12 months during the term of the contract.

There are 2,311 families enrolled in public housing and 2,493 families in Section 8 vouchers or certificates. Females lead 90 percent of the households in county housing assistance programs.

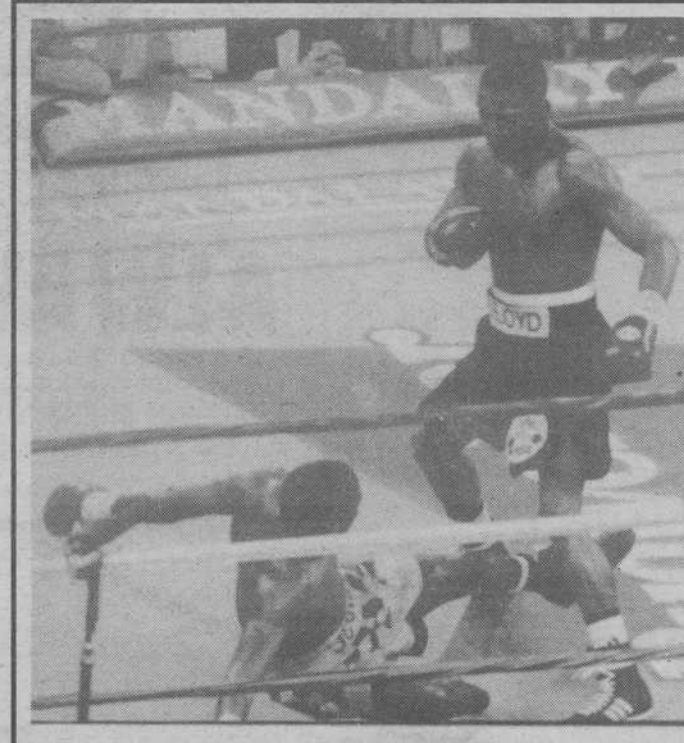
Any family on Section 8 voucher or certificate is eligible to participate.

"It is almost unbelievable," said Kim Crutchfield said who utilized the program to open a day care center, Kim Care, on 1305 Little Dipper. "They set up a program designed for you to meet your own personal goals. They're a built in cheering squad."

"It's difficult to find yourself at an older age with absolutely nothing," said Crutchfield, a college graduate who once stayed at Shade Tree facility for homeless and abused women. "It shows that anyone can end up in this position."

"I wanted to get off all public assistance," Gerald

(See FSS, Page 5)



MAYDAY

Floyd Mayweather knocks out Justin Juuko in the ninth round of their WBC super featherweight championship fight Saturday at the Mandalay Bay. The title bout was part of the under card that featured a WBC welterweight championship fight between Oscar De La Hoya and Oba Carr in the hotel's first ever boxing event. See related photos on page 16. Photo courtesy of Jonathan Olsen of Front Row Photos

Tyson released

WASHINGTON (AP) — After spending 3 1/2 months behind bars, Mike Tyson is free to fight again.

The former heavyweight champion was released Monday from a suburban Maryland jail where he was serving time for assaulting two motorists over a fender-bender.

He said nothing to reporters as he and a friend walked to a nearby car where his wife, Monica, waited.

Said Tyson flak Peter Seligman: "We will be announcing very shortly plans on Mike's return to the ring."