

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Strohmeyer clinging to life

Strange what the prospect of a lifetime of isolation can do to a person. Jeremy Strohmeyer, the California high school honor student turned child murderer, claimed in court this week that he did not sexually assault and strangle the 7-year-old Los Angeles second-grader in a women's bathroom stall at Primm Hotel in Primm Nevada.

In an evidentiary hearing this week, Strohmeyer, and a team of new attorneys, blamed his former attorneys for bullying him into confessing to the May 1997 murder of Sherrice Iverson. The defense team claims the Long Beach native agreed to plead guilty to avoid the death penalty.

"I want to know the truth. I want justice," Strohmeyer testified in District Judge Joseph Bonaventure's court.

The truth is as plain as day. All he has to do is look at reams of evidence against him.

In court depositions, Strohmeyer laid out the murderous sequence of events, all the way down to the mercy killing of Iverson. After sexually penetrating the girl with his fingers, he unsuccessfully attempted to break her neck. When he feared someone was entering the bathroom, he sat on Iverson, muffling any breathing and silencing any screams. He claims he blacked out and found Iverson clinging to life. He simply "tried to stop her pain" by kindly finishing the neck fracture that eventually killed her. He blamed his blackout on an earlier drug-induced stupor.

"That scene is etched in my memory and will haunt me every day for the rest of my life," he said in an October 1998 court proceeding.

Videotaped surveillance shows Strohmeyer chasing Sherrice into the bathroom after what should have been a friendly exchange. Strohmeyer admitted that he flew into a rage when the girl hit him with a wet floor sign. Strohmeyer was in the restroom for 22 minutes. His friend David Cash, who many think should have been charged as an accessory, was in the restroom for two minutes, surveillance shows.

Leroy Iverson, Sherrice's father, denied claims that he bumped into Cash and asked him about the whereabouts of his daughter.

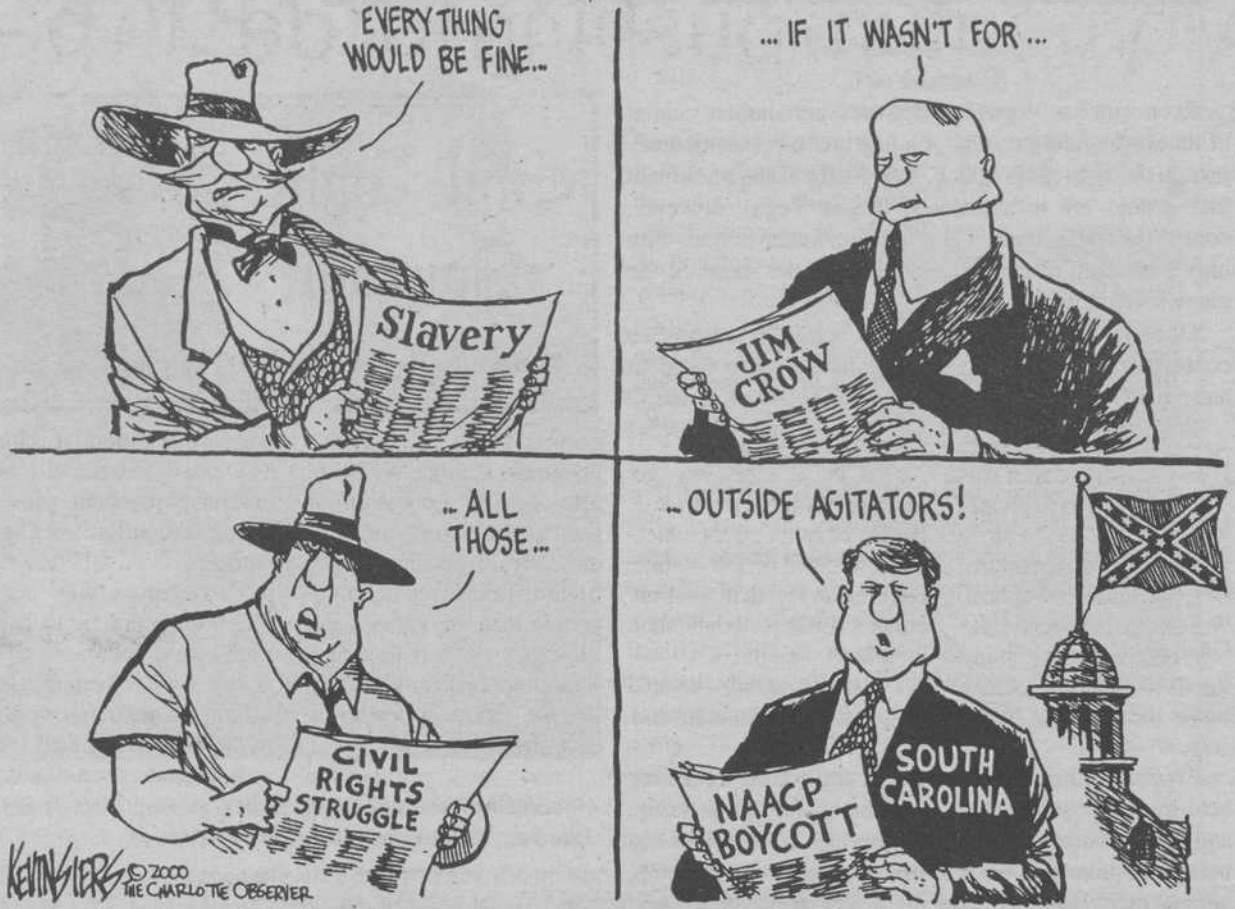
For all its positioning and propaganda, Strohmeyer's newfound ammunition carries little weight and are destined to tank. He's merely clinging to what's left of his life. He's feeling desperate. Life in prison is hard enough. Life in isolation can be even harder. Time has a way of evening out things.

Race riot reparations right thing

Who knows how many Tulsas there were? Who knows how many smaller-sized cities, towns and enclaves were decimated or destroyed by hate-fueled race riots often started by a rumor of a black person committing a crime against a white person?

No one knows these answers. But an 11-member Tulsa Race Riot Commission in Tulsa, Okla., is attempting to secure redress for that town's 1921 race riot. The panel has recommended direct payments to survivors and descendants of riot victims, a memorial to the dead, scholarships and a tax checkoff program to fund economic development in the Greenwood district where a white mob killed nearly 300 people, most of them black.

The Tulsa Legislature shouldn't think twice about accomodating the requests. History will record their heroic deeds, much as it did the despicable acts that led to this point.



The Diallo case: Law enforcement on trial

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The long-awaited trial of the four white New York City Police officers who last February shot to death a law-abiding, unarmed West African immigrant, Amadou Diallo, in a hail of bullets in the vestibule of his New York City apartment building, has finally gotten underway.

It got underway in Albany, NY, 150 miles from The Bronx, the borough where Diallo lived and was slain.

That change of venue is just one of the things which has contributed to the deep skepticism with which many people in The Bronx, throughout New York City and across the country are viewing these proceedings.

As I wrote in an earlier column, this trial had no business being moved to Albany. The December decision of a special five-member panel of the state Court of Appeals to move the case was blatantly wrong.


It declared it was moving the case because evidence showed an unbiased jury could not be achieved in the Bronx — a borough of 1.2-million people, 77 percent of whom are black or Hispanic.

What the ruling did not acknowledge was that the very survey which figured so prominently in their stated justification found 71 percent of Bronx residents surveyed said they were confident they could judge the case impartially if called to serve.

But, as I said, the issue of a Bronx jury was a

To Be Equal

By Hugh B. Price
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smokescreen because the trial in The Bronx was never going to be a jury trial. It was clear from the beginning of this case a year ago that defense lawyers would waive a jury trial and ask that the case be tried before a judge.

The judge to whom the case was assigned last spring turned out to be an African-American woman, a former federal prosecutor of impeccable credentials. Because she is an "acting" State Supreme Court justice, not a full-fledged one, she could not preside over the case if it were moved from her jurisdiction.

And so, the suspicion in many quarters is: that is why the trial was moved to Albany—where it is now before a white judge and a "diverse" jury of four African-Americans and eight whites.

Much of the media seems to be celebrating the Albany jury's "diversity," without speculating that since the Bronx is 19 percent white, a jury selected there would very likely have been even more diverse.

This trial, of course, can



moment it occurred in early February of last year until well into April. The sentiment that powered those demonstrations has not abated.

Part of that context was the explosion of testimony from individuals, private reports and public investigations of the widespread police practice of racial profiling — "Driving While Black or Brown," "Walking While Black or Brown," "Standing While Black or Brown" — that was an integral part of the operation of the New York Police Department undercover unit these officers belonged to.

It turned out their supposedly "expert" stop-and-frisk policy amounted to little more than a stop-any-black-or-Hispanic-male-and-see-what-you-turn-up approach.

That sounds harsh. But the department's own statistics were shocking.

(See Diallo, Page 15)

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