

Rubin Carter protests for death row inmate

WASHINGTON (AP)—Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, a former boxer whose release after 19 years in prison inspired a movie, insisted Friday that Texas death-row inmate Gary Graham "has clear evidence of his innocence" and should not be executed next month.

"We must not let him die," Carter said.

Carter was twice convicted with another man in the 1966 killings of a New Jersey bartender and two patrons. He was freed in 1985 after a federal judge concluded the case was tainted with racial bias.

Carter, who now lives in Toronto, appeared in front of the Capitol with Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr., D-Ill., to plead Graham's case, one of the longest and most contentious capital punishment cases in Texas. The state leads the nation in executions, with 18 people put to death this year alone.

Graham was sent to death row in November 1981 for the shooting death six months earlier of Bobby Grant Lambert, 53, of Tucson, Ariz., in the parking lot of a Houston supermarket.

Graham, who is now 36 and prefers to go by the name Shaka Sankofa to reflect his African heritage, was 17 at the time of the shooting. He is scheduled to be executed June 22 — his fifth execution date.

His case, a lightning rod for both death penalty opponents and proponents, has been reviewed more than 35 times by the courts.

At his trial, a witness never wavered on her identification of Graham as the killer.

But his lawyer, Richard Burr, said Friday that alibi and other eyewitness witnesses who could clear him, as well as a lab report showing the bullet used in the crime did not come from the gun he was arrested with, have never been heard in open court.

Now that the appeals process has been exhausted, Texas' clemency process is his only hope.

"We have tried endlessly to get courts to hear this evidence. They have refused," Burr said. "I think it's one of the most compelling cases of innocence in the country."

Carter, Jackson and others called on Texas Gov. George W. Bush, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, and the state parole board to grant Graham a new trial.

"After having heard the facts, I am convinced that he is innocent of this crime," Jackson said. "We are not saying, 'Free Gary Graham.' We are saying, 'Grant him a new trial.'"

Jackson took issue with Bush's statements of certainty that Texas has only executed the guilty.

"Almost certainly, there have been or will be innocent people executed in Texas and elsewhere," Jackson said.

But the congressman was equally critical of the support of Vice President Al Gore, the likely Democratic candidate for president, for the death penalty.

Jackson also blamed a 1996 law that restricted the appeals process for capital cases for Graham's inability to have new evidence heard. He has introduced legislation seeking a nationwide, 7-year halt to capital punishment until stronger safeguards are in place to ensure innocent people aren't executed.

There are 3,600 people on death row nationwide, while 87 have been freed since 1973, according to the Washington-based Death Penalty Information Center.

Skinhead

(Continued from Page 1)

The jury found that the store was 53 percent negligent and that Polk was 47 percent negligent. Polk said Friday he believed white jurors found it difficult to put themselves in his place.

"It comes down to a black man alone. Do you help or just watch?" Polk said. "And then Fred Meyer tells me it's my fault for fighting back, when they didn't help me one bit."

Two of the attackers were convicted of felony intimidation and other charges. They served jail terms and were ordered to avoid skinhead groups.

Fred Meyer, an 800-store grocery chain founded in Portland, operates in 12 states. It was sold last year to Kroger Co. of Cincinnati.

Racist groups thriving in Missouri woods

GAINESVILLE, Mo. (AP)—The remote and rugged Ozark hills blanketed with dogwoods and oaks are treasured by hunters, hikers and others wanting to get away from the bustle of urban life.

The pastoral hills are also a haven for hate groups, authorities say. Southern Missouri has drawn more than its share of religious sects and white supremacists looking for a place to hide.

Last week, police arrested the Rev. Gordon Winrod — the leader of an anti-Semitic church — for allegedly kidnapping six of his grandchildren and concealing them for years at his farmhouse in the hills.

The children, ages 9 through 16, ended a four-day standoff with police by peacefully leaving the home Saturday after urging from their grandfather, brought from jail in shackles and an orange jumpsuit.

The only explanation authorities offer for why the kids were kidnapped is that Winrod thought their two fathers were Jewish. Sheriff Steve Bartlett said the youngsters had been taught by their grandfather to distrust authorities.

At one point, the sheriff said, the children shouted at deputies, "Get your Jew hands off me."

Winrod, 73, and his followers gained a reputation in Ozark County for mass mailings of literature calling law enforcement officers and prosecutors "Jewdicals" — a play on the word judicial — and claiming they cover up murders of whites.

It's not uncommon to find that kind of sentiment in some areas of the Ozarks, which straddles the state line between Missouri and Arkansas. Experts say the region draws hate groups and people connected to the white supremacist Christian Identity movement.

"We are rich in these types of groups down in this part of the country for some reason," Highway Patrol Sgt. Marty Elmore said. "They seem to like this rugged and remote terrain where they can buy up lots of cheap land and get back there where people won't bother them too much."

Southwest Missouri is often characterized by a lack of adequate law enforcement in rural areas and lacks a tradition of heavy-handed local government and gun control, said Robert Flanders, former director of the Center for

Ozark Studies at Southwest Missouri State University in Springfield.

"When I think of Ozark County, I always think of how the sheriff did not have a car until 1937," he said. "The rivers weren't bridged and there was no real road system developed."

Outlaws looking for cover in the backwoods — including such notorious villains as Bonnie and Clyde and Jesse James — were drawn to the area for those reasons, Flanders said.

Religious-based groups, typically those who shun the doctrines of mainstream churches, appreciate the quiet and reserved nature of fellow Ozarkers. "There is a long tradition in the hills that you live and let live, no matter how weird the beliefs of your neighbors might be," Flanders said.

Both Springfield and Branson have seen national and regional supremacy conventions in the last year. In February, some 225 people gathered in Branson for the third annual convention of the Identity group Songs for His People.

"You're right in the

middle of the Bible Belt, which plays an important role in the culture there," said Devin Burghart of the Chicago-based Identity watchdog group, Center for New Community.

"These guys come strolling along singing songs and holding Bibles, which allows them a certain degree of legitimacy in the area. But behind it all is still the same message of hate and intolerance," he said.

Christian Identity espouses white Anglo-Saxon virtues and calls Jews, minorities and gays enemies of God. Some hard-core members believe in death sentences for those who violate "God's law."

In August, Identity follower Buford Furrow Jr. allegedly killed a Filipino-American postal worker and wounded five others after opening fire on a Jewish day-care center in Los Angeles. A month earlier, two brothers — also Identity adherents — allegedly killed a gay couple in California and set fire to several synagogues.

Through the 1980s, the Identity movement became associated with other extrem-

ist groups, including The Order, the Ku Klux Klan and The Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord, or CSA.

Many residents here say they have felt intimidated by supremacist groups like CSA and Winrod's church. Most decline to be interviewed or ask not to be identified for fear of retaliation.

"These guys would wear fatigues and walk into the post office with guns strapped to their waists," said Tim Morgan, owner of a marina in Pontiac, a town of fewer than 300 not far from Gainesville. "They were intimidating because they were so military-looking."

Winrod's church, called Our Savior's, consisted mostly of his adult children, their families and a few other followers. The sheriff said he began distributing his racist mailings to every county resident.

"People would call and complain about it, but there is nothing we could do — he had First Amendment rights," Bartlett said. "We could only keep an eye on him."

Now, Winrod is accused (See Racists, Page 3)

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