

Judge: Alleged R. Kelly sex photos can't be used

BARTOW, Fla. (AP) - Detectives illegally seized photographs allegedly showing R&B singer R. Kelly having sex with an underage girl and prosecutors cannot use them to try him on child pornography charges, a judge has ruled.

Circuit Judge Dennis Maloney agreed with Kelly's lawyers that Polk County sheriff's detectives did not have enough evidence to justify a search of Kelly's Davenport home when they asked a judge for a warrant in June 2002. The photographs were on a digital camera that was

wrapped in a towel inside a duffel bag.

Prosecutors said they would wait for Maloney's written order to decide whether to appeal. Assistant State Attorney Chip Thulberry said if there is no appeal, prosecutors would drop the 12 counts of child pornography against the singer, whose real name is Robert Sylvester Kelly.

Kelly's Chicago-based lawyer, Ed Genson, called the singer, who was not at the hearing, and told him the evidence was being thrown out.

"I told him, 'Congratula-

tions.' He was very pleased," Genson said.

Kelly also faces 14 counts of child pornography charges in Chicago and has pleaded innocent. Those charges are not affected by Maloney's ruling. Last month, seven of the original 21 child pornography charges against Kelly in Chicago were dismissed.

Ron Toward, a member of Kelly's defense team, told Maloney the search warrant affidavit submitted by Polk County Detective Robert Mateo lacked the evidence

needed to form a legal basis for a search of Kelly's home.

Deputies had earlier found marijuana in a home Kelly rented for three business associates. They then sought a warrant to search the house where Kelly was staying nearby to look for drugs.

During an initial search for drugs Mateo said he observed video cameras and an "unusual" amount of adult pornography in a cabinet in a room marked "Private." The detective then sought a second search warrant to look

for child pornography.

The next day, Mateo was granted the warrant by Polk Circuit Court Judge Mary Catherine Green. Mateo returned to Kelly's home and wrote in a report that he examined one of the video cameras and scanned the images, finding several pictures of two women performing sex acts and other photos of Kelly in a sex act.

Toward said the affidavit Mateo submitted wasn't adequate because it was based on unspecified information

from Chicago authorities and no link was established between the discovery of marijuana and the presence of cameras and child pornography.

Thulberry later defended the detective's actions in seeking the warrant. "I don't think the sheriff's office could have done anything differently in the case," he said.

Kelly's hits include "I Believe I Can Fly," "Bump 'n' Grind," "Feelin' on Yo Booty" and "Your Body's Callin'."

Gravatt

(Continued from Page 2)

females to the department, but none appeared interested. One Black female considered joining but instead joined the U.S. Marshal's office.

"I sincerely believe that by having her on board will provide an avenue for other Black females to join the department," Brown said.

It's been more than 30 years since Brown worked to recruit African-American women to the police force. He was surprised it took more than three decades for it to become a reality.

"The efforts were made by me personally to attract Black females to the department, but for some reason they would decline the chance," Brown said. "The pay has increased substantially over the years, so we know it wasn't money. It could have possibly been not wanting to have to deal with the problems of today in law enforcement."

Brown was referring to what he called "disproportionate treatment" or inadequacies in opportunities offered to officers on the department because of race or gender. Gravatt said she hasn't experienced any cold shoulders. Instead, the department has proven to be a warm and friendly environment.

As a relatively new officer, in addition to her patrol duties, Gravatt works with the department's Crisis Intervention Team, supports the Peer-to-Peer Counseling program and one evening a week speaks at the Citizens Police Academy. Gravatt's plate is full.

Encouragement to get involved came from Dunn, who has been on the department 16 years. He has been involved. During his tenure, Dunn has worked undercover narcotics, SWAT, Internal Affairs and supervised patrol divisions. He said working for the department has been challenging and rewarding.

"Be fair and treat people right," Dunn told Gravatt. He is one of her biggest supporters, giving advice not found in textbooks. He made her aware of local Black police officers associations like NOBLE (National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives).

"She has an opportunity to blaze trails for other young women," Dunn said. "Her verbal skills are one of her biggest assets. The way she handles questions and her sincerity are just wonderful."

Gravatt beams when she talks about police work. The road to this point in her life was paved with sacrifice and hard work, including physical training, hours of study and cutting her hair to comply with department requirements.

With her hair pulled back at shoulder length, Gravatt is on her way, submerging herself in what she expects to blossom into a long-term, rewarding career. She has her sights set on becoming a psychologist with her focus being traumatized police officers.

"I love Las Vegas. I love my job," she said. "I've been here for five years, but it feels like two. Not many people can say that, so I'm happy," Gravatt said, adding that she often encourages women to follow in her footsteps not necessarily as a police officer but as a person who works doing something they love.



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