

Black leaders file suit vs. Texas D.A.

Waller County political dispute to be decided in court

HEMPSTEAD, Texas (AP) - Black leaders filed a federal lawsuit Tuesday against several White officials in Waller County, alleging "an extensive illegal reign of terror against African-American" officials.

One of the six plaintiffs, Justice of the Peace Dewayne Charleston, said District Attorney Oliver Kitzman sought to intimidate opponents after he lost a legal battle this year to keep students at historically Black Prairie View A&M University from voting in the county northwest of Houston.

The lawsuit accuses

Kitzman of trying to intimidate and harass the plaintiffs to keep them out of Waller County's political process. He made false claims against them, the suit says, in one case accusing Charleston of misreporting the hours he worked. The lawsuit says that although Charleston was cleared of the allegation Kitzman continues to try to indict him. Kitzman told The Associated Press Tuesday he had not seen the lawsuit but had heard about some of the allegations.

"It is absolutely, totally false," he said.

Attorney Grover Hankins,

who filed the lawsuit in Houston federal court, said Texas Gov. Rick Perry. Perry is also named because he holds the power to remove Kitzman from office.

Kathy Walt, a spokesperson for Perry, said she could not comment on the lawsuit because she hadn't seen it. But she added that Perry does not have the power to remove Kitzman because he didn't appoint him.

"The power to remove a district attorney rests with local citizens," Walt said.

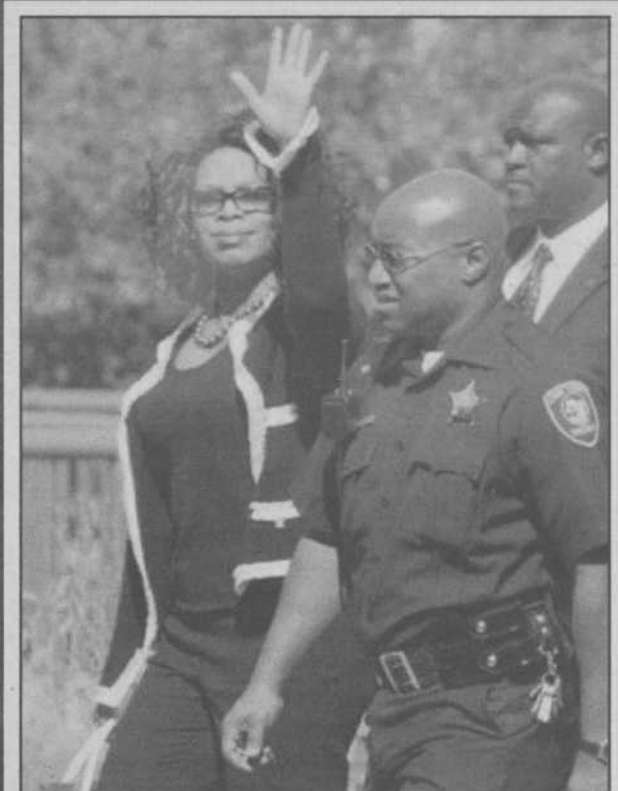
The lawsuit claims civil rights violations, conspiracy, malicious prosecution, inflic-

tion of emotional distress and libel.

It seeks unspecified damages and asks that the defendants be prevented from singling out Blacks or "arresting or permitting the arrest of any individual where there exists only the uncorroborated word of the district attorney."

Kitzman has said he returned to the county district attorney's office in January 2003 after decades as a judge because he thought his "services were needed."

"I thought it was not being run efficiently and that I could do better," he said.



TV host Oprah Winfrey waves as she arrives for jury duty at the Cook County Criminal Court Building in Chicago on Monday. She was picked for a murder trial.

Winfrey tabbed for jury duty in Chicago

CHICAGO (AP) - Oprah Winfrey was picked to serve on a jury at Cook County Criminal Court. Winfrey walked into the courthouse Monday through an alternate entrance to avoid crowds. But officials said once inside the courtroom, she wouldn't receive any special treatment.

The talk-show host had told reporters she didn't think she'd be picked because she's too opinionated. But Winfrey added that if she were selected, "I'm just hoping it doesn't take longer than a week because I've got shows to do."

After Winfrey was selected for a murder trial, Judge James B. Linn was asked how she was picked.

"This was a straight-up jury selection," he said.

Last week, Cook County sheriff's office spokeswoman Sally Daly said Winfrey was among some 300 prospective jurors scheduled to appear at court Monday.

Texas children found in Nigeria orphanage

HOUSTON (AP) - Seven Texas children were discovered abandoned at a Nigerian orphanage, suffering from disease and malnutrition, and have been brought back to the United States.

Child Protective Services, which received emergency custody of the children Monday, is investigating accusations that the children's adoptive mother abandoned them in Nigeria in October and later went to work in Iraq as a private contractor.

The Houston woman, whose identity was not released, allegedly left them at a Nigerian school that later discharged them for nonpayment of tuition.

The children returned to Texas on Friday.

Three of the children were hospitalized with malaria and later released, said CPS spokeswoman Estella Olguin.

They all were thin and covered with mosquito bites and scars, officials said.

The three boys and four girls, ranging from 8 to 16, were discovered in late July by a visiting Texas mission-

ary, who notified House Majority Leader Tom DeLay and Sen. John Cornyn, both of Texas, said Stuart Roy, a spokesman for DeLay.

The lawmakers contacted CPS and the U.S. State Department, along with the ambassador in Nigeria, and the children were given papers allowing re-entry into the United States.

Now, they are living in two Houston foster homes.

"It's horrible, horrible," Olguin said.

"I haven't seen anything like it. Seven children fend for themselves in a foreign country where they have no family members."

Four of the siblings were adopted from Houston in 1996, followed by a set of three siblings from Dallas in 2001, according to authorities who interviewed the children and their adoptive mother.

The woman took all the children in October to Nigeria, where a relative of her fiance lived.

The children were enrolled in school and the mother returned to Houston about 30

days later. She went to work in Iraq in April.

But the children were removed from school because payment for their tuition stopped.

Nigerian child-protection authorities found the children in a wooden shack, malnourished and sick, and moved them to an orphanage in late July.

A minister from a San Antonio church alerted lawmakers after he overheard the children speaking with American accents and talked to them.

The minister said the children told him the name of their adoptive mother and said they liked the Houston Rockets.

In a final effort to prove they were Americans, the seven children stood shoulder to shoulder and sang the national anthem, San Antonio pastor John Hagee said.

The children wanted pizza after returning to Texas on Friday, Olguin said.

They're saying: "God bless America. We love America," she said.

She said their adoptive mother was at the hearing Monday at which a state district judge ordered the children to be returned to CPS custody.

State officials will determine whether criminal charges will be filed against the adoptive mother, who is due back in court Aug. 26.

Law Firm of Timothy C. Williams

ATTORNEY AT LAW



TIMOTHY C. WILLIAMS

Timothy Williams is a member of the Nevada & Illinois State Bar, practicing primarily in personal injury cases.

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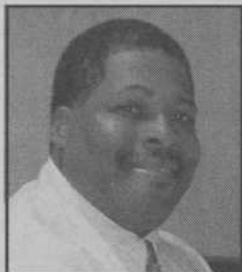
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844 E. Sahara Avenue
Las Vegas, Nevada

Neither the State Bar of Nevada nor any agency of the State Bar has certified any lawyer identified here as a specialist or expert. Anyone considering a lawyer should independently investigate the lawyer's credentials and ability.

John T. Stephens III



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