

# Jackson not in clear—civil lawsuit possible

SANTA MARIA, Calif. (AP) - Part of Michael Jackson's winning legal strategy was convincing jurors that his accuser's family intended to get rich by suing the pop star for a cash bonanza. Whether that happens to Jackson may soon be clear. When a celebrated criminal case ends without a conviction, it is often not the end of the defendant's legal troubles — O.J. Simpson, Kobe Bryant and Robert Blake are just a few celebrities who have been hit with civil suits.

Civil suits have their appeal: Victory can result in monetary damages and a

sense of vindication, and such cases are easier to win because the burden of proof is lower. In Jackson's case, he already has a history of paying millions of dollars to make child molestation allegations go away. During Jackson's criminal trial — which ended Monday with the pop star being cleared of molesting a 13-year-old boy — defense attorney Thomas Mesereau Jr. told jurors that the accuser and his mother were "looking for a big payday" at the pop star's expense. The mother testified she did not plan a lawsuit and did not want "the devil's

money." She could still change her mind. The accuser's family has not spoken publicly since the verdict. The lawyer who appears most likely to file any civil suit, Los Angeles attorney Larry Feldman, did not immediately return a call Wednesday. Feldman represented a boy who received a multimillion-dollar settlement after making molestation accusations against Jackson in 1993. Feldman is also the attorney the accuser's family approached after their close relationship with Jackson ended. One key difference in a civil trial that would

benefit the family is the lower standard of proof required.

While all 12 jurors in the criminal case would have had to find Jackson guilty "beyond a reasonable doubt," in a civil case plaintiffs must simply prove their case "by a preponderance of the evidence." Also, only nine of the 12 must agree.

For those and other reasons, Jackson will have to be well-prepared for another trial, said Carl Douglas, a lawyer who has represented Jackson in past civil matters and a member of the "Dream Team" that won Simpson's

murder acquittal. "He has to send a message to the world: 'If you're going to come after Michael Jackson, you have to be ready for a war,'" he said.

Another key difference in civil litigation is that the accuser's family could force Jackson to testify both in depositions and at a trial, said Daniel Petrocelli, the attorney who sued Simpson for the family of slaying victim Ronald Goldman. Jackson exercised his right not to testify at his criminal trial. But in a civil case, "if he refused to take the stand, there would be a default entered," and

Jackson would be held liable for damages, Petrocelli said.

At the same time, family members would face even more stinging attacks on their credibility than they did during the criminal trial, where Jackson's lawyers worked to bring out the mother's history of welfare fraud and other possible scams.

"The defense was able to portray the mother as greedy, manipulative, grasping," said John Nockleby, director of the civil justice program at Loyola University Law School.

"If she is the plaintiff, her (See Jackson, Page 4)

# Leader seeks strong Black-Latino trade coalition

By Leslie Jones McCloud  
Special to Sentinel-Voice  
CHICAGO (NNPA) - One month after Mexican President Vicente Fox angered some African-American activists with his comments about Black workers, the Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr. announced that he will lead a trade mission to America's neighbor in order to seek business for Black companies.

Emphasizing the need for a strong Black-Latino alliance in the U.S., Jackson was joined by Carlos de Icaza, Mexico's ambassador to the U.S., in making the announcement.

Jackson likened today's goal to that of the relationship between the Dr. Martin

Luther King and Cesar Chavez. "We must build a world class bridge. For too long we have had shared interest but we have not effectively built this strategic alliance," Jackson said.

Part of Jackson's plan includes getting African-American children to learn Spanish and increasing the number of Latino children who speak English.

Additional issues include teaching Black and Latino children nonviolence and to avoid gang warfare; cultural exchanges; organizing religious leaders from both ethnic groups; and fighting for affirmative action.

But the most critical issues that Fox has focused on

have been the illegal immigration reforms being tossed about on Capitol Hill. Jackson said he is willing to work with Fox and other Latino leaders to help craft a sensible immigration policy that isn't as harsh to undocumented workers.

"The challenge is to build a legal way for people to migrate, so people can come back and forth," de Icaza said at a news conference, and later at the business luncheon at the 34th annual Rainbow/PUSH conference.

He said he will work with Jackson and a Black-Latino coalition to solve many issues that the nation's two largest minorities have in common.

"I am here to show respect

and appreciation to African-Americans and Operation PUSH. There is no reason (we) cannot be friends and brothers. (African-Americans) have a great history in the United States, with (civil rights)," he said.

He emphasized the importance of the "human dimension" in a relationship with African-Americans. One area that the two groups can work on in the short-term is trade.

"We have with the United States, the biggest trade agreement on earth. We buy American goods more than Japan and the United Kingdom combined," de Icaza said. "We have trade to protect."

Rev. James T. Meeks, a

state senator and vice president of PUSH, brought humor and insight to the somewhat strained relationship African-Americans and Latinos have shared over the past few weeks.

He compared it to the relationship between the former Los Angeles Lakers teammates Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant.

"Without cooperation, we will be at home like Shaq and Kobe — sitting at home watching others play," he said to a laughing audience at the business luncheon.

Jackson also said a strong Black-Latino alliance can play a role in the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act in 2007.

"The result of the Voting

Rights Act created a historic rise in African-American and Latino elected officials around the nation," Jackson said.

He said the alliance is timely because combined, African-Americans and Latinos make up more than a majority of the populations in the country's largest 75 cities.

He said, "When we work together we can finish the unfinished business of our movement, the constitutional right to vote, the constitutional rights to health care and education and the right to organize and breathe free."

Leslie Jones McCloud writes for the Chicago Defender.

## Politics

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"I understand that the real work is organizing at the grassroots level. There is no substitute for putting yourself in front of another person's door, knock on that door, and introduce yourself to your neighbor. We have to engage ourselves as human beings because we have so much in common," he said.

"There's also the telephone and good old-fashioned shoe leather. That's what grassroots organizing is all about," he further explained.

Cobb added that the mainstream media often "manufacture consent around a whole host of issues. I read everything in the media with a jaundiced eye," he said.

"No newspaper tells that we are waging an illegitimate war in Iraq over oil. We are living in a country where the majority does not have access to affordable health care — that is a crime. The majority of people are working more and more hours for less and less pay," Cobb said.

"There are a litany of problems, [and] the big corporate media continue to sugarcoat that," he pointed out.


He doesn't see himself traveling the country, speaking on voting rights and other current issues as some sort of a 21st century Don Quixote, either. People are listening to his message.

"There are exciting pockets happening everywhere, and there is a growing awareness and a consensus that there is a genuine concern in this country," Cobb concluded. "I try to tell the truth as I see it."

Charles Hallman writes for the Minneapolis Spokesman-Recorder.

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