

# Rap mogul's laundering trial wrapping up

NEW YORK (AP) - A constellation of hip-hop stars gathered Wednesday for closing arguments in the trial of a top rap executive who prosecutors say laundered more than \$1 million in drug money for a notorious cocaine kingpin.

Irving Lorenzo, chief of the Murder Inc. label, and his brother Christopher knew Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff was a "a thug and a drug dealer, and they were helping him cover it up," Assistant U.S. Attorney Carolyn Pokorny said at the Lorenzos' racketeering trial.

Between signing autographs at the Brooklyn courthouse, Jay-Z, Ja Rule, Ashanti, Fat Joe and Russell Simmons took front-row seats in support of Irving Lorenzo, a music producer and entrepreneur known professionally as Irv Gotti.

"Poverty and ignorance is more of problem in our com-

munity than convicting our poets," Simmons told reporters outside court.

Defense attorney Gerald Shargel argued that the Lorenzo brothers were victims of guilt by association.

"There's nothing illegal about knowing a criminal, about socializing with a criminal, even doing business with a criminal, unless you commit a crime," Shargel said. "Irv and Chris Lorenzo committed no crime."

The government claims Murder Inc., home to platinum-selling artists Ashanti and Ja Rule, struck an illicit deal with "one of the biggest, baddest, most dangerous drug lords in New York City," Pokorny told the jury.

McGriff allegedly funneled more than \$1 million in drug money through Murder Inc. in return for serving as the Lorenzos' protector and enforcer. A government



Murder Inc. owner Irving 'Irv Gotti' Lorenzo, right, and his brother Christopher, enter a Brooklyn federal court on Wednesday in New York. Lorenzo faces laundering charges.

witness who once worked at the label testified that he saw a "huge amount" of money delivered in shopping bags

and a shoe box in 2000.

Murder Inc. cut tens of thousands of dollars in checks for sham corporations

controlled by McGriff, including a movie company that produced a straight-to-video film called "Crime Partners 2000," Pokorny said. The label also covered his expenses as he traveled around the country masquerading as an entertainment executive, she added.

The defense has portrayed the Lorenzo brothers — both

charged with money laundering — as legitimate businessmen who made it big adopting a gangster persona and starting Murder Inc. with Def Jam, a subsidiary of Universal Music.

They decided to invest their own money in McGriff's movie because he was an old friend from their Queens neighborhood, Shargel said.

"Even if Supreme McGriff was the biggest drug dealer in the world, and even if 'Crime Partners' was the worst film in the history of American entertainment, there is nothing illegal about giving backing to a movie," he said.

The brothers are free on \$1 million bail. McGriff, who faces murder charges, will have a separate trial.

The judge barred prosecutors from introducing evidence that the Lorenzos knew about an alleged plot by McGriff to shoot 50 Cent amid the rapper's ongoing war of words with Ja Rule. Investigators believe 50 Cent, who famously survived the shooting, had angered the drug lord by writing the song "Ghetto Koran" about him.

## D.C. sites proposed for Black museum

By Shantella Sherman  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON, D.C. (NNPA) - About 50 D.C. residents braved the rain to take part in a Nov. 16 town hall meeting at the Smithsonian to assess four possible sites for the new National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Scheduled to open in late

2006, the museum is the latest in a succession of museums and cultural centers proposed for the Washington Mall.

With continued growth in the city, there was some concern about already existing overcrowding at national landmarks, but legislation directed the Smithsonian Board of Regents to select one of four locations speci-

fied by Congress for the museum.

The Regents' decision will be based, in part, on the results of an engineering study and other factors, including public sentiment.

On hand at Baird Auditorium were broadcast journalist Renee Poussaint, NMAHC Founding Director Lonnie Bunch and Eleanor Holmes Norton, D.C. Del.

Norton said all of the sites seem well-researched and emphasized how essential it is that the community remains involved in the museum's completion.

"I was one of the original composers of the legislation to get this museum built, and year after year, we fought to get it through the House and Senate. But this fight began

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## Study links teen health, early stress

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) - Stress from abuse or neglect early in life may be linked to increased mental health problems during adolescence, according to a new study based on animal research.

Children who have suffered abuse, neglect or loss of a parent have an increased risk of behavioral and emotional problems, including attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, anxiety, depression, suicide and drug abuse, according to Oregon Health & Science University researchers.

The study was based on rhesus macaque monkeys that were exposed to a stressful event before they were raised in a stable family environment.

"By studying a species that has responses to early-life stresses that are very similar to young children, we can get a developmental picture that is much clearer than in

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### HARRAH'S HELPS HEALTH

Harrah's Entertainment recently donated \$50,000 to Community Partners for Better Health, whose mission is to empower minorities to prevent and treat chronic disease. L to R: Fred Keeton, Harrah's vice president of external affairs and chief diversity officer, Community Partners for Better Health chairwoman Celeste Folmar and Dr. Larry Gamell, program officer for Healthy Hearts, part of the University of Nevada, Reno's Cooperative Extension program.

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