

New Orleans officers indicted in beating retired teacher

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Two former New Orleans police officers who were caught on videotape beating a retired teacher were indicted on felony charges that could send them to prison for years.

The officers — Robert Evangelist and Lance Schilling — were fired after the Oct. 8 beating of Robert Davis, 64, was captured on video by an Associated Press Television News crew covering the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Evangelist, 36, faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted of false imprisonment

while armed with a dangerous weapon and second-degree battery. Schilling, 29, could spend five years behind bars if convicted of second-degree battery.

"I hope this will result in something good for our city," said Davis, who spent more than an hour Wednesday testifying about the beating, which left him lying on the street, hands cuffed and blood flowing from his head and face.

A third officer, Stewart Smith, 50, was charged with simple battery. If convicted, he faces up to 6 months in jail and a \$500 fine.

Smith was suspended for 120 days but remains on the force.

Evangelist and Schilling were charged with battery against Davis, and Smith was charged with battery against a reporter.

A telephone call Wednesday to an attorney representing Evangelist, Schilling and Smith for comment was not returned.

Police Superintendent Warren Riley said in a statement late Wednesday that Smith would be reassigned to desk duty pending the outcome of his trial.

After the grand jury appearance, Davis

told reporters that he still has headaches and back problems. He had to interrupt his testimony to take medicine.

The retired elementary school teacher said he had returned to the storm-struck city to check on his property and was looking for a place to buy cigarettes in the French Quarter when police grabbed him.

The videotape shows an officer hitting Davis at least four times on the head. Davis twisted and flailed as he was dragged to the ground. One officer knelt Davis and punched him twice.

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eled the main sanctuary of his ground. But the Redeemed Church believes Christianity here has become a lifestyle, not a transforming way of life, and they feel obliged to rescue the people who brought them the faith in the first place.

"There is a vibrancy in Africa," Akinkoye said. "We are offering that gift back to America."

Other Nigerian pastors are following close behind.

Sunday Adelaja, who founded the Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations in Kiev, Ukraine in 1994, has built the congregation into a 30,000-member megachurch with 15 offshoots in this country. He plans to open 250 U.S. congregations within a decade.

Jonathan Owhe, who became a pastor after emigrating to New York, started Christ the Rock World Restoration Church in 1995 in Brooklyn, then branched out to Tennessee and Georgia — then overseas to Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan and other countries.

"It's globalization happening to the church," said the Rev. Ted Haggard, president of the U.S. National Association of Evangelicals. He so admires the success of African pastors that he mod-

ing every worshipper a worker, teaching classes for children, holding events for singles — even cleaning. At one U.S. parish, the pastor has given the title "Holy Police Commissioner" to the churchgoer who manages the parking lot.

"They are amazingly sophisticated," said Elias Bongmba, a religion professor at Rice University in Houston. "They know how to organize."

Still, however effective they are at administration, Redeemed Church leaders know their future here depends heavily on something harder to control: their public image. With their mandate to save all peoples, they worry they'll be dismissed as a "foreign" church.

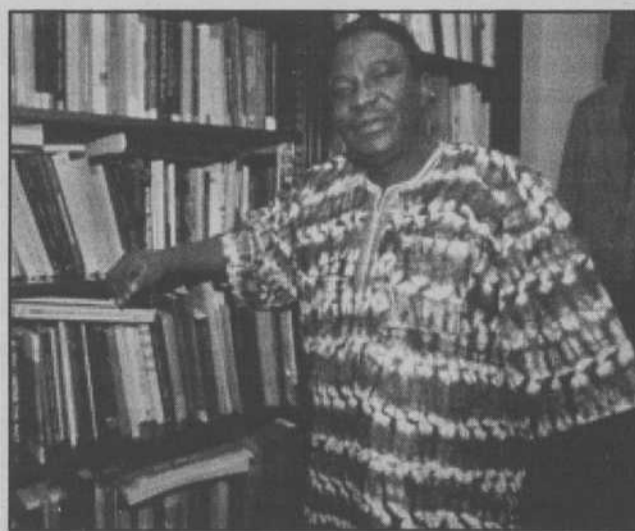
John Garner, a native Texan who sold the church the first parcel of land for its Floyd headquarters, said local residents have been asking him "about that cult coming in." Garner, who is White and previously belonged to a Baptist congregation, is now a member of the church, and his wife, Marti, is an assistant pastor who leads a new congregation on the site.

"People don't understand what's going on," said John Garner, standing in the first new building on the property — a sleek conference center for 1,000 people rising incongruously amid grain silos and barren fields. "People don't realize they're Christians just like them."

Yet, even as newcomers, Redeemed Church pastors are already carrying an American burden.

U.S. churches remain largely segregated by race — and the Nigerian church fears being drawn into those divisions. Many of their parish websites and fliers feature photos of Whites and Hispanics, along with Blacks, even though the church right now is overwhelmingly African.

"They are going out and



Jacob Olupona, a professor at the University of California, Davis, compiles data on African congregations in America.

bringing people in, and the way they treat people will keep bringing people in," said Katie Bendorf, a 26-year-old mother of three who was one of the few Whites at a recent service at Jesus House, a major Redeemed Church parish in Chicago.

A music minister invited Bendorf to attend last December and she now plays violin with the church band. "Everyone knew my name by the second time I came," she said.

In fact, American Christians looking beyond ethnic differences will find something familiar. The Redeemed Church is Pentecostal — a movement that began 100 years ago at a downtown Los Angeles revival and is now the fastest-growing wing of Christianity worldwide.

Pentecostals, or charismatics, are biblical conservatives known for ecstatic, spirit-filled worship, speaking in tongues and a belief in miracles and supernatural battles with evil. Missionaries and evangelists from the United States and elsewhere spread the movement in Africa throughout the 20th century.

The connection is clear at Jesus House in Chicago, where Sunday services fit squarely within the mainstream of American Christianity.

The carpeted sanctuary,

regularly visit Africa. Redeemed Church leaders are advising all their U.S. parishes to consult Warren's book "The Purpose Driven Church."

"There is an immense move of American pastors going over there and forming church relationships," said Tony Carnes, head of the Research Institute for New Americans, who studies African churches in the New York area. "These pastors in Africa have already read American writing. They have a common vocabulary."

The Redeemed Church is counting on it. As soon as their Dallas TV studio is completed, they'll invite American pastors to preach on the air. Bleachers are being built to bring in a local audience. If the TV venture succeeds, they plan a companion Spanish-language network. Their Internet radio station is already broadcasting from the Irving office. And Akinkoye, the network chief executive, is preparing for Dove Media to produce its own movies in America, just like the church does in Nigeria. All of this is in service to the goal their international leader, Adebayo, has set for the church: "At least one member of the church in every household in the whole world."

"A society that will not embrace the Holy Spirit of God is encouraging satanic influences," Akinkoye said. "We are not introducing Jesus Christ to America, but this society has become a post-Christian society and that is a dangerous thing."



Enoch Adebayo pastors for the Redeemed Church, which has more than 200 parishes, from Chicago to Washington.





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