

Death incites activists in Louisville

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) - The death of Anthony Graham — and what happened in the days after his murder — has roiled the Black community.

On March 31, Graham, a Black man, was dragged seven city blocks by a car driven by a White man. The car then struck a brick wall and Graham's head hit a utility pole, killing him.

The driver, Thomas Sewastynowicz, fled the scene but turned himself in the next day.

He was permitted to stay out of jail while awaiting trial — even though he was charged with murder.

Sewastynowicz's release has underscored a perception that Jefferson County's judicial system doesn't always give Blacks a fair shake, and findings from a recent report appear to support some of the complaints.

A local commission investigating racial bias in the court system issued a report that said Blacks make up a larger portion of the county's jail population than Whites, even though more Whites are booked into the jail.

Community activists say mistrust of the city's justice system has festered since the fatal shooting of a young Black man by a White detective here two years ago.

Prosecutors say Sewastynowicz, 49, is out of jail partly because his attorneys "were successful in improperly getting the facts out there before the community and in giving the impression that Mr. Sewastynowicz was an innocent victim."

But local Black activists say Sewastynowicz still should not be out of jail with a pending murder charge.

"I think he should be in jail right now with a big mil-

lion-dollar bond on him or something to keep him stationary," said Graham's father, Dr. Toney Graham, a family physician in Lake City, S.C. "I'll bet you if it would've been my son, it would have been a million dollars on him."

He has traveled to Louisville for all of Sewastynowicz's court proceedings.

The commission report investigating bias found that Black males spent an average of a week longer in jail after they were booked, according to data taken from the county's correctional facilities during the 2004-2005 fiscal year.

The study took a sample of offenders arrested on cocaine possession in Jefferson County from 1999 to 2002 and found that Black offenders were incarcerated in 31.6 percent of cases, compared

with 18.4 percent for non-Black offenders.

The 2004 fatal shooting of 19-year-old Michael Newby by officer MacKenzie Mattingly during a botched drug bust brought simmering racial tensions in the community to a head.

Newby, who was Black, was shot three times in the back, and Mattingly, who is White, was later fired from the department. A jury cleared him of all criminal charges, causing an outcry in the Black community.

Newby was the seventh Black man killed by police in five years in Louisville, a city of nearly 700,000, where Blacks make up about 20 percent of the population and 13 percent of the police force.

"You have never seen that level of unrest, you never seen that kind of level of anger, recently," said Christopher 2X, a local activist.

Denise Clayton, a Circuit Court judge in Jefferson County and a member of the commission, said the survey may appear to uncover racial bias, but that is actually not a factor in the disparities.

Clayton, who is Black, said the study found that White defendants are more likely to make bail partly because they tend to have more financial resources.

"I don't think the judges and trial commissioners are setting bond with race in mind," Clayton said. "But I certainly think there still is a distrust of the system by African-Americans, and certainly this kind of result could make individuals question whether or not they're given a fair shake or opportunity once they're here on the issue of bail."

The commission is currently examining the racial makeup of juries. Civil rights

activists have complained there are too few Blacks on juries and too many all-White juries.

Sewastynowicz, who declined to be interviewed, told police he had stopped to ask for directions when he encountered Graham near downtown Louisville.

He told police Graham reached inside his Nissan sedan, and Sewastynowicz drove away, according to a police report. Graham held on and was dragged for seven blocks.

But Graham's wallet was reportedly found inside Sewastynowicz's car, and Graham was not armed, according to court records filed by prosecutors.

Sewastynowicz's attorney, Don Major, said his client was freed from jail because he has cooperated with authorities and had "no history of violence whatsoever."

Politics

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Candidate Debbie Conway currently works as the Business Development Manager in the Finance Division for Clark County, supervising a staff of 4 employees and 11 consultants. She also works with 102 employers who mentor high school and college students under the Summer Business Institute program which she has coordinated for about ten years.

Her yearly operating budget is approximately \$3.5 million, and she has been employed with the county for 16 years.

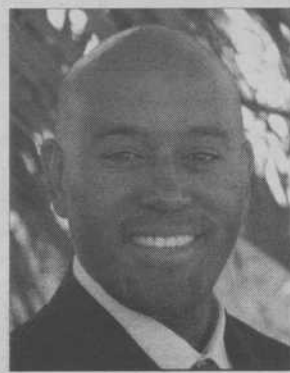
She has a master's in business administration, along with a bachelor's in business management.

Harvey and Conway have both established track records working in the community, and they spoke with the *Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice* to express their desire to serve in an elected office.

They were asked why they chose to run for the position of County Recorder.

Harvey stated: "Well, I am a type of person who believes that we serve a higher power. We all have our calling, and I believe that my calling is to serve the public. Customer service is very important to me, and when I was given the opportunity three years ago to come back into the Recorder's Office."

Harvey said he "thought about whether or not I should eventually run for this position."



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— Charles Harvey

He said his plan was actually to run during the next election, but stated "when certain events started to unfold in this office, I saw an opportunity and I saw a need for someone in this position with strong ethics and strong morals who was truly concerned with the public that we serve."

Answering the same question, Conway said, "Basically I saw an opportunity again to take things to the next level and be able to serve the public. I want to take into that office a fresh new perspective, a fresh new approach. I saw an opportunity to change some things."

She specified that she would "change how the different items that come through that office, documents... are recorded and helping to expedite that process. I saw this as a challenge, and as a project manager, I have a background in dealing with budgets, record keeping, and accounting practices, along with computerizing various techniques. So, with my back-

ground, experience and expertise I wanted to put them to good use for the public."

The Recorder's office is now experiencing some image problems dealing with integrity, honesty and upholding the public trust, how would you go about restoring confidence to that office and the employees working there?

Harvey said, "This has been an unfortunate situation, and none of us here asked to be in this situation, but unfortunately we are. What I have done is taken extra steps to communicate and have an open forum with the staff, where they can come in and express any anxiety or feelings of depression, or any other feelings that they have. I try to keep them focused on coordinating and serving the public that comes through our doors."

He added, "This office has always functioned well due to the dedication of our employees, and I stress to them that we need to continue doing so. Let the court handle

its responsibility, and let us continue to maintain the integrity that we always have had in fulfilling our job and serving the public."

Conway stated, "I feel that integrity matters. Not only would I go in to do my job to the best of my ability, I would encourage the staff to continue doing what they do best. Be honest in serving the public and avoid the controversy that presently exists, because you are not the reason that created this controversy. Continue working

with a mindset that you are there as a public servant to serve the public."

Conway said she would utilize her leadership skills to "empower the employees through a number of approaches that would expedite the recording and filing of documents in that office along with seeking their input to develop projects that will enhance the office." In addition, she would, "become a team member, letting them know that we are a team working hand in hand to

move things forward."

Other candidates for the non-partisan Clark County Recorder position are: Alan Castle Sr., Kevin Child, Moshe Comforti, Richard Deeds, Jim Edwards, Gil Eisner, Paul Marra and Bob Spencer.

Three of the candidates are registered Democrats — Castle, Conway and Spencer; five are registered Republicans — Child, Deeds, Edwards, Harvey and Marra, and Comforti and Eisner are Independent.



IT'S ABOUT TIME

Supporters of Presidential candidate Pierre Pay Pay, head of the Coalition of Democratic Congolese look on during a rally at Bunia, Democratic Republic of Congo, on Wednesday. Sunday's vote in the heart of Africa puts one of its largest, most populous and potentially wealthiest countries among those that have embraced democracy, however fitfully, in recent years.