

L.A. activist escapes charges

By Gene C. Johnson Jr.
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LOS ANGELES (NNPA) - Nation of Islam Minister Tony Muhammad said he still plans on pursuing a lawsuit against the Los Angeles Police Department, despite City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo's decision not to file criminal charges against him following an incident last year involving LAPD officers.

"The lawsuit is not just about me, but it also says we want policy changes," Muhammad said. "The LAPD should be held responsible for the actions of their officers, because their officers are wrong."

Muhammad has yet to file a lawsuit against the LAPD in Superior Court, said Allan Parachini, a court spokesperson. He was arrested on Aug. 25, 2005, on suspicion of resisting arrest and obstructing an officer. Two of Muhammad's bodyguards were arrested for obstructing the police officers' efforts to arrest him.

Delgadillo recently announced he would not file charges against Muhammad.

"I believe it's a sense of relief for Minister Tony," said community activist Najee Ali. "It will allow him to keep being a service to the community, now that that cloud isn't hanging over his head."

Muhammad was arrested



A man holds a photo of L.A. activist Tony Muhammad. The Nation of Islam leader claims he was roughed up by cops.

in the Hyde Park area, where many had congregated for a candlelight vigil for Nahum Beaird, 21, who was shot and killed in a gang-related shooting the night before. Many neighbors were angry with paramedics who responded to the shooting, saying the paramedics ignored signs that Beaird was still alive to attend to two others who were wounded in the attack.

During the vigil, police requested that two vehicles reportedly owned by the Nation of Islam be moved. Muhammad and his bodyguards "became very belligerent and uncooperative" after the request, according to

LAPD Assistant Chief Jim McDonnell.

The LAPD subsequently released an audio tape of the events leading up to the arrest. On the tape an officer could be heard telling someone, apparently Muhammad, not to "walk behind me, don't walk behind me."

Muhammad replied: "I'm not doing nothing. I'm not going nowhere."

When the officer told him to "back up," Muhammad responded by shouting, "Make me."

The transcript ends with the officer calling for additional units and the dispatcher asking for clarification on what kind of help is

needed.

Announcing his decision not to file charges against Muhammad, Delgadillo said: "After conducting an extensive factual investigation and a thorough legal analysis, and in accordance with the recommendation of the prosecutors in my office, I have concluded that there is insufficient evidence to file charges against Minister Muhammad and his two security guards in this matter."

After receiving the police department's request for filing charges, Delgadillo said, the city attorney's prosecutors worked with police detectives to conduct a thorough investigation of the incident, which included a review of all available evidence and three visits to the scene of the incident.

"They had to consider a variety of different factors before making a decision," said Andre Birotte, the inspector general for the city's Police Commission. "I know the city attorney weighed this case thoroughly and comprehensively and made a decision that was appropriate."

Gene C. Johnson Jr. writes for WAVE Newspapers.

Convicted racist sues old lawyer

CHICAGO (AP) - A White supremacist serving a 40-year prison sentence for seeking to have a federal judge murdered has filed a malpractice lawsuit against his former attorney.

A jury convicted Matthew Hale in April 2004 of soliciting his security chief, who was working as an FBI informant, to kill U.S. District Judge Joan Humphrey Lefkow.

Hale alleged in a lawsuit filed Wednesday in Cook County Circuit Court that his lead defense attorney, Thomas Durkin, "committed numerous acts and omissions that fell beneath a reasonable standard of care."

He is seeking \$30 million in damages, according to the lawsuit.

Durkin told the *Chicago Tribune* that he had not yet seen the lawsuit.

"I don't believe it's worthy of a comment," he said. "I don't intend to dignify it."

Hale alleges in the lawsuit that Durkin charged Hale's father legal fees for services that never were performed. He also claims that Durkin improperly excluded White jurors and worked to get Blacks on the jury, which worked against his case.

The jury was made up of six Blacks, five Whites and a Hispanic.

Prosecutors said Hale was angry at Lefkow because of a ruling she made against his White supremacist organization.

In 2002, she ordered Hale's group to stop using the name World Church of the Creator because the words were trademarked by a religious group. The judge never was attacked. Her husband and mother were killed in her home the following year by a man who had no relation to the Hale case.

ACLU claims Black mayor practicing racial profiling

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) - The national American Civil Liberties Union recently accused the city's Black mayor of civil rights violations, including racial profiling, in his crusade to stem crime in Mississippi's capital city.

The accusations against Mayor Frank Melton and police are based on complaints from people who say they were pulled over on the basis of their race and searched without probable cause, the ACLU's national racial profiling coordinator, King Downing, said at a news conference.

"For me to leave my office and come into one of the states means that there is a very serious problem," said Downing, who is based in New York. "There are problems here that it's going to take the attention of the nation in order to solve."

Downing said the mayor's race should make him "more sensitive to the problems this is creating."

However, Melton said in an interview Tuesday that he wasn't interested in the ACLU's complaints against him or the police, and denied he had violated anyone's civil rights. "We have 26 people that have been killed in Jackson this year. We have 300,000 people killed across America each year. The majority of them are African-American, and

it's time to do something different," Melton said. "I want to know what the ACLU wants to do besides criticize."

Melton took office last July after winning 88 percent of the vote on a tough-on-crime platform.

Melton declared a state of emergency last month to attack the city's escalating crime problem, basically adopting a stricter curfew for teenagers and homeless people. He also continued his practice of riding with police officers on patrol or at roadblocks.

The city's population of 184,256 is nearly 71 percent Black, and 23.5 percent live below the poverty level.

Since his election, federal authorities have told him to quit packing his pistol on commercial airline flights, Mississippi Attorney General Jim Hood told him to stop wearing police gear, and Faye Peterson, the district attorney in Jackson, has said the mayor was breaking the law by impersonating a police officer.

Melton criticized the ACLU's plan to hold meetings in Jackson to inform residents of their rights if they're stopped by police.

"I hope they don't obstruct justice and give people false information because if they do, then we'll be focusing on them and we'll come after them," Melton said.

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