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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"



The casket of Washington Redskins safety Sean Taylor is wheeled into the Pharmed Arena at Florida International University prior to a funeral in Miami on Monday.

Taylor funeral used to stump for gun control

Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Thousands filed into the Florida International University Arena Monday to mourn the tragic death of Washington Redskins star safety Sean Taylor.

He died in a Florida hospital after he was shot in the leg during a break-in at his Miami home Nov. 28. Four men are charged with his killing.

"Even champions live in danger. Not all of us are safe in our own house," said Rev. Jesse Jackson, among the speakers at the funeral.

"Our American house is on fire. We've accepted violence as the norm. It must be rejected."

Jackson has fought for stricter gun laws

over the past year. He has called for the renewal of the Brady bill, which would ban assault weapons and place restrictions on the sale of other firearms.

"One day it's Columbine. One day it's Virginia Tech," Jackson said. "Now it's Sean Taylor. We're slow learners. We're in a hole, looking for a shovel when we need a rope. We need a new game plan. We need a stronger defense... We're all the safety now. NFL players, you must play the safety between your community and violence now. If we learn from his death, we've saved many a touchdown. In your living and dying you still inspire us to win the big game."

Meanwhile, over the weekend, Jason (See Funeral, Page 12)

Jena Six defendant pleads to charges

By Valencia Muhammad
Special to Sentinel-Voice

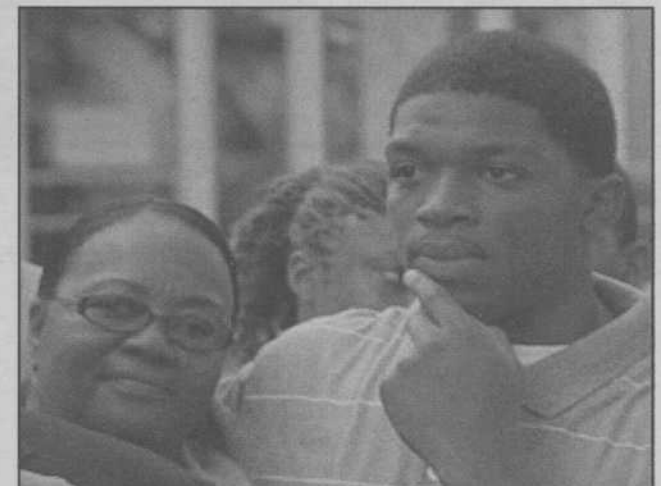
WASHINGTON (NNPA)

- Mychal Bell, the lead defendant in the high profile Jena Six case, has pleaded guilty to second-degree battery and agreed to serve 18 months in juvenile custody. He could, however, be released within six months.

In a plea agreement this week with the prosecution, Bell, one of six Black defendants accused of beating a White schoolmate following a series of racially charged incidents, would receive credit for time served, the LaSalle Parish District Attorney's office said.

Bell, 17, is currently serving 18 months in juvenile custody for violating parole on a previous juvenile offense. He would receive credit for the time he spent in custody early this year awaiting trial and the time he spent in lockup after he was convicted as an adult by an all-White jury of felony assault in the case.

An appellate court ruled that Bell, who was 16 at the time of the assault, should not have been tried as an adult and ordered his release earlier this year. He was sent



Mychal Bell has agreed to plead to second-degree battery.

back into custody shortly afterwards for violating probation.

Bell's attorney, Robert Nowell, said he advised Bell to accept the plea bargain because the district attorney's office had "overwhelming evidence to convict him."

Louis Grandison Scott, Bell's lead attorney, said he told Bell he was prepared to take the case "all the way through," however, he thought the judge would probably convict Bell and sentence him to more than 18 months.

Even if they had won an appeal of the conviction, Scott said, Bell would have already have served more than the 18 months in the plea bargain.

Bell has been the most visible of six defendants being tried for allegedly viciously attacking a White classmate, the culmination of a number of racially charged run ins that began over a tree on a Jena, La., school campus.

The tree had been claimed by White students as theirs, and after a number of Black students had gathered at the tree, the White students hung nooses from the tree as a symbolic gesture.

A number of racially charged encounters between the Black and White students ensued, culminating in the fight. Civil rights activists and others charged racism

after only the Black students were charged while White students, one who was stopped while carrying a shotgun, were let go.

Bill Furlow, spokesman for the LaSalle Parish District Attorney, said Bell's plea ends his involvement in the case.

"It's over," he said.

Under the terms of the plea agreement, Bell agreed to several conditions:

- He admits to second degree battery, which would be a felony punishable by up to five years in prison were it in adult court.

- He is ordered to serve 18 months in the custody of the Office of Youth Development, receiving credit for time already served.

- He pays a pro rata share of restitution to the Barker family for medical costs not covered by insurance.

- Court costs will be paid by him.

- He is required to testify truthfully in the cases of any of the five co-defendants that go to trial.

According to Furlow, the district attorney will offer the same plea to the remaining defendants.

LaSalle Parish District Attorney Reed Walters issued a statement following the agreement.

"I am pleased to have reached a resolution of this case that is fair to the victim,

(See Guilty, Page 3)

King injured in California shooting

(AP) - Rodney King — whose videotaped beating by Los Angeles police officers in 1991 led to race riots that devastated the city — has been shot and wounded in California, according to recent reports.

King, 42, was treated in the hospital for non life-threatening injuries following the incident in the Los Angeles suburb of San Bernardino, local media reported.

Police quoted by the Los Angeles Times on the paper's website said they were still attempting to establish the circumstances surrounding



RODNEY KING

the shooting.

Rialto Police sergeant Don Lewis said King had called officers late Wednesday to tell them he had been shot before returning home.

"We sent a couple of officers out to his address here in Rialto, but he didn't really tell us a whole lot other than he'd been shot," Lewis said.

"He took some pellets to his face, back and upper torso... It looked like birdshot, looked like long-distance shot."

King rose to national fame over 16 years ago after he was beaten by baton-wielding Los Angeles police following a high-speed car chase. Four officers involved went on trial the following year for use of excessive force but were acquitted, sparking the devastating

1992 Los Angeles riots that left more than 50 people dead and caused around \$1 billion in damage.

Since the events that catapulted him into the spotlight, King has had several brushes with the law.

He was arrested in 2005 for making threats to kill his daughter and his daughter's mother after the two women got into an argument with his then-girlfriend.

He was also arrested in 2003 for allegedly punching a girlfriend. He had also pleaded guilty to reckless driving after crashing into a house with his car.