

O.J.'s team can't question jurors

LAS VEGAS (AP) — O.J. Simpson's lawyers lost a bid Friday to question prospective jurors in his armed-robbery trial about what they know and think about the former football star. Clark County District Court Judge Jackie Glass also rejected the lawyers' attempt to use a long pretrial questionnaire to gauge how those in the jury pool might respond to defense strategies.

Simpson, Charles Ehrlich and Clarence "C.J." Stewart face kidnapping and other charges on suspicion of robbing sports memorabilia dealers in a Las Vegas hotel room in September.

Defense lawyers are concerned about seating an impartial jury because of Simpson's celebrity — as an NFL Hall of Famer and the acquitted defendant in the Los Angeles slaying of his ex-wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend, Ron Goldman.

"There's people probably out there, judge, that believe Mr. Simpson doesn't have right to be out on the street, much less own property," defense lawyer Gabriel Grasso said.

"The jurors, basically, know a decent amount about my client before I open my mouth," he said.

Grasso also argued to quiz jurors about two possible defense strategies without saying what the questions would be. None of the questions in the questionnaire have been made public.

One question would have dealt with Simpson believing items he and several other men took from two memorabilia dealers belonged to him. The other would have addressed Simpson being present but not the orchestrator of the event.

The judge removed both questions. She allowed 76 others — and possibly one more — if defense lawyers and prosecutors agree to the wording before another pretrial status hearing July 31.

Lawyers said last month they were considering 115 questions. Many questions the judge accepted have multiple parts, they said.

Glass called the questionnaire the longest she has handled in her more than five years on the bench. She said she wanted it completed in time to hand out in August to 400 or more prospective jurors and expedite what both sides expect will be a contentious jury selection.

"This jury selection is not going to go on and on," she said. "We're looking for jurors for all of the defendants and the state that can be fair and impartial."

The judge also rejected another request to separate Simpson's trial from co-defendants Ehrlich and Stewart.

Simpson, Ehrlich and Stewart did not attend the hearing. Each has pleaded not guilty to all charges, including kidnapping, armed robbery and assault with a deadly weapon on allegations they robbed two sports collectibles dealers at gunpoint last Sept. 13 at a Las Vegas casino hotel room.

A kidnapping conviction carries the possibility of life in prison with the possibility of parole. A robbery conviction would mean mandatory prison time.

CBC

(Continued from Page 1) into the workplace."

As of Monday morning, the CBC had not yet gotten a White House response to the letter. NUL President/CEO Marc Morial also laments that the cutting of the Urban Youth Empowerment Program comes at a time when no substantial federal funding exists for general summer jobs for youth across the nation.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unem-

ployment rate for Black teens ages 16-19 is 32.3 percent, twice the rate of the 16.4 percent of White teens in the same age group; and nearly twice the rate of Latino teens, 17.5 percent.

"You have a lot of idle teenagers who are out of school and who want to work, who want opportunities, careers, and a chance to earn a living," said Morial. "It's a tragedy that Congress has not moved on summer jobs because the teen unem-

ployment rate is as high as it's been in 50 years."

The cutting of the UYEP will only exacerbate the occupational void where it is needed most, the CBC letter states. It lists at least 27 high crime cities where the program has been highly effective, including Baltimore, Birmingham, Charlotte, Columbus, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Louisville, New Orleans, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Sacramento and Washington, D.C.

"The program represents the best that our communities have to offer by providing educational and training assistance to at-risk youth in ways that encourage partnerships with local businesses, faith organizations and employers," the letter states. "These collaborative partnerships and intense support for at-risk youth ultimately achieve improved outcomes for individual participants, healthier communities and a better-equipped workforce."

New Black caucus makes inroads

By Parker Philpot
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The Clark County Democratic Black Caucus is activated and aims to be an energetic, local, power force, not a short-lived group in the political arena.

The CCDBC started with 61 charter members, has more than 250 members and seeks more with its membership drive underway, according to Yvette Williams, founder and acting caucus chair. Aiming to "aggressively increase African-American registration and participation in all levels of the Democratic Party through grassroots efforts" is the goal. "Over 70 people attended [our] first meeting," Williams said.

Clark County registered Democrats who pay an annual \$20 membership may join the 100 percent member-supported organization, she said.

"This caucus is a committee-based, citizen action group and will be run by the membership from the ground up," Williams emphasized. "This is a grassroots organization empowering each member. ...There are very few elected officers."

CCDBC's elected positions are chair, treasurer, and recording and corresponding secretaries. "Laura Martin serves as acting recording secretary, and Felice White serves as acting treasurer until after the board elections next month."

Williams says the chairs of committees create the spark, and active members are the thrust of the organization.

"It is important to this caucus that the voice of its members are heard and that the members are empowered to take action," she said.

The CCDBC was chartered on May 10 by the Clark County Democratic Party and is recognized by the Nevada State Democratic Party as an official caucus. Will-



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Yvette Williams, left, founder of the Clark County Democratic Black Caucus, discusses politics and policies to prospective supporters of Barack Obama during one of his rallies.

iams believes the organization is destined to play a significant role in this historic 2008 election year. CCDBC's early accomplishments support her belief.

"Thirty-three of our members were recently appointed to the Clark County Central Committee," she continued. "The Nevada State Central Committee has just appointed 18 of our members at their recent Nevada State Convention."

Williams says the organization will continue to be active on all levels of the process.

"We plan to be very visible in the community and very active in this election cycle. Many of our members are actively involved in the Obama campaign and have become seasoned canvassers and campaigners. I've seen them work, and they are some of the best."

The immediate focus is "getting Democrats elected" and party building. Beyond that, the CCDBC plans to take part in legislative sessions next year. In the interim, there is further political skill and capacity building through "education, after school programs, and

partnering with faith based and nonprofit organizations that serve our community."

The CCDBC promotes accountability of elected and appointed officials, according to Williams. The goal is to work with other like-minded Democratic groups for effective action.

She stated: "The CCDBC does not want to duplicate efforts already served by the many wonderful organizations currently in our community but desires to establish effective working relationships to support their cause. Many of these organizations are currently an important resource for our members."

Williams stated, "The CCDBC Political Action Committee will act as the lobbying arm of the caucus."

The primary goal is creating change in the interest of its constituents, with a decidedly Black-oriented advo-

cacy but not exclusively so. "Members range in age from college age to senior citizens. Several of our members are not people of color but support the ideology and mission of the CCDBC. We welcome everyone that shares our vision."

The CCDBC action plan covers training and strategic collaborations, but members also want to "secure seats on local and statewide committees, boards, appointments and elected positions."

Williams, a board member on the African American Democratic Leadership Council, expressed her central reason for founding the caucus: to serve an underrepresented population of our community.

Local commentator and politically active native Ne- vadan, Karen Jill Benzer, says that Williams' abilities and the "total momentum" of

(See Caucus, Page 3)

The Austin Dancers Academy

Proudly Presents
A Stage Production

The crew "sayers" connection

Saturday, June 28 at 6:00 pm
West Las Vegas Library Theatre
951 West Lake Mead Blvd.

Advanced Tickets:	Door Tickets:
Adults - \$18.00	\$23.00
Children - \$12.00 (12 yrs. & under)	\$17.00

Music by L.A. Connection

For more information and group rates:
Call (702) 242-9551