

O.J. Simpson was only fall guy in civil trial

By Linda Deutsch
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SANTA MONICA, Calif. — The differences were many but in the end it may have come down to one idea — the jury in O.J. Simpson's civil trial wasn't offered anybody but the football great to blame.

Although the law did not require the defense to find that answer, it was an underlying theme of the case and one which the defense was barred from exploring in his second trial. In bitterly fought pretrial motions, defense lawyers lost the option of suggesting to jurors that Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman were killed by shadowy figures in the drug underworld — a theory offered during Simpson's criminal trial. Superior Court Judge Hiroshi Fujisaki rejected the strategy on grounds the defense could not back it up with sufficient evidence. Simpson's criminal "Dream Team" suggested Nicole Simpson's drug-using friend, Faye Resnick, placed her in harm's way when they shared living quarters for a time.

Perhaps, the lawyers suggested, Resnick owed big money to drug dealers who came in search of her and

killed the victims by mistake. But Fujisaki found the theory was rank speculation unsupported by evidence and ruled it could not be mentioned. In a verdict announced last week, jurors unanimously found Simpson liable in the killings of his ex-wife and her friend and awarded Goldman's mother and father \$8.5 million. A punitive phase of the trial — to punish Simpson — resulted in \$25 million in damages.

Jurors remained under a gag order Tuesday, so they weren't talking and it's impossible to know what turned jurors so steadfastly against Simpson. Perhaps it was the physical evidence — the blood, hair, fibers or gloves. Maybe it was something Simpson said — or didn't say — or 31 pictures purportedly showing Simpson wearing Bruno Magli shoes. The defense was unable to use the so-called race card in the second trial. The testimony of disgraced former police detective Mark Fuhrman was barred by Fujisaki.

Branded as a racist hate monger in the first trial and forced in October to plead no contest to perjury, Fuhrman was accused by the defense during the criminal trial of framing Simpson by planting evidence. By the

time the civil trial began, Fuhrman had moved out of state and refused to return to testify. The defense asked to use the next best thing, his testimony at the criminal trial, but the judge ruled against them. Fujisaki bought the plaintiffs' argument that defense lawyers had no legitimate reason to call Fuhrman as a witness and were merely setting him up as a whipping boy, injecting him in the case only to tear him down.

In his opening statement, lead defense lawyer Robert Baker attacked Nicole Simpson's reputation. He told jurors the beautiful divorcee was running with a bad crowd, consorting with drug users and prostitutes, getting pregnant by a lover and having an abortion. All of this, he said, could have placed her in the path of a killer. But his allegations were never developed in testimony. Simpson was the only witness asked to discuss the claims and he seemed reticent to trash the reputation of his dead ex-wife. In the end, the defense even tried trashing Goldman's reputation. But no one ever offered the name or the face of another possible killer.

LINDA DEUTSCH covered the O.J. Simpson trial for The Associated Press.

Deja vu all over San Francisco

By John Templeton
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Ever since the Gold Rush, it has been very dangerous to be an African American neighborhood in San Francisco. As soon as a community gets settled and comfortable, someone else decides they want your land.

The city's history can literally be traced by the neighborhoods that used to be populated primarily by blacks from the Financial District and Chinatown to Russian Hill and the Fillmore and Hayes Valley. Tactics ranging from vigilante violence and the Fugitive Slave Act — to the right of testimony law, urban renewal, and in the case of the Fillmore, even murder, have been employed to displace black land owners. But generally, it's been done under the auspices of legitimate governmental authority through planning, zoning and permits granted, often with the stated purpose of improving community conditions. You'll find very few former residents of the Hayes Valley or North Beach public housing projects who expect to move back into those areas once they are demolished.

Nationally, African American urban neighborhoods have been sited near industrial concentrations. We've all heard the oft-quoted saying "the other side of the tracks." While doing an analysis of Census data in the 1980s, I was able to confirm demographically the validity of that notion. While looking at more than 100 metropolitan areas, I was struck that 95 percent of the time, the 2000 block of East 14th Street in any city was an 100 percent African American area.

Further queries determined that because of prevailing winds heading east, African-American neighborhoods were generally just east of the industrial area near the site of the pollution from smokestacks. Since railroads ran to the factories, those neighborhoods would be next to the tracks. Conversely, in practically any city, the "West End" was described as a fairly upscale area with very few blacks.

Despite the environmental consequences, there might be some security and lower housing prices from being in a less desirable area. But those neighborhoods have tended to be the path of least resistance for highways, and major construction projects like the Oakland postal clearing center. Crippled by the lack of access to mortgage capital for home building and renovations, the communities have been unable to amass the capital to hold on to their neighborhoods.

New Bayview publisher Willie Ratliff is now sounding the alarm for Bayview-Hunters Point, the site of the highest concentration of breast cancer in the world. It also lies between the already approved Pacific Bell Park for the San Francisco Giants and the about-to-go-to-the-voters 49ers stadium-mall complex, linked by a planned light rail line up Third Street. Although the combined impact of the Giants and Niners has never meant an iota of economic benefit to Bayview, Ratliff correctly perceives that someone will benefit from the increased land values due to the appeal of the new facilities. History tells him that it won't be the current residents.

In the same way that an effort has been launched to create an economic magnet with the Fillmore Jazz Preservation District, although hopefully much more effectively and quickly, there is a need to give the Bayview-Hunters Point community an economic focus that provides jobs and entrepreneurship for residents.

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Honeymoon won't last between political rivals

By Donald M. Rothberg
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The era of good feelings, of gentle words and grand common goals ought to last at least for a few more days.

Long enough for President Clinton to deliver his State of the Union address and the Republican-run Congress to start chewing on the details. The assumption is the partisan knives will come out once the debate is joined on balancing the budget, dealing with Medicare, paying U.N. debts and overhauling the welfare reform act passed last year. The Democratic president will propose and the Congress will dispose. That is how the system works. The result can be gridlock. But it does not have to be. Not even in this era of divided government. Both sides could look back 40 years for an example of cooperation in a divided government.

After President Eisenhower was re-elected in 1956, Senate

Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson and House Speaker Sam Rayburn, two Texas Democrats, pledged to work with the Republican president. They said the Democrats would not offer a rival program. Much to the dismay of portions of their own party, Johnson and Rayburn kept their pledge.

Clinton draws criticism today from Democrats for backing positions with a distinctly Republican cast. No doubt, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., and House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., also would come under fire from their right if they got too cozy with Clinton.

"The president has got to collect votes on the other side, and the more he does that the more he alienates people on his side," said University of Wisconsin political scientist Charles Jones. "The same with congressional leaders; the more they go toward the president the more they're going to get some carping from their wings."

Jones called it "the nature of

the beast in split party government. But it's also the definition of coalition building."

The second Clinton term and the 105th Congress have begun on a note of conciliation. With an ease unimaginable in the take-no-prisoners political atmosphere of a year ago, four of Clinton's second-term Cabinet choices zipped through the Senate with hardly a dissenting vote. But the nominations of Anthony Lake to head the CIA and Alexis Herman as secretary of labor are encountering greater scrutiny. Senators are raising questions about Lake's role as national security adviser in the decision to give tacit, covert approval to the flow of Iranian arms to the Muslim government of Bosnia. Also at issue is the handling of energy stocks Lake promised to sell to avoid any conflict of interest when he took his White House job. Herman will have to explain her role in helping arrange White House briefings for U.S. business executives going on Commerce

Department trade missions. Republicans allege that political contributors got priority on such trips. Immediately after the presidential election, Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, R-N.Y., said he was ending his investigation of Whitewater, the Arkansas land deals in which the Clintons were investors. But there will be plenty of congressional probes to torment the administration. Sen. Fred Thompson, R-Tenn., chairman of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, received Senate approval for a yearlong, \$6.5 million investigation into fundraising activities by the 1996 Clinton and Dole campaigns. On issues, there are these conflicts and more:

- The administration is asking Congress for \$1 billion to pay back dues to the United Nations. Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, says the world body shouldn't get any money until it comes up with a management-reform plan.

- Clinton wants \$16 billion to restore programs cut in the welfare reform bill he signed last year and promised to alter. Among those benefiting would be legal immigrants, people on food stamps and employers who hire people off the welfare rolls. Most congressional Republicans like the law just the way they passed it last year.

- Medicare played its usual hot-button role in the 1996 campaign, with Clinton saying the GOP wanted to cut the health care program and Republicans countering that they wanted to increase benefits but make changes that would keep Medicare from going broke. That debate will continue.

- The president and Congress talk about cutting taxes, but not necessarily the same ones. One area in which agreement looks more probable is on capital gains, long a GOP goal. Clinton has recently indicated a willingness to discuss cuts in that area.

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Father of Black History Month

Carter Woodson's gift to America grows in stature

By Ron Daniels
SPECIAL TO THE POST

Black America is in the midst of celebrating Black History Month which has become an institution in the United States. Unfortunately far too few people are aware of Carter G. Woodson, the man who had the foresight and wisdom to conceive of the idea of an annual occasion for Africans in America to discover and celebrate their history.

Born in 1875 in New Canton, W.Va., Woodson devoted his life to restoring the self-esteem of the sons and daughters Africa in America who suffered from the physical and mental shackles of enslavement.

Woodson, however, was concerned with much more than racial self esteem. For Woodson, self-awareness, a knowledge of one's origins, culture and history was the key to the uplift and liberation of an oppressed people. Hence his passion for Black History was not a love of history for history's sake but a search for that which could heal a wounded people and prepare them to struggle for liberation.

As an expression of his motive for engaging the study of Black History Woodson wrote:

"...No systematic effort toward change has been possible, for, taught the same economics, history, philosophy, literature and religion... the Negro's mind has been brought under the control of his oppressor... When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions." The challenge as Woodson perceived it, therefore, was to utilize black history to liberate the mind of African people from the education and way of life of their oppressors.

A dedicated and talented

scholar totally committed to rediscovering the history of African people which had been intentional buried by Europe and America, Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1916. He also served as Editor of the Journal of Negro History. The Association and the Journal were seen as vehicles to disseminate the "good news" that Woodson and other scholars were unearthing about the phenomenal achievements and contributions of Africans to history and humanity. Woodson was convinced that newly conscious Africans would become missionaries fanning out amongst the unconscious to rescue them from the bondage of European culture and history.

It was in 1926 that Woodson decided to establish Negro History Week for the "awakening of American Africans to their heritage." In establishing Negro History Week, Woodson also offered suggestions on how the week might be celebrated. "...This included exercises emphasizing the importance of the African background, the Negro in the discovery and exploration of America, the laborer, the inventor, the soldier, the poet, the artist, the spokesman, the press, the business man, the professional class, the educator, and the minister."

Created at the height of the Black Renaissance that was sweeping the country, Negro History Week was immediately successful. Woodson was of course quite pleased with product of his labor. He proudly reported that "one high school principal said that as a result of the effort the pupils of his schools were showing unusual interest in their background. A teacher said:

"The celebration improved my children a hundred per cent. I wish we could have Negro History Week throughout the year."

Not content to rest on his laurels, Carter G. Woodson published his most important book, The Mis-Education of the Negro, in 1933. This widely read work gave even greater impetus and momentum to the celebration of Negro History Week.

Though the teacher cited above has not quite gotten her wish, what began as Negro History Week was transformed into Black History Month as a result of the Black Consciousness Movement of the '60s. Indeed, the wisdom that Carter G. Woodson showed in establishing an annual occasion to celebrate the history of African people has not only led to the expansion of the occasion from a week to a month, Woodson's efforts have also contributed to the spawning of the African Centered Education Movement.

Consistent with Woodson's mission in pressing for the study of Black History, the essence of the African Centered Education Movement is to promote education for liberation and self development; a major effort to counter and overcome the damaging effects of European education by making African history and culture an integral component of the learning experience of African students.

In that regard, as we celebrate that which Carter G. Woodson bequeathed to us, we should be ever mindful of his original motive and mission — to free the African mind from the yolk of European education and culture, to liberate African people from the oppressor.

Carter G. Woodson died in Washington D.C. in 1950 having done his best to rediscover our history as a tool to rehabilitate and restore the race.

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The history of Ebonics

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Amidst the controversy over Ebonics, the history of Africans in America has been conveniently overlooked.

Our ancestors were forcibly brought to this hemisphere in chains and subjected to egregiously brutal indignities and atrocities designed to transform them from Africans into chattel (Negroes). In most colonies (later states) it was against the law to teach Africans to read or write or provide even the rudiments of education.

An artificial language barrier was created because Africans were forbidden under severe physical and psychological duress from speaking their native languages. Even when they retained some familiarity of their native tongue, the slave system deliberately separated Africans from the same tribe or clan thus minimizing the potential for communication, plotting and rebellion. Africans learned to speak English by imitating the crude language of the overseers who for the most part were what came to be known as white trash.

Later arrivals learned from other detribalized and deculturated Africans who learned from the lower class, uneducated whites. (Remember it was not until Reconstruction that African Americans played a major role in the establishment of free universal public education in the South). Out of this milieu emerged distinctive regional dialects and patterns of speaking based not only on the local colloquialisms of the whites but on the African's adaptations to them and what they added to what was forced upon them.

The way we speak is both our response to cultural oppression/depravation and a reflection of the way Africans in America view the world. Our language simply mirrors every-

thing else we've done here in America. We bring our own distinctive flair and approach to whatever we are exposed to. It's just the way we are. Our music, blues/spirituals/jazz/R&B, evolved the same way. Detribalized and deculturated Africans took African and European instruments and created brand new forms of expression.

The battle for quality education for all Africans in America won a major victory in the U.S. Supreme Court decision, Brown vs. Topeka Kansas Board of Education. The plaintiffs successfully argued that "Separate but Equal" pedagogy was inherently inferior. Based upon the evidence they presented and the realities in existence at the time the "high court" outlawed legally sanctioned educational apartheid in America. That decision was rendered less than 43 years ago, but has not fully rectified or remedied the situation to this day.

Africans in America speak the way we do for a number of reasons, many of which I have already alluded to. I teach GED English to adults. I tell them they have to learn standardized English to function in the workplace, to fill out applications, write letters, research papers and speak in a way that is acceptable to "mainstream" America. However, I also point out the hypocrisy of the advertising industry for example, that mutilates the spelling and the pronunciation of the language while nothing is said. I remind them that we understand each other when we use "our language" and that that is what communication is all about. I tell them not to be ashamed of the way we speak to each other as long as it is positive and uplifting.

Not speaking "standard" English gives those in power another reason to knock us down and belittle us.

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