

O.J. trial divides along racial lines

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come back with a fair verdict. I think an all-white jury couldn't be fair."

At the courthouse in Santa Monica, a large, mostly white crowd cheered wildly for the family of Ronald Goldman and taunted the departing Simpson with shouts of "killer! killer!" The crowd's elation paralleled the widely televised nationwide reactions among many groups of blacks to the criminal trial verdicts.

Yvonne Adler of West Los Angeles broke down in tears of joy and huddled in a circle with her friends, crying and hugging them as she repeated, again and again, "12-0, 12-0."

"This is personal," Adler said. "This shows me that a man who does something like this has been exposed and found guilty."

At the Boulevard Cafe in the Crenshaw district, the mostly African American clientele expressed dismay but little surprise.

The cafe's owner, 63-year-old Frank Holoman, stressed that the new verdicts were wrong and attributed the decision to racial motives.

"He was judged innocent in his criminal trial. They had to find a way to get him, and this is how they got him," he said. "He'll be a target as long as he lives."

"Here in America, black people have always had to accept the verdict of white jurors - even when people were totally innocent and sent to jail," he said. "So we should have accepted the verdict of the first jury. But white America was not ready to

accept this."

The racial divisions in the case were blurred to some extent by Simpson's wealth and celebrity.

In the mostly black Potrero Hill section of San Francisco, where Simpson grew up in a housing project, a number of residents gathered at a recreation center to await the verdicts while 25-year-old cabinet-maker Jose Torres played basketball with friends.

"They had a lot of evidence against him. I knew he did it in the first place," Torres said.

"If you've got money, you can do anything in the world...His fame saved him from going to prison."

Some in the recreation center said they were tired of the case-and tired of reporters who only visit their community to ask about Simpson.

"I like O.J. But if he messed up, he messed up," said Kerry Dolford. "I feel like this: The good Lord takes care of all of it. If O.J. did it, it's gonna eat him up inside."

Even so, in many black neighborhoods the bitterness ran deep.

"The justice system just pocketed O.J.," said one man at a Crenshaw beauty shop. "White America, shame on you. Black power!"

"There are some deep wounds that were created by both of these trials... a line in the sand that still divides us," John Mack of the Los Angeles Urban League told television interviewers. "I don't think this decision is necessarily going to widen the wounds, [but] it didn't heal anything..."

Two jurors from the criminal trial - one black, one white, but both of whom had voted for acquittal 16 months ago - split on Tuesday's verdicts.

"I love it. I couldn't be happier," said Anise Aschenbach, a 62-year-old white woman who said she thought Simpson was guilty but felt compelled by jury instructions to acquit him. "It conflicts with our verdicts, but it sure doesn't conflict with the way I felt inside about whether he did the crime."

"I always had that feeling that he did it," she said. "In the criminal trial it had to be proven beyond a reasonable doubt. That is the difference between then and now. They (civil jurors) only needed 51 percent, plus they had some additional evidence that I thought was important too."

"It has nagged me that (Fred Goldman) felt that he hasn't had 12 people say that O.J. killed his son. This will mean some closure."

But her fellow juror, Yolanda Crawford, who is black, said she was shocked that the civil jury even reached a verdict, let alone a unanimous one. "I thought they'd definitely end in a mistrial or a hung jury," she said.

"I still feel good about my decision. I still believe there was reasonable doubt," she said.

Crawford stressed that she did not believe either jury was swayed by racial prejudice. "Race was not a part of our verdict. I don't think race was a part of this verdict," she said.

The racial split was dramatically underscored by a citywide Los Angeles Times poll conduct-

ed after the jury began deliberating. Overall, the poll found that 55% of the respondents believe Simpson killed his former wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and Goldman, while 22 percent believed he did not kill them, and 23 percent were undecided. However, the results differed sharply according to race: 71 percent of whites said they thought Simpson committed the murders, while 70 percent of blacks said they thought he was innocent.

Some who gathered to cheer outside the courthouse saw more than racial overtones to the case; they also recognized it as an unofficial referendum on domestic violence and the women's movement.

"I am so ecstatic," said Cardanne Sudderth, a 44-year-old arborist from Santa Monica. "I feel like women's rights everywhere have been vindicated. In a lot of ways, Nicole represented all of us."

Still, there were dissenters - mainly a smaller number of blacks in the crowd.

"The best thing of all, O.J. is still free," said Molly Bell, 50, of Compton, finding some consolation in the results while she waved a large sign that read: "OJ is Not Guilty."

As Simpson climbed down the stairs into a big black Chevy Suburban waiting outside the courthouse, more than a thousand people watched his exit, and the crowd broke into chants of "guilty guilty guilty." Others yelled "murderer" and "loser." Placards read: "OJ, what next? Golf?" and "Out of jail but you'll never be free."

Youth conference set for Feb. 22

Emphasis will be on discussing concerns from their point of view

By Herbert L. White
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Young people will try their hand at addressing society's problems Feb. 22.

The Community Youth Conference will be held at Grady Cole Center. The conference, which is open to the public, starts at 10 a.m. It's the first event of its kind in Charlotte where young people will control the agenda. Adults are welcome, however.

"This is set up where youth will talk about their concerns in

our communities," said Linda Hinton Butler, who helped organize the conference.

The conference was organized in response to the recent surge in racial animosity in Charlotte in the wake of the fatal police shooting of an unarmed black motorist. Butler said adults have dominated the discussion about community needs, but few results have been realized. Topics that will be discussed include violence, gangs, education and AIDS.

"I saw so many groups wanting to picket and march after the

(James Willie) Cooper shooting," she said. "Obviously, the adults have been talking for years and years and the world has gotten worse. It's time we listened to someone else."

Butler, a former Charlotte-Mecklenburg PTA president, said giving young people a chance to talk about their concerns may be the catalyst to help find solutions and build coalitions with adults who share those concerns.

"Any time there's a negative, I see where we should want to make a positive out of it," Butler said. "This is a way for us to do that."

Lunch will be provided during the day, and a social will be held from 3-5 p.m. for youth. A

debriefing for adults will be held during the social. Registration for the conference is Jan. 15. For more information, call Butler at 598-3988.

Ji Jaga tries for a new trial

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In the photographs, Ji Jaga was the only person shown wearing a jacket similar to the one Olsen described, thus adding fuel to the theory that Ji Jaga had been set up. Ji Jaga claims that he was in Oakland at the time of the murder, and that the FBI was aware of that, because they had been tapping his telephone and tracing his movements, which they routinely did at the time to prominent Black Panthers.

The key witness in the 1972 trial was Julius Butler, a former Los Angeles Black Panther who testified that Ji Jaga, who was not a suspect at the time, had confessed to the murder to him. Butler also stated under oath that he had never informed on anyone. However, documents released in 1979 showed that Butler had, in fact, met with the FBI 33 times prior to the trial, to give them information about the Panthers. Later, it was revealed that he was also an informant for the Los Angeles Police Department.

During the recent hearing, Ji Jaga's legal team based its strategy on showing that during the original trial, the prosecutors knew that Butler was an informant, but purposely withheld that information. Three jurists from the original trial now state that, had they known about Butler's role, they would

not have voted for conviction. In 1996, for the first time, Butler was named as being an informant for the Los Angeles District Attorney's office as well - the same agency that had prosecuted Ji Jaga in 1972.

Investigators found Butler's name on a list of confidential informants for the office, and records showed that Butler had admitted to being a paid informant for the agency, prior to the 1972 trial.

Butler, 64, is now an attorney and board chairman of First AME Church in Los Angeles, the city's most prominent black church. During the hearing, he continued to deny being an informant, saying that his briefings with law enforcement were merely "conversations." Richard P. Kalustian, the chief prosecutor at the 1972 trial and now a Los Angeles County Superior Court judge, admitted that in 1973 he helped reduce four felony charges against Butler to misdemeanors so that Butler could attend law school.

Ji Jaga's case continues to attract international attention, and he gets many regular visitors in prison. Despite spending his first eight years behind bars

in solitary confinement, he remains unbroken, and shows no bitterness for his fate.

• Ji Jaga is known to act as a peacemaker for many inmate factions

Known simply as "G," he is highly respected by the other inmates. Rather than taking sides with any one group, he is known to act as a peacemaker for the many factions.

Stuart Hanlon, a San Francisco attorney who is on Jaga's legal team, said in a telephone interview: "Julius Butler is one of the best liars I've ever seen in court. I think nothing he says will the judge believe."

Hanlon concluded: "I think the hearing went very well. I think we were able to prove convincingly that Julius Butler was an informant for the Los Angeles Police Department, and got no jail time when he pled guilty to four felonies, which was unheard of in Los Angeles for a Black Panther."

Geronimo's sister Virginia Pratt, one of his staunchest supporters throughout the years, said: "This is as far as we've ever been, and things are looking pretty good at this critical hearing. And at last, some of the things that we've known all these years, they've allowed us to bring forward."

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