CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Park Heights fight leads to manslaughter conviction

By Ejike Obineme
AFRO Staff Writer

A Baltimore City Circuit Court Jury recently found Charles Hunter, 36, of the 2900 block of Edgecombe Circle South guilty of manslaughter, for the death of Kurtis Felix Ramsey during a fight last August.

Sentencing has been set for July 15, and Hunter can get a maximum of 10 years for his conviction.

Hunter has been standing trial for his involvement in the murder of Kurtis Felix Ramsey, aged 28 at the time, of the 4700 block of Delaware Ave. which occurred Aug. 2, 1987.

The incident took place in the rear of the 100 block of Wylie Ave. The police report showed that it was a case of on-going argument that turned deadly.

Hunter, Ramsey and Hanson Fawcett were drinking in the alley when the argument ensued. A written statement obtained from Hunter by the police indicated that the argument was about Fawcett's car, which was allegedly stolen by Ramsey.

Hunter said that the more they drank, the more violent the argument became. He said that Ramsey, who admitted to taking the car, told Fawcett, "Hit me, beat me up, do whatever you want to do. Just get it over with." At that time, Hunter's statement said, Fawcett pulled a knife and cut Ramsey.

Ramsey fell to the ground and was cut repeatedly in the throat. He jumped up off the ground and grabbed Fawcett, then he was struck upside the head with a brick.

He fell to the ground once again, and the cement block was laid against his skull. He did not move after that. Photographs taken by the police afterwards suggest that Ramsey's body was dragged to the position where it was found.

As it turned out, Hunter's 3-page written statement was the major evidence produced by the state during the trial, and Assistant State's Attorney Albert Phillips relied on it in his eloquent closing arguments Thursday, to draw conclusions.

Hunter had said in the statement that he was separating the two fighting men when he was hit by Ramsey. He admitted that he struck Ramsey more than once. Phillip told the jury that if Fawcett was the one cutting Ramsey, and Ramsey jumped up and grabbed him, then it was logical that Hunter was the person who struck Ramsey on the head with the brick.

Pointing at Hunter he said, "That man is a liar. He freely entered the fight to help his friend (Fawcett)." Phillips said that Hunter carefully avoided stating what he did in the killing of Ramsey but clearly stated what Fawcett did.

Phillip contended that Hunter moved Ramsey's body to conceal it, adding that Fawcett, who was said to weigh about 110 pounds could not have been able to lay the 80 pound block on Ramsey's head. "When the police confronted him (Hunter), he threw up." Phillip said, "He was not sick."

He said that Hunter's stomach turned because he knew he was about to be found out. He told the jury to return a verdict of first degree murder against Hunter.

Defense attorney Michael Middleton was fiery in his argument. He said the state did not have even a jot of good evidence against Hunter. The written statement that police got from Hunter, he said, "was not worth the paper it was written on." He said his client was still drunk at the time the statement was forced out of him.

The prosecutor had said that when Hunter was confronted by the police he was wiping his hand with a handkerchief, and that there was blood on the handkerchief as well as on Hunter's shoes. But lab test did not match the blood with the victim's blood. Middleton said that because the blood did not match, it means that (Hunter) wiping his hand had nothing to do with the murder.

He told the jury to use their verdict to tell the state, "Go and do your work," on the case. He said, "They (the State) do not even know whose blood was on the 80 pound block." He reminded the jury that it was his client who called the police and reported the crime. Middleton asked, "Is this his reward to act as a responsible citizen?"

When Hunter was asked in the written statement why he reported the crime, he said he did not know why he did it.

The jury deliberated for about four hours Friday without a verdict. Judge John C. Byrnes then sent them home for the weekend. When they reconvened Monday morning, it took them 15 minutes to come to a verdict.

Meanwhile, the other alleged culprit in this case, Fawcett, who was said to have been under arrest at one time in connection with Ramsey's murder is a free man today. The only evidence the State has against him is Hunter's statement, which cannot be used to send him to trial because it cannot be corroborated or confirmed.

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Community Calendar

Free hearing screenings available

In recognition of this major health problem and in a continued effort to help the greater Baltimore Community identify hearing problems, the Baltimore Shock Trauma Speech and Hearing Program will provide free hearing screenings to all citizens of Maryland. Children and adults are invited to participate in this free community service. The free screening will take place at Montebello Hospital, 2201 Argonne Drive on Wednesday, May 25, from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. No appointment is necessary.

PROGRAM OFFERS FREE HEALTH LECTURE & SCREENINGS

"Exercise After Heart Attack" is the topic of a free health lecture to be held at The Union Memorial Hospital Thursday, June 2 at 10 a.m. in the Memorial Auditorium. Free screenings for cholesterol, health and fitness, blood pressure, pulse and spirometry will follow from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the Auxiliary classroom. Call 554-2700.

Cardinal Shehan seeks student volunteers

Student Volunteers between the ages of 13 and 18 are needed this summer at Stella Maris, part of the Cardinal Shehan Center for the Aging. The various duties include escorting residents, assisting in Programs and Activities and unit volunteer. If interested in the Junior Volunteer Program, please call Terri Dezell, Coordinator of Volunteers at 252-4500, ext. 254.

CPR courses offered

Howard County General Hospital's Department of Continuing Education will offer the following CPR courses: A CITIZEN'S CPR (COURSE A) will be held on Tuesday, May 31 from 7 to 10 p.m. This American Heart Association Heart Saver program includes one-man CPR for the adult victim and techniques to remove airway obstruction. The fee is $9.

CPR FOR TEENAGERS (COURSE B) teaches valuable skills in infant, child and adult resuscitation. An American Heart Association card will be received at the completion of the session. This course will meet on Saturday, June 4 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Lunch is included in the $18 fee.

To register, call 740-7600.

"BETTER BREATHING" GROUP TO MEET

The American Lung Association of Maryland's FREE, monthly "Better Breathing Group" will feature Gary Monk, R.R.T. at Francis Scott Key Medical Center, AA Building, Rathbum Conference Room, on May 31, from 3 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

All adults with asthma, emphysema, or chronic bronchitis, and their families, as well as other interested persons, are urged to attend this presentation on "Respiratory Therapy and Home Care Companies." This seminar is a free service of the Christmas Seal People®

For more information on this and future programs, contact the American Lung Association of Maryland at 494-1100.

AA meeting held

The National Islamic Multi-Purpose Education Center located 1132 Homewood Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21202 Non-Funded, Non-Profit Religious Corporation Bro. Sam Ramadan 728-8421 AA Meeting Daily 7-8 a.m. and 12-1 p.m. Yes we sign Court Slips.

African Liberation Day celebrated

A celebration of African Liberation Day will be held on Sunday, May 29, from 2 p.m. to 12 a.m. at Mother Africa Shrine, 1706 W. North Ave.

The event will feature African culture in a beautiful, relaxing environment. Activities will include: dinner, lectures, dance, art shows, and a fashion show.

African Liberation Day is being presented by Shaka International, L.T.D. Call 523-8376.

SECURITY SQUARE MALL TO OPEN EXTENDED HOURS MEMORIAL DAY

For shopper convenience, Security Square Mall will be open extended holiday hours on Memorial Day, Monday, May 30 from 9 a.m. - 9:30 p.m.

Hecht's, Hutzler's and Sears will maintain hours at 9 a.m. - 9:30 p.m., J C Penney 10 a.m. - 9:30 p.m.

Baltimore Federal Financial will be closed May 30 in observance of Memorial Day. The bank's MOST Network money machine; however, will be open during mall hours.

PROMINENT SPEAKERS HELP COMMEMORATE MEMORIAL DAY SERVICE

On Monday, May 30, the annual observance of Memorial Day will take place at 11 a.m. at Dulaney Valley Memorial Gardens, located at 200 East Padonia Road in Timonium, one mile east of York Road.

Participating in the Memorial Day service to commemorate and honor the men of Maryland who died in Vietnam and lie within the circle of the immortals are: The Honorable Paul S. Sarbanes, United States Senate, The Honorable Ellen R. Sauerbrey, Maryland House of Delegates, tenth legislative district and Lt. Col. William M. Kerr, II, United States Marine Corps Reserve.

HERB FESTIVAL held

The Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks is co-sponsoring The Second Annual Baltimore Herb Festival which will be held in Leakin Park on May 28, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Twelve lecturers will speak about the horticultural, aromatic, culinary, literary, decorative and medicinal aspects of herbs. There will be exhibits of herbs, an herb garden, bluegrass songs, herbed food, hikes for wild herbs, and around fifty vendors of herbs and herb products.

As with last year's festival, the profits will be dedicated to restoration of a historic chapel in Leakin Park. The commitee are all volunteers.

Turn off the Baltimore Beltway at exit 16 (Rt 70) toward Baltimore. Signs will direct you to the festival. Call (301) 448-0406.

Senior Citizen's Picnic

On May 28, the Northwest Community Relations Team on the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company and the Baltimore Police Department Community Relations Team will join forces in sponsoring a Senior Citizen's Picnic. This affair will be held at Patapsco State Park, Pavilion 707A and 707B, between the hours of 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Please contact Vashti Jackson at (301) 236-1778 (work) between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. or 945-4584 (home) after 5 p.m., or you may contact Brenda H. Jenkins at 565-8446 (work) between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. or 922-5225 (home) after 6:30 p.m. to discuss your interest in reporting on this joyous affair.

Hurston to be honored by society

By Jeanette Gibson
AFRO Staff Correspondent

The Harlem Renaissance will be the focus of a conference sponsored by the Zora Neale Hurston Society of Morgan State University next week.

The three-day conference from June 2-4, at the Baltimore Holiday Inn, will include slides, lecturers, and music relating to the theme "Interface: The Black Arts and Aesthetics During the Harlem Renaissance."

The society recognize the art of Zora Neale Hurston, novelist, anthropologist and 1919 graduate of Morgan Academy, now Morgan State University.

Hurston has been overlooked by the public as a major black writer partly due to sexism by blacks, says Ruthe Sheffey, founder of the society and professor of English at Morgan State University.

"I think there is a factor of sexism in deciding who is important in the literary world," says Sheffey.

Hurston's flamboyant lifestyle and controversial work led to criticism of many including blacks, says Sheffey.

"Richard Wright wrote and objected strenuously that he thought Zora Heale Hurston's works were not sufficiently militant; that she was not writing and publishing enough about the oppression of blacks in the U.S. Others said she didn't get down to the nitty gritty of blacks in America," Sheffey said.

Explaining the universal human condition and interactions between blacks was Hurston's work, says Sheffey.

"On her side, it wasn't that she didn't see herself as a black writer. But as a black woman who grew up in an all black town, she wanted, not just to write off oppression, but of the humanity and interactions between blacks."

Hurston grew up without a sense of limitations because her hometown of Eatonville, Fla., was governed by blacks. Her father was the mayor.

"Zora knew tradition first hand. Lots of Harlem Renaissance writers were taking her stories, tales and games and putting them in their works," says Sheffey.

The revival of interest in Hurston is not limited to the black community but includes whites, says Sheffey.

"It's not just historically black institutions. As a matter of facts, most interest is from predominately white institutions."

Hurston was a unique woman during her lifetime in pursuing international study instead of traditional homelife, says Sheffey.

"She wasn't going to stay in one place. That took a lot of courage in her time. That takes a lot of courage now, too. She was unusual. How many black women were doing that in the late 20's and 30's? She was courageous if nothing else," says Sheffey.

Registration for the conference is required. Contact Ruthe T. Sheffey, P.O. Box 550, Morgan State University, Cold Spring Lane and Hillen Road, Baltimore, MD 21239.

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