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Judge Dismisses Suit Against Cochran Legal Team

By Denise Levin
Daily Journal Staff Writer

Civil rights attorneys Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr., Carl E. Douglas, Eric G. Ferrer and Shawn S. Chapman won dismissal Thursday of a malicious prosecution lawsuit against them by a police officer who took part in the fatal shooting of a woman on a hospital rooftop in 1993.

Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Carolyn Kuhl granted summary judgement to the high-profile attorney-defendants who represented the mother and son of the slain woman in a suit against the city and Los Angeles Police Department. That wrongful death suit settled for \$2.5 million in 1997.

Sergeant Michael Long, one of the two officers who shot Sonji Taylor, sued the attorneys for malicious prosecution in 1997 fol-

lowing the settlement. *Long v. Cochran et al.*, KC028755.

Long, who is white, claimed Cochran and the other attorneys wrongly portrayed him and the other officers as racist for the shooting death of Taylor, who was black. Long said he shot Taylor in self-defense.

Officers called to the roof of St. Vincent's Hospital found Taylor holding a butcher knife and her 3-year-old son. During a stand-off, during which Taylor threatened to slit the throat of her son, officers doused her with pepper spray, causing her to drop the boy, who was caught by an officer.

Taylor was shot nine times, including seven times in the back.

The summary judgement in the malicious prosecution lawsuit was granted on the grounds that Long could not prove that he won

the underlying wrongful death case, since the case against him was dropped as part of the settlement, according to defense attorney Jonathan B. Cole of Nemecek & Cole.

Cochran, Douglas, Ferrer and Chapman now have standing to bring their own malicious prosecution suit against Long, but Cole would not say if they would.

Long's attorney, Paul R. Jensen of Jensen & McIntosh, said his client would "absolutely" appeal.

Jensen cited case law that gives Long's malicious prosecution case standing because Long opted to have his own defense lawyer in the wrongful death case and disavows the actions the city took on his behalf. *Villa v. Cole*, 4 Cal.App.4th, 1327 (1992).