

Simpson verdict tips, upsets justice scales

■ **OUR OPINION:** In this trial of the decade, money buys a savvy defense team but not innocence

As the highest court in America, the U.S. Supreme Court, reconvened on Monday, final decisions were being made in Courtroom 103 at the Los Angeles Criminal Courts Building on the other side of the country.

While the Supreme Court geared up to field cases, ranging from the abortion battle to Agent Orange settlements for Vietnam vets to alcohol advertising, arguably the trial of the decade came to a surprising close.

Approximately 10 minutes after 10 on Tuesday morning, in a trial infinitely more sensational and bizarre than anything the Supreme Court has seen since *Roe vs. Wade*, a jury of 12 people gave Orenthal James Simpson, on trial for the murders of his ex-wife and her friend, a reason to celebrate.

The jury declared Simpson not guilty, effectively giving the former athlete a second chance at life — one that the two people Simpson stood accused of killing will never have.

The controversial decision came after more than nine months of trial proceedings, highlighted by legal antics from both the prosecution and defense teams. Throughout the trial, shark-like media fed off the high-profile frenzy produced by the celebrity status of Simpson and his murdered wife. At times, it was grotesque.

Too often, the fate of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman was pushed into the background as lawyers grappled with

strategies. The victims' families undoubtedly suffered immensely and unnecessarily during the whole fiasco.

The court clerk calmly read four verdicts of not guilty on all counts, while only a few feet away Ronald Goldman's sister cried out and bent forward sobbing; her father Fred Goldman stared straight ahead in total disbelief and shock.

In the end, it seems the defense was completely successful in planting reasonable doubt in the minds of the jurors despite mountains of incriminating evidence.

Defense lawyer Johnnie Cochran said in the post-verdict press conference that he believed the jurors were convinced of Simpson's innocence by the so-called small window of opportunity Simpson supposedly had — a time line that was too short to enable Simpson to commit the murders and return home to catch a limo to the airport.

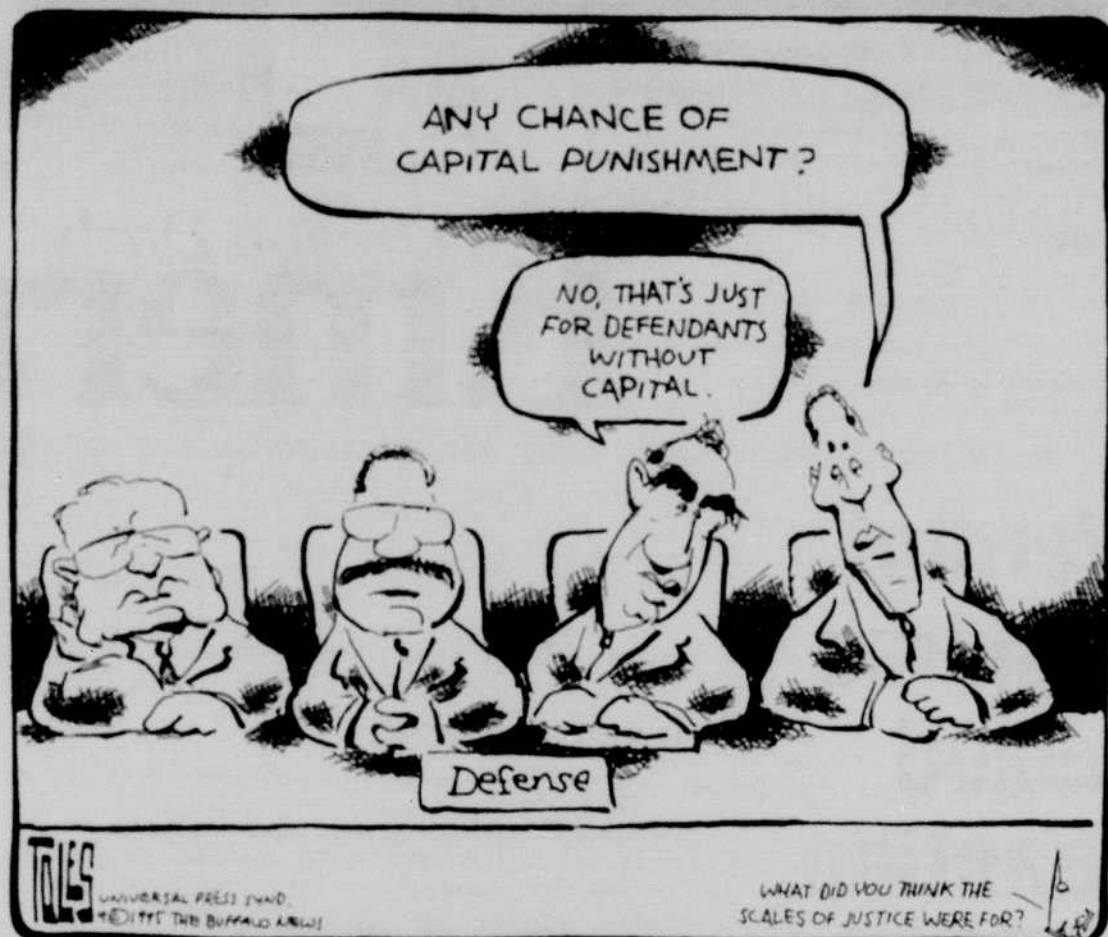
The prosecution team also held a short press conference after the verdict, but it was one more subdued and emotional than the defense's.

Several lawyers gave their parting thanks and one broke down and left in the middle of his statement. Gil Garcetti, the Los Angeles district attorney, announced he would take a few questions from reporters.

A journalist asked Garcetti if a new murder case would be brought against Simpson.

Garcetti's mouth literally dropped open and he began to stammer. "I stand before you today and I tell you ... this was it. ... I ... the evidence was there."

Unfortunately for the jury and for justice, so was reasonable doubt.



Cost of smoking exceeds the daily price

I have lived in Oregon my entire life and have always loved this time of year. We have escaped the hot tediousness of summer and have not yet entered the never-ending rainy season. The air is crisp and school still seems like a pleasant adventure instead of a penance for sins gone by. The days alternate between ones perfect for shorts and picnics and ones spent curled up watching the rain fall.

It is at this time of the year that I love to watch nature unfold — chubby-cheeked squirrels and bright-colored leaves surrounded by the smell of ... smoke?

Don't get me wrong; I'm for the occasional camp-out, but I cannot stand the smell of cigarette smoke.

Since my return to school I have been unpleasantly surprised by the amount of smoke I inhale each day. As I walk along I am invariably trapped behind a smoker who turns and exhales over his or her shoulder directly into my face.

But I march on grimly, understanding that in this country, the right to smoke must be protected. After all, it's the smoker's business, right?

For many years it was flouted in the faces of anti-smokers that smoking was the business of only the people puffing the cigarettes. If they want to be part of the 23 percent of Americans who disable their chemical balances by taking in nicotine, why should the rest of us care?

They are the ones who should be worrying about the fact that cigarettes are the number one underlying cause of death in the United States and the single most preventable cause of premature death. They are the ones who will have low-birth weight babies and children with higher susceptibility to ear infections, pneumonia and bronchitis.

I have other things to worry about — such as the disturbing study that found cigarette smoke to be more harmful to nonsmokers than to smokers because smokers become used to its effects.

I could wonder if my asthma was induced by second-hand smoke, as one-third of childhood asthma is. I could wonder what the approximately \$700 million we spend each year on smoking-caused diseases and lost productivity could have been spent on if no one smoked.

But I don't. I can't change the facts by wondering about them. I can't, by sheer will, live in a smoke-free world where everyone is given the same shot at life.

I can't even wonder why people do it.

Nicotine is addictive. It stimulates hormones that fend off infection and affect mood, pain sensation and alertness. Without these hor-

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Kay Krautscheid

mones, we die.

The body produces these hormones as needed, but as soon as enough nicotine consumption makes this hormone release redundant, the body becomes addicted to the drug. The body requires eight weeks to recover from the physical addiction, and the psychological addiction can last much longer.

But is quitting worth it? Many ex-smokers say it is. Within days of quitting smoking, most people notice a physiological change. Lung capacity increases and the heart strengthens. And think about all of that extra money — the money each smoker shells out to feed the craving.

If an average smoker pays \$1.75 a pack each day, he or she will spend more than \$650 each year. That's enough money for a nice dinner once a month or a new CD every week. Better yet, in two years a low-end computer would be in range, and in three years you could buy a used car.

Thinking this way, in the 19 years I have not smoked, I have saved more than \$12,000 — more than I will spend on a year of school. By not starting now and smoking for the next 50 years, I will save more than \$30,000. All that just by not starting a habit that could kill me and my loved ones.

If I wanted to try something dangerous, why wouldn't I bungee jump, hang glide or sky dive — rushes without the polluted air? Even drinking alcohol gives better survival statistics than smoking. While almost all adults engage in occasional drinking, alcohol and other drugs (excluding tobacco) cause only 2.7 percent of deaths each year. In contrast, the 23 percent who smoke claim 20 percent of all deaths.

More and more smokers quit now than before. Unfortunately, new smokers are pulled in every day. In Oregon, 27 percent of teens smoke. Although studies show that the number of men smoking is on the decline, lung cancer among women has increased sevenfold.

For most people, quitting smoking is a question of "when" rather than "if." Many high school students plan to quit when they graduate, and many experts agree that smokers must be self-motivated to quit — the timing of which is different for each person.

Unfortunately, for many, smoking ends only with the premature closing of their lives.

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