

Gary Tyler Family Victimized

Bob Nirkind

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Although there have been no recent developments in the nation-wide campaign to free Gary Tyler, the 17-year-old Black Louisiana man framed and sentenced to death for the shooting of a 13-year-old white racist youth, there have been new disclosures concerning Tyler and his family, friends and supporters.

In an effort to keep Tyler as isolated and helpless as possible, prison officials at the Angola State Penitentiary in Louisiana sentenced Gary on June 2 to 20 days of solitary confinement for allegedly fashioning a knife out of a prison spoon. Tyler denied the accusation while guards at the prison explained that the spoon was considered a dangerous weapon because it had been "twisted."

In other recent developments, the entire Tyler family has been adversely affected since the rise of a strong protest movement. For daring to back up one of their own, three members of the family have lost their jobs in and around the St. Rose, Louisiana community within the last few weeks. Elyos Tyler was fired without warning from his place of employment, one of his sons was dismissed for skipping work to attend Gary's trial and his daughter-in-law was canned for passing around a petition at work.

Even more harassed has been Gary's 16-year-old brother Terry, who was recently arrested with a friend, Donald Files, who served as a defense witness at Gary's last hearing. Both were held for 25 hours for allegedly "breaking and entering," then charged with stealing a \$2 bill and a pack of cigarettes. Ruche Marino, the same judge who presided over Gary's trial, presided over Terry's hearing as well and set an absurd \$5,000 bail for the pair.

Equally as repulsive as Marino's ridiculous bail was the attitude of the police towards Terry Tyler and his companion. As Tyler recalled, one white cop put two shells in his .44 magnum, "spun the barrel of the gun, clicking the trigger at us, playing Russian Roulette, I guess."

In a statement which summarizes the attitude of the Louisiana police towards justice for blacks, one unnamed cop said "I wish we didn't have trials no more. I wish it was like in them olden days when you could just hang them niggers."

In the New Orleans area, blacks have been subjected to more and more instances of harassment since the Gary Tyler trial. Sheriff's deputies have repeatedly stopped cars of Tyler Defense Committee supporters for phony traffic violations. The Ku Klux Klan has been active as well, riding through the St. Rose community where the Tyler family lives, clad sometimes in their traditional white robes and at other times in T-shirts imprinted with the KKK emblem.

Meanwhile, across the country people are organizing all manner of appeals to free Gary Tyler. In the past few weeks, demonstrations and rallies have been held in New York City, Pittsburgh, Springfield, Mass., Cleveland, Boston, Louisville and right here in Detroit.

Gary Tyler's freedom—from jail at least—depends on nationwide support. Contributions can be sent care of Juanita Tyler, 736 Mockingbird, Destrehan, La.

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