

Trial may be over, but many wonder if justice was served

By Catherine Blalock
Staff Reporter

Since Officer Luke Wilke was found not guilty of third degree assault involving the arrest of Francisco Renteria, both sides have expressed their opinions.

Connie Mendoza, a friend of the Renteria's and a translator, said the family is very saddened by the decision.

"My feeling of the verdict is that I know it was unjustified justice," she said.

Elliot Rivas, a coalition member and assistant director of the Hispanic Center, said, "I think we were really hoping for something positive out of this tragic event. I'm not sure if justice was served. No one has been held accountable."

Mendoza is very upset by the makeup of the jury (mostly Caucasian) and feels that a mixed jury would have been more appropriate. She also believes that if the death of Renteria would have been mentioned, the outcome might have been different.

"I think if the word 'death' would have been allowed to be used instead of the word 'struggle,' the verdict would have come out different. I believe he's done his sentence, but he did not commit any crime. Francisco was an innocent man," she said.

Mendoza feels the police department is teaching officers an inappropriate method of force. As witnesses from the Lincoln Police Department testified, she heard that officers are taught to use military techniques when apprehending a suspect.

"You cannot train people to use war tactics on everyday people," she said. She feels these types of techniques should be outlawed.

Lt. Kent Wood-head said the types of force used by the LPD will not change.

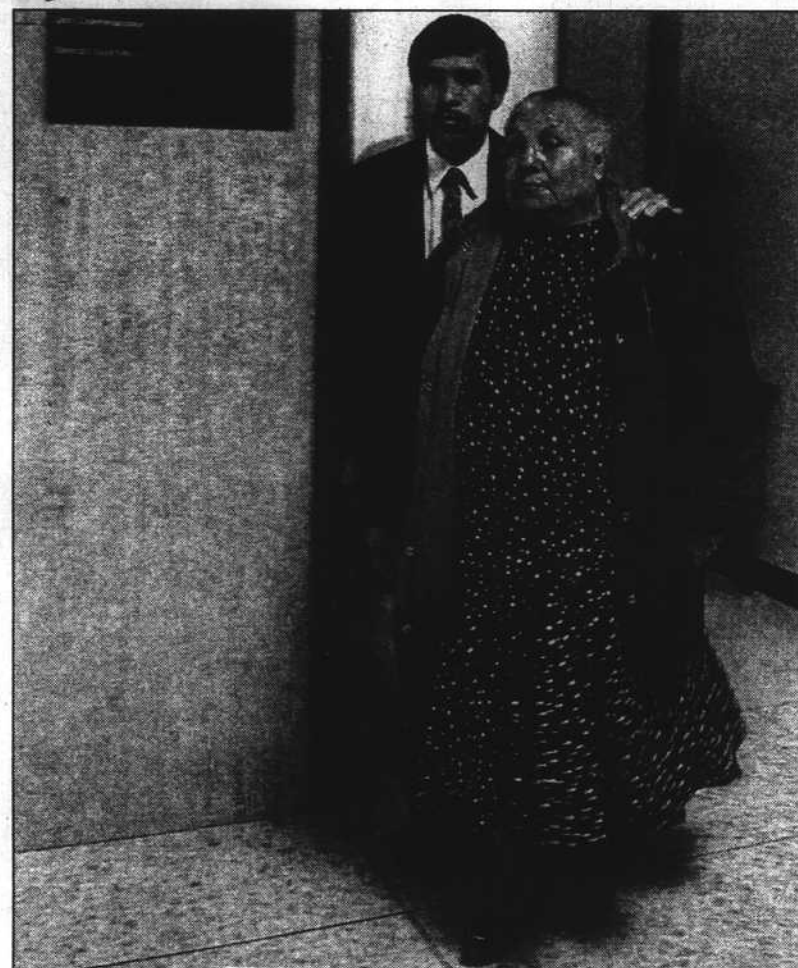
Making nation's children's lives better should include education and planning

By Doug Kerns
Staff Reporter

Zero Population Growth, a non-profit Washington D.C. organization concerned with the effects of population pressures on the quality of children's lives, placed Lincoln fifth on its "Children's Environmental Index."

The study ranked 207 U.S. cities based on these indicators: percentage of children in poverty, unemployment rate for 1994, percentage of births to teens, property crime rate, violent crime rate, student-teacher ratio, per pupil expenditures on education, high school drop-out rate, toxic releases, number of superfund sites, number of days with unhealthy air, average pollution standard index value, number of safe drinking water act violations, and per capita water consumption.

Sharon Pickett, Director of Communications of Zero Population Growth, said, "In general, we found that larger cities provided a poorer environment for children than smaller cities."



Tanna Kinnaman/DN
After hearing detailed testimony on the arrest and death of Francisco Renteria, Jose Cruz Martinez, Renteria's nephew, and Maria Vaga, Renteria's mother, leave the courtroom.

Detective Jim Spanel, LPD union secretary said, "The jury made the only verdict possible. If police don't have the authority to take people into custody, then there's no need for a police department."

Chief Tom Casady said that as soon as Wilke was ready to return to work, he would be returned to his normal

duties. He believes that Wilke will continue to be one of the department's finest officers.

Mendoza feels that when Wilke returns to work no one will respect him.

"I think a lot of citizens will not respect Wilke. He is wearing a uniform that he should not be wearing," Mendoza said.

Pickett directed the research and served as editor of the index. She explained the effects of population growth on children's environment: "All the indicators we've looked at are made worse by rapid population growth."

Pickett did note that some indicators weighed more heavily than others and that other factors also play a role in the environment of children.

"We tried to limit ourselves to data that we could get from the public record so that all of the categories could be quantified in a fair way; however, this does not negate the fact that there are lots of other factors that influence environmental quality."

Pickett felt that having smaller families could relieve some of the pressure.

"By choosing to have smaller families, we feel that people can take an important step in addressing the population pressures, not only for ourselves today, but particularly for future generations," she said.

Pickett suggested ways students can affect population growth, including

"things like the decision to have smaller families or deciding to try to make small changes in their lifestyle that would reduce wasteful consumption, or to use more recycling and to be a consumer that's aware of the need for environmental protection in the kinds of products they buy, or choosing to eat lower on the food chain."

She also stressed the importance of voting.

"We want to make sure students vote, and that they vote for candidates that understand these problems and are committed to making it a priority of exacting policies that will ensure everyone's right to reproductive choice, access to safe and affordable contraceptives, support for international foreign aid that would help reduce the migration pressures on this country, implementing voluntary family planning programs in the developing world, and the need for school based sexuality education."

The index was distributed on Capitol Hill and nationally in the bimonthly publication, "The ZPG Reporter." The next index is planned in two years.



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