

## **DEATH ROW INMATE GUY LEGRANDE DECLARED MENTALLY INCOMPETENT TO BE EXECUTED**

ALBEMARLE, NC – As North Carolina and the nation are beginning to recognize the inhumanity and unconstitutionality of executing the mentally ill, a superior court judge in Stanly County today ruled that death row inmate Guy LeGrande is too mentally ill to face the ultimate punishment.

Serving as his own lawyer, wearing a Superman t-shirt and communicating with Oprah through the television, Guy LeGrande was sentenced to death in 1996 in Stanly County for his role in the murder for hire plot masterminded by the victim's husband.

LeGrande, a Black man, was tried before an all-White jury by the District Attorney's office that handed out gold noose lapel pins when the attorneys won a death verdict. The victim was white, as was her husband, the mastermind.

"This order addresses only one of the injustices in this case," said LeGrande's attorney Jay Ferguson. "If the Legislature enacts the Racial Justice Act, the courts can examine serious issues, such as why prosecutors excluded every African-American citizen from Mr. LeGrande's jury, and why they chose to prosecute the less culpable, mentally ill Black man for death, while giving a life saving deal to the White mastermind."

LeGrande rambled incoherently during his trial, cursed the jury and called them "Antichrists." In his testimony to the jury, he told them that "[h]ell ain't deep enough for you people. But you remember when you arrive, say my name, Guy Tobias LeGrande. For I shall be waiting. And each and every one of you will be mine for all eternity. And we shall dance in my father's house. And you will worship me and proclaim me Lord and master. But for right now, all you so-called good folks can kiss my natural black ass in the showroom of Helig Meyers. Pull the damn switch and shake that groove thing."

"Guy LeGrande was delusional at the time of the crime, he was delusional while representing himself in his own trial for his life, and he is delusional today," said Ferguson. "The court has finally stepped in and halted a colossal miscarriage of justice, the execution of a seriously mentally ill man." LeGrande is also represented by attorney James Monroe.

LeGrande was scheduled to be executed on December 1, 2006, until Judge Robert Bell stayed the execution in order to evaluate LeGrande's competency. Judge Bell heard from three mental health experts during a two-day hearing in June. One expert was hired by the State, one by the defense, and one served as the Court's expert. Both the Court's and the defense's experts found LeGrande mentally ill and incompetent, while the State's expert found him mentally ill but competent.

The Court's expert, a Dorothea Dix psychiatrist who previously had never found a death row inmate too mentally ill to proceed, could not conclude that LeGrande was competent. The expert cited LeGrande's belief, written in a letter to his sister, that "my pardon is coming through and

I'm getting three billion dollars" as evidence of his delusional disorder. In the Court's expert's opinion, LeGrande's delusional disorder "interfere[s] with his appreciation of the nature and object of the proceedings against him."

"Execution is to be reserved for the worst crimes and the most culpable offenders," said Triangle psychiatrist Holly Rogers. "Both the mental health and legal communities are asserting that seriously mentally ill offenders, like Mr. LeGrande, simply cannot understand the consequences of their actions enough to make the death penalty a just punishment."

Recently the American Psychological Association, the American Psychiatric Association, The National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, and the American Bar Association called for changes in the law, to ensure people with serious mental illness are not executed. A bill was introduced in the North Carolina General Assembly last year that would exempt the seriously mentally ill from capital punishment. Other states have also introduced bills and are considering the issue.

An April 2007 poll found that a majority of North Carolinians believe that mentally ill offenders should not be subject to execution.