

FELTON CASE GOES TO THE JURY

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In a chilling, obsessively planned conspiracy, Leo Felton laid the groundwork from within prison for "Aryan Unit One," the white supremacist terror cell that would wreak havoc and begin a nationwide racial holy war against "mud people" - African-Americans, Jews, Asians, and Latinos - while his partner Erica Chase bought weapons and counterfeiting equipment to prepare for his release, federal prosecutors said yesterday in their closing arguments in Felton's bombing conspiracy trial.

But defense attorney Lenore Glaser appealed to jurors to consider Felton, 31, a misguided artist who depicted racist acts in comic books and dabbled in nonviolent crimes like counterfeiting without ever actually committing acts of neo-Nazi terrorism.

Jurors began deliberations yesterday afternoon after hearing nine days of evidence. Felton and Chase are charged with plotting to bomb a Jewish or African-American target, bank robbery and financing a racist underground cell with proceeds from counterfeiting. They also face a variety of handgun charges.

"They were both long-standing white supremacists committed to a vision of an all-white America," Assistant US Attorney Emily Schulman told the jury. The case, Schulman added, is not about their political beliefs but about the federal crimes they committed on the path toward "rahowa," or racial holy war.

In a brief closing argument, Glaser said the government had not proven Felton's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. "This is not a case where political ideas are on trial," she said. "You need to separate your feelings about ideas and look at the evidence."

Glaser said the document investigators found in the North End apartment shared by Felton and Chase depicting a series of racial attacks, as well as passages about planned attacks in scores of prison letters, actually referred to the ornate comic strips Felton drew.

"This isn't planning. It's just talk," she said. "These are fantasies that Leo has."

In his closing argument, federal defender Timothy Watkins portrayed his client Chase as a bright-eyed victim of a charismatic convict. She purchased a gun and assisted in counterfeiting money, Watkins said, but Chase, 22, never shared Felton's desire to build a bomb.

"She was not a wild-eyed, rabble-rousing terrorist ready to march into battle for white power," Watkins said.

Felton used Chase like he used his ex-wife and fellow inmates during his decade in prison, Watkins said. "He's kind of like a hurricane, all kinds of energy going in all kinds of directions, able to really sweep a lot of people up into it," he said.

Chase's infatuation with Felton turned her into a different person, Watkins said, calling his client's vision of a shared future with the ex-convict "pathetic," and her decisions "mind-boggling" and "incomprehensibly stupid."

Felton used Chase for money, logistical help, and nonviolent schemes - never trusting her for the real work of Aryan Unit One, which was to build bombs and plan murders, Watkins said.

Neither defense lawyer contested the counterfeiting charges.

After closing arguments, Glaser moved for a mistrial because she and Watkins mounted antagonistic defenses. US District Judge Nancy Gertner denied the motion because Glaser hadn't asked earlier for the two defendants to be tried separately.

Assistant US Attorney Theodore Merritt said Chase willingly embraced Felton's bomb conspiracy, building on years of neo-Nazi commitment as a member of the World Church of the Creator. "She chose to become a terrorist - her term - and join Leo Felton in racial holy war," he said.

In a letter laced with racial epithets referenced by Schulman in her closing argument, Felton told Chase that he was someone who "would just as soon exterminate [several groups of people] as tie his shoes." Felton spoke of going underground after his release from prison in January 2001 and becoming "part of the historical process."

According to testimony from a cooperating witness, convict Thomas Struss, Felton planned to target the US Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., Jewish media moguls including Steven Spielberg, and black leaders such as the Rev. Jesse Jackson.

The jury of seven women and five men will continue deliberations today.

Under sentencing guidelines, if convicted on all counts Chase faces about eight years in prison, while Felton would face a minimum sentence of 35 years.

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Caption: PHOTO

LEO FELTON Bomb plot alleged

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