

# Chronological Order of Events Concerning the “Jena Six”

*Editor’s Note: Because of the overwhelming number of requests from outside media and other individuals/groups, the Jena Times has compiled a chronological order of events from last August until now concerning events surrounding the “Jena Six.” This feature was compiled from news stories appearing in this newspaper, whose information came directly from investigators with the LaSalle Parish Sheriff’s Department, the Jena Police Department, the LaSalle Parish District Attorney’s Office, LaSalle Parish School System officials, and from information obtained from US Attorney Donald Washington and FBI Agent Lewis Chapman. We believe this to be a nearly accurate depiction of events during this past year.*

**August 30, 2006:** During a Wednesday assembly of all males at Jena High School, many items were discussed concerning rules and policies of the school for the new school year. Such items included dress codes, etc. Near the end of the assembly, one black student jokingly asked Assistant Principal Gawen Burgess if black students were permitted to sit underneath the tree in the center of the square located in the center of the campus. The question evoked laughter from everyone at the meeting, including the black students, with Burgess responding, “Don’t even go there. You know you can sit anywhere you want.” Burgess and the rest of the students knew the remark was made to gain laughter as a joke, not as a serious question. A couple more jokes were also made (not about the tree) before the lighthearted assembly was dismissed.

**August 31, 2006:** On this Thursday morning two “hangman” nooses were found hanging from the lone tree in the center of the

area known as the Square, located on the center of Jena High School's campus. Some students had arrived and saw the nooses, but as soon as they were brought to the attention of school officials, they were removed. Students that arrived after 7:55 a.m. did not even see the nooses, as they had already been removed. The three white students who placed the nooses in the tree were identified by school officials, a school/state/FBI investigation was held, and they were removed from school with a recommendation by Principal Scott Windham for expulsion. A hearing by an expulsion committee ruled against expulsion and instead suspended the three students for nine days at an alternative facility, two weeks of in-school suspension, and a number of Saturday detentions. They also had to undergo evaluations from licensed professionals. The committee's investigation revealed there was no racial motivation behind the nooses and that the incident was a prank. "To say that these students were simply 'slapped on the wrist' is a grave misconception of what punishment actually took place," said LaSalle Superintendent Roy Breithaupt. The overwhelming majority of students at Jena High School did not even know about the nooses until the following week, when it was published in daily newspaper reports and TV programs.

An external, criminal investigation did take place in the days that followed the nooses being found, with police, including an agent with the FBI, interviewing the three students. All agencies concluded the same: The noose incident did not meet the criteria for a federal "hate" crime and although it was a terrible act that should have been punished within the school system, it did not warrant criminal charges from either the state (local district attorney's office) or the federal government. (It was learned later that the US Attorney's Office did review the noose incident through its civil rights division and also came to the same conclusions.)

With so much emphasis on the nooses in this case, LPSB Child Welfare Supervisor Melinda Edwards said it might surprise everyone to learn that the three students did not have a knowledge

of black history in relation to that hanging of black citizens in the south during the civil rights movement.

“We discussed this in great detail with those students,” Edwards said. “They honestly had no knowledge of the history concerning nooses and black citizens. This may seem hard to believe for some people, but this is exactly what everyone on the committee determined.”

She also said that once the historical significance of the nooses was revealed to the students and how it was considered a tremendous insult to those of the black race, they showed great remorse.

“When they were told about the historical relevance of the nooses and how others would interpret their actions, they really were very remorseful,” she said. “I can honestly say that these boys regretted tremendously ever hanging those nooses.”

**September 1, 2006:** Some black students have said they participated in a “protest” at the school this day in response to the noose incident the prior day. They said they met underneath the tree in an act of solidarity; however, this was the only report of such a protest. The school officials note that if such a protest was conducted, it apparently did not disrupt school enough to draw their attention to the incident as no report of such a protest was noted by administrators or teachers at the school. For the most part, the majority of students at JHS still did not even know about the nooses being hung.

**The following four days, September 2-5:** There were no reports of violence or confrontations in the town or at JHS. Students were out of school on Monday, September 4, and on Tuesday, the school did report one fight at school, but it was not linked to the noose incident. However, on Tuesday night, September 5, several black parents and students attended a rally at the L&A Missionary Baptist Church to discuss the noose incident and how to respond. The event was covered by this area’s daily newspaper, which published an article on Wednesday, describing the noose incident

as “racial.” Television stations then caught on to the story, and segments were broadcasts that same day, again describing the incident as racially motivated. It should be noted that no law enforcement agency, including the FBI, has determined the noose incident to be racially motivated.

**September 6, 2006:** The result of the media coverage was a tense atmosphere at the school Wednesday, September 6, where at least two fights occurred between students. One of those altercations was between a white girl and black girl, and another sent a white student to the emergency room for stitches to the back of his head after he was hit from behind while walking to class in a hallway. Because of the media attention, police officers from the Jena Police Department and the LaSalle Parish Sheriff’s Department stayed at the school most of the day, especially during time when students were out of classes. The tension also prompted Principal Scott Windham to call an assembly of all students, where he, LaSalle School Superintendent Roy Breithaupt, and LaSalle Parish District Attorney Reed Walters addressed students. A faculty meeting was also held that afternoon, setting new duty posts for teachers and requiring all male teachers to be on duty at all times.

**September 7, 2006:** On Thursday, September 7, as the media continued to flame the racial winds, police officers were again at the school as students arrived and stayed throughout the day until they left to go home. There were no reports of any misconduct related to the noose incident. But because of the area-wide media attention, a football game between the Jena Junior High School Giants and the Vidalia Junior High School Vikings, that was to have taken place at JHS, was cancelled.

**September 8, 2006:** Shortly after students arrived to school on Friday, the school went into “lock-down” mode after a report was received that a student had brought a gun to school.

For approximately three hours, students stayed inside classrooms as police officers searched the school grounds and students for weapons. No such weapons were found, but a large number of cell phones were confiscated. It is against state-law to bring cell phones on campus.

Because of the large array of rumors that circulated during the week, culminated with all types of reasons why the school went into lock-down mode Friday morning, parents began arriving at the school by 11:15 a.m. to check their children out of school.

Some 150 students did not even show up to start school Friday, and by the time over 160 more students checked out (in about 30 minutes) following the lock-down, well over half of the student body at JHS was not even in school by Friday afternoon.

Classes had been reduced in size drastically, with some classes with 26 students enrolled having only four or five in attendance. The massive exodus from JHS prompted Superintendent Breithaupt to make a radio statement on KJNA shortly after lunch Friday. In his radio broadcast with Owner-Disc Jockey Larry Evans, Breithaupt said:

“The LaSalle Parish School System has a history of providing inclusive and safe schools and we’re committed to this tradition. “It’s very unfortunate that we cannot control everyone’s behavior and we cannot control what people say sometimes, but we’re very confident in the fact that we have very safe schools. “Jena High School is a safe school and we have confidence in the administration and the teachers because we know these are individuals whose primary concern is to protect students and provide for their needs and provide them a quality education. And I can tell you that at Jena High School you will find a safe school today. We have local law enforcement on duty just to make sure things are going right. The school was inspected by our local law enforcement and found to be safe. There have been no major incidents over the last few days, so there is really no justification for any alarm on the part of any parent or anyone caring for a child. We’re closely monitoring the situation at Jena High School.

I just returned from JHS myself – had lunch there – and I found everyone to be very calm and looking forward to the ballgame tonight. And I can tell you that JHS, at this present time, is a very safe learning environment. As a matter of fact, the most protected place children can be today is at school. I’ve seen teenagers driving vehicles up and down roads, driving at high rates of speed, and I know that if those children would not have been checked out of school, they would be in the classroom where they would be learning and taking advantage of the opportunities we have for them.” The superintendent further stated that parents need not fear for their students and their reaction by pulling them out of school simply had no justification. “It’s unfortunate that things like this happen. I understand that parents want to protect their children but sometimes, due to the fact that we cannot control rumors and we cannot control information that is false, people are given information that is not necessarily correct. In this particular case, I think there is much concern on the part of many people that really has no justification. They (parents) can be confident in the fact that we’re going to provide a quality education to the students of LaSalle Parish and our primary concern is that we have good, safe schools that provide students everything they would have need of,” Breithaupt concluded.

That night, the week ended with a strong police presence at the Jena-Buckeye football game, but nothing out of the ordinary occurred at the game.

On the sidelines during the game, one Jena player stated that all of the things being said about the school in the media and around the parish is simply not true.

“Sure, there may be some whites that don’t like blacks, and there may be some blacks that don’t like whites, but that is a very small minority here,” the player said. “At JHS, we’re neither black or white...we’re black and gold!”

**September 18, 2006:** Black parent Tracey Bowen addressed the LaSalle Parish School Board at their regular monthly meeting

concerning the noose incident. Bowen said that she was there on behalf of all parents, defending her and several other black parents' recent cries of racism following an incident at JHS where two hangman's nooses were discovered at the school.

"Everyone says that we went overboard but I don't believe we went overboard with this," she said. "Right is right – no matter what color you are."

Three white JHS students were suspended following the incident after it was discovered their motivation was not racism but rather a prank taken from a movie.

Bowen contended that even if it was a prank, the punishment warranted much more, given the history of American racism against blacks.

"We're all equal and we only want what is right," she continued. "What goes for one goes for all."

Bowen read from a prepared statement and that took less than five minutes to read. Approximately ten other black supporters were there with her.

Following her statements, the board thanked Bowen for her comments and moved to the next item on the agenda. Because the issue involved students of a school, board members are prohibited from discussing them or information about the incident in public due to confidentiality reasons.

**September 9-November 30, 2006:** Despite the media promoting racial tension, there were no such reports of any violence or destruction during this time period. Disruptions at school were only those of typical disruptions, nothing related to any racial divide, thus, putting to rest any speculation that there was true racial tensions in town.

**Late September-Early October, 2006:** Although the specific date cannot be verified, an assembly of all students was called by school officials at JHS where various officials addressed the student body. Those speaking included sheriff's detectives Paul

Smith and Jimmy Arbogast, Principal Scott Windham, Superintendent Breithaupt, and LaSalle Parish District Attorney Reed Walters.

The assembly was prompted when police were called to the school to calm down a student who was fighting and when police got there the student allegedly tried to hit Detective Smith. Although Smith did not arrest the juvenile (who would later be implicated as one of the “Jena Six”) he felt the need to call the assembly and requested the DA to come and speak to students.

Walters said that he’d been preparing an aggravated rape case that morning when he received the call. Such a case in Louisiana could subject the accused to the death penalty.

“I had been handed an aggravated rape case where an 18 year-old had allegedly had sex with a 12 year-old and I was concentrating on that,” the District Attorney Reed Walters said. “This is the type of case that can subject one to the death penalty in Louisiana so I was very much involved in deciding how to proceed with the very serious case when I got the call from Paul.”

“So, here I am thinking about this case and what to do,” he continued. “Should I or should I not seek the death penalty and in the middle of all this Paul (Smith – then LPSO detective) calls and says we need you to come to the school. I thought to myself, I don’t want to go to the school right now, but he said he really needed my presence there.”

LaSalle Parish Sheriff’s Detective Jimmy Arbogast said that tensions were high on the campus on that particular day and the purpose of the district attorney coming to school was to calm everyone down.

“Everybody was upset and Paul just wanted Reed to explain to them that they have to think about their actions,” he said. “Reed talked about the case he was looking over that day and was explaining to them that they would be held accountable for their actions.”

Walters said that he did mention the death penalty case before the students, although he did not divulge any details about the case.



While he was talking to the students, he contends some of the students were not paying him any attention.

“What happened was, two or three girls, white girls, were chit-chatting on their cell phones or playing on their cell phones right in the middle of my dissertation,” he remembered. “I got a little irritated at them and said, ‘pay attention to me. I am right now having to deal with an aggravated rape case where I’ve got to decide whether the death penalty applies or not.’”

The DA said that his purpose in his speech was to allow the students to see the very serious consequences that certain actions would have. Furthermore, even though the DA didn’t mention any names associated with the rape case, several in the auditorium who were related to that white man and white girl involved in the rape case, apparently figured out what case the DA was referencing even though he never mentioned any names or other vital information about the case.

“The reason I know this is because after I left I had to go back to the school to talk with those certain students and their mothers to calm them down,” Walters said. “I would assume that when I made the statement concerning my pen they thought I was talking about their relative.”

“I’m trying to help Paul and Jimmy and the school by saying I want you (students) to call me before you do something stupid,” he said. “If you don’t, then I have to go based on what the facts are. I was trying to impress upon the kids to please think before you act. That was the context of what took place that day.”

To emphasize his point and to grab the attention of the uninterested white girls, the DA said he pulled out his ink pen and made a statement that many in the black community felt was aimed at them.

“As I got aggravated with the white girls, I made reference to the aggravated rape case and say, look, I can be your best friend or your worst enemy,” he said. “With the stroke of a pen I can make your life miserable so I want you to call me before you do something stupid. But that last part never gets reported.”

Also contrary to reports concerning the DA's speech to students, Arbogast notes that the black and white students were not sitting in segregated fashion as many say.

"If I remember correctly, they came into the auditorium and sat by classes, such as homeroom classes," the detective said. "The whites and blacks were scattered throughout the auditorium and he never focused on any one particular group when giving his speech."

Walters said he just remembers walking up and down the left aisle of the auditorium while talking when he noticed the three white girls not paying attention to his speech.

"If anything, I was focused on the girls when I said the pen statement and not any of the black students in the assembly," he said. "In all actuality, if I hadn't been dealing with the aggravated rape case I would have never even thought about saying that statement."

Arbogast said that he is very confident that the DA was not addressing black students.

"Look, these are kids," Arbogast said. "That's what the DA was trying to explain is that if they come up here and do something stupid then its going to affect you from now on. Every time you go to get a job, every time you go some where, you don't want something (criminal history) following you around."

Smith said that the reason for having Walters speak before the students was to simply have them stop and think about the consequences of inappropriate actions.

"In my theory of calling him up there was to get him up there and explain that there are consequences of their actions and hopefully, it would ease the tensions," Smith said. "Maybe they would stop and think, hey, we can't be acting like this."

Walters also noted that this was not the only time he'd addressed students.

"I have spoken to students on several other occasions," he said. "My purpose is simply to have them to think before they act. This

pen is a pretty important instrument in my hand. I can help you or I can hurt you. It's up to you. It's not up to me."

**November 30, 2006:** Around 4 a.m., Thursday, November 30, the Jena Fire Department received an alarm that the main, two-story academic building of Jena High School was on fire. They arrived to find the building nearly engulfed in flames and soon called for every fire department in the parish to respond for assistance.

Within 20 minutes, departments from across the parish converged on the scene to assist with the fire.

A total of 98 firefighters from 15 different departments and 32 other assistant personnel fought the blaze until it was finally extinguished around 11 a.m. Officials from the Louisiana State Fire Marshal's Office were also at the scene, and quickly determined the cause of the fire – arson.

According to sources, one fire was started in the main office complex of the building, specifically in Principal Scott Windham's office. There were also multiple fires set on the second floor in various classrooms. The result was a fire that firefighters in the parish have only read about or watched training films on.

There still have been no arrests made in connection with the arson fire and officials do not believe it is related to the noose incident.

November 30<sup>th</sup> also marked the changing of command at Jena High School, as Principal Scott Windham was promoted to a position at the school system's central office and was replaced by new JHS Principal Slick Joiner.

**December 1, 2006:** The first time law enforcement officials used the term "racial tensions" was in describing the events of the weekend and subsequent Monday, in which several black-white altercations occurred. LaSalle Parish Sheriff's Department Investigator Paul Smith said the unusual racial unrest throughout the community started Friday night, December 1, at a private party held at the Jena Fair Barn.

“The facility was rented by a woman who was throwing a party for her daughter,” Arbogast said. “During the course of that party that night, where both blacks and whites attended, Robert Bailey, Jr. and some other friends came to the party seeking a mutual friend inside the party.”

Walters said that according to the statement given by Robert Bailey, Jr., he was asked to leave by the person who was giving the party.

“My understanding of the case is that the mother was going back inside to get the friend and the defendant (Justin Sloan) comes out and hits him (Bailey),” Walters said. “A scuffle ensues and then Mr. Bailey leaves. All of this took place outside of the fair barn.” The DA noted that this was not a fight because Robert Bailey did not swing at Sloan or fight back.

“He did not do anything,” Walters said. “Robert Bailey, Jr. was the victim of this incident. He was hit by the defendant’s fist, knocked down, some type of scuffle occurred, then Mr. Bailey left.”

The police and DA noted that contrary to reports since the incident that a beer bottle was used in the attack of Bailey, Bailey’s own statement written after the incident said that he was hit only with the fist of Sloan.

“There was no statement given by the victim at that time that any weapon was used in the attack,” Walters said. “There is nothing in his statement that says ‘he hit me with a beer bottle.’ He did not go to the hospital for stitches and there is no medical evidence other than this was a simple battery.”

Walters said that Sloan was arrested for simple battery, prosecuted for simple battery, pled guilty to simple battery, and was sentenced for simple battery.

“As part of his sentence, he was made to apologize to Robert Bailey in open court,” Walters said. “In summation, it started as a simple battery, the evidence supported a simple battery, and it was prosecuted as a simple battery. It was only after the fact, after the ‘Jena Six’ began to receive national attention that I heard that a beer bottle was involved and stitches were involved. So, I checked

with the local hospital and there was no medical evidence to support the accusation.”

Justin Sloan, 22, of Jena, a white participant of the party, was arrested by the sheriff’s office in connection with the fair barn fight, and this event led to other attacks throughout the area.

“Sometime later that night, there was another incident near the fair grounds but there were no arrests made in connection with that,” Smith said.

**December 2, 2006:** On Saturday night, December 2, another altercation occurred at the Gotta-Go Grocery, a convenience store near the Jena Airport, that resulted in three Jena High School students arrested on several charges and the victim having to be treated at the hospital for injuries.

The victim, Matt Windham, alleges that three black males attacked and robbed him while the three accused are claiming self-defense.

Both the victim and those arrested offered different statements to police, however, two eye witnesses to the event unrelated to the victim or those arrested, gave a report of the incident that corresponded with the victim.

Those arrested include: Robert Bailey, Jr., 17, of Jena; Ryan Simmons, 17, of Jena, and Theodore Shaw, 17, of Jena. All three are students at Jena High School and each were charged with second-degree robbery, theft of a firearm, and conspiracy to commit second-degree robbery.

No reports of any fights or attacks were noted for the following day, Sunday, December 3.

**December 4, 2006:** On Monday, December 4, one of the most violent attacks in Jena High School’s history was orchestrated by seven black students on a lone white student, according to authorities.

The attack came less than four hours after students were allowed back on campus following the arson fire of JHS. According to witness statements, at the end of the lunch period, the seven

students jumped a white male student, beating him unconscious with him having to be carried from the school by ambulance to the emergency room. Trial testimony later identified Mychal Bell as the first of the group to strike Justin Barker, hitting him so hard from behind that it knocked him immediately unconscious. Other participants in the attack then joined Bell in kicking and stomping Barker as he lay defenseless and unconscious on the ground. Although Barker was released later that day from the hospital, it was reported that he continues to suffer pain from the attack. He did attend a senior class ring ceremony that same night, but had to leave early because of pain.

Shortly after the incident, sheriff's detectives arrested Robert Bailey and Theodore Shaw again in connection with the attack, along with JHS standout football player Carwin Jones, 18, of Jena, Bryant R. Purvis, Mychal Bell, and two juveniles.

The seven were originally arrested for second-degree battery related charges, however, LaSalle Parish District Attorney J. Reed Walters made the decision to up the charges to more serious offenses.

All seven were arraigned on charges of conspiracy to commit second-degree murder and attempted second-degree murder.

Walters charged juvenile Mychal Bell as an adult while the other two remain in juvenile court.

Mychal Bell, 16, of Jena, another standout JHS football player, had his bond set at \$90,000.

Total bonds on each of the students from the Gotta-Go fight and the JHS attack were set at: Jones - \$90,000; Bailey - \$138,000; Shaw - \$130,000; Purvis - \$70,000; and Simmons - \$60,000. (It should be noted that portions of some of the students' bond were from the event at Gotta-Go Grocery, making them higher than others.) No information was available concerning bond on the other juvenile.

Investigator Smith noted that since the JHS attack on December 4, there have been no other reports of violence in the Jena area connected with the incidents.

From all evidence gathered by law enforcement detectives, the violent attack of Barker by seven black students at Jena High School December 4 is not linked to the arson fire that destroyed the main academic building four days prior or the hanging of a noose at JHS in August.

U.S. Attorney Donald Washington has stated on numerous occasions that no where in any witness statements concerning the attack is there ever any reference to the noose incident in August, thereby, discounting the attack was related to the noose hangings. Investigator Paul Smith of the LaSalle Parish Sheriff's Department said the investigation so far has revealed no link between the fire or noose incidents and several fights throughout Jena over the previous weekend involving white and black students of JHS.

**December 7, 2006:** Approximately 35 ministers and lay-leaders from many Jena-area black and white churches met for over an hour last Thursday night, uniting in their efforts to promote peace among all citizens.

The ministers met at Trout Creek Baptist Church to start a new ministerial alliance group for Jena churches of all denominations and racial-ethnic groups. The meeting occurred just days following racial unrest throughout Jena, specifically involving students at Jena High School.

“We’re not here to talk about what has happened, but rather what we can do to address those issues from a spiritual basis,” Jena First Baptist Church Pastor Dominick DiCarlo told the group. “This is a spiritual problem and there is no other institution appointed by God to deal with the heart problem of man other than His church.”

DiCarlo said he believes all area ministers must unite to combat the spiritual forces that are attacking area young people and there must be a unified front for the sake of the entire community.

“We want to implement Biblical solutions and stress the value of powerful prayer among all believers, white and black,” he said.

By the end of the meeting, the group agreed in wording for a resolution to be printed in the newspaper (see resolution inside this issue) with all ministers' signatures attached.

The clergy also agreed to address the situation from their individual pulpits during Sunday services, encouraging their members to pray and to seek peace among students and adults.

They also organized a prayer time last Sunday, December 10, at the four different schools in Jena – Jena High, Jena Junior High, Jena Elementary, and Good Pine Middle School.

At JHS alone, over 200 people from all denominations and racial groups met to pray for the school, its students, teachers, and administrators. Joiner even opened the doors of classrooms so people could walk inside each room and pray. The end of the event had all participants joining hands in the school square for a time of corporate prayer.

On Monday of this week, administrators invited all area ministers to have lunch at Jena High with the students and teachers.

**December 13, 2006:** Approximately 600 Jena residents filled the Guy Campbell Memorial Football Stadium Wednesday night, December 13, for a community-wide prayer and unity service sponsored by local ministers.

The new ministerial alliance, consisting of Jena area pastors of various denominations and ethnic memberships, organized the event during a special meeting of some 35 pastors and lay-leaders December 7.

The purpose of the new alliance and the prayer meeting last week was to unite all Christians in light of recent racial tensions surrounding Jena High School.

Jena has been plagued in recent weeks with a series of events containing racial overtones, culminating December 4 with a violent attack on the campus of Jena High School involving black and white students. Other events included fights throughout the Jena area involving blacks and whites, including JHS students, and the



recent arson fire at the school November 30, although so far investigators have not linked the fire to racial motivations.

“Our purpose here tonight is not to talk about what has happened, but rather to pray for healing and unity for our community,” Midway Baptist Church Pastor Rick Fezell said in opening the service. “This is not a social problem, but a spiritual problem that can only be solved by God.”

SCHOOL OFFICIALS, POLICE OFFICIALS, AND OTHER GOVERNING OFFICIALS have all noted that there have been no racial incidents since the December 4, 2006, attack and subsequent arrests. However, some time at the beginning of 2007, black ministers pulled out of the LaSalle Ministerial Alliance and are no longer participating in the joint ministry.

**March 7, 2007:** A special meeting was held at Antioch Baptist Church near Jena for the formation of a LaSalle Branch of the NAACP. According to president Caseptla Bailey, who is also the mother of accused student Robert Bailey, Jr., over 100 people, including adults and youth, paid membership fees to join the organization. The committee known as the “Jena Six Defense Committee,” was also formed this night.

**March 8, 2007:** The first “Free the Jena Six” rally was held at the LaSalle Parish Courthouse in Jena with about 30 people in attendance. Along with some of the family members of the black students accused, members from the national ACLU and state NAACP were in attendance.

**May 2, 2007:** Approximately 40 people attended a rally on the steps of the LaSalle Parish Courthouse Wednesday afternoon, calling for the release and charges dropped on six former Jena High School students.

Some of the parents and family of the six accused students were at the rally, however, a large portion of those attending were from outside of LaSalle Parish.

Groups represented included the NAACP, ACLU, and the National Action Network.

**June 25-28, 2007:** The trial of Mychal Bell, the first of the Jena Six to go to trial from the December 4, 2006, attack, was held during this week. An all-white jury was selected, however, it should be noted that no potential black jurors showed up for jury duty, although several were summoned. Bell's charges were reduced from attempted murder to aggravated second-degree battery and conspiracy to commit aggravated second-degree battery. He was convicted of both counts.

**July 26, 2007:** A community education forum was held at Good Pine Middle School led by US Attorney Donald Washington and FBI Assistant Special Agent in Charge Lewis Chapman. At this forum, Washington said his office's civil rights division has investigated all of the events in Jena during 2006, including the noose incident, the fights throughout town, and the December 4, 2006 attack. He said there were no civil right violations in any of the incidents...making specific reference to the noose incident. He also said the FBI has investigated the school system, police departments, sheriff's department, district attorney's office, and the 28<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court system and found no violations of civil rights in any area.

**July 31, 2007:** An estimated crowd of 300 people descended upon the lawn of the LaSalle Parish Courthouse Tuesday, July 31, demonstrating their support for the black Jena High School students charged in connection with an attack at the school last December.

The protesters came to Jena from all over the country, including California and Washington, D.C., although only around 10

residents of LaSalle Parish were present. Most of those were family members of the students accused in the attack.

The protest was called for a day when Mychal Bell was originally set to be sentenced following his conviction of aggravated second-degree battery and conspiracy to commit aggravated second-degree battery during a jury trial in late June.

**August 5, 2007:** Rev. Al Sharpton made his first official visit to Jena, preaching in a service at Trout Creek Baptist Church during their Sunday morning service.

**August 14, 2007:** Rev. Al Sharpton made his second visit to Jena bringing with him Martin Luther King, III, during a town hall meeting at Antioch Baptist Church on this Tuesday night.

**August 24, 2007:** Mychal Bell was back in court on a series of motions from his new pro-bono attorneys. They were successful in getting on the conviction counts thrown out, the conspiracy to commit aggravated second-degree battery, but Bell still faces sentenced on the aggravated second-degree battery count on September 20. He faces a maximum jail time of 15 years. It was also revealed during the hearing that Bell has a violent past as a juvenile, with at least four different violent arrests. He was also on juvenile probation during some of those arrests, and was on probation when the December 4, 2006 attack occurred.

**September 12, 2007:** Rev. Jesse Jackson made his first appearance in Jena during a meeting with some 300 people at Good Pine Middle School Sunday afternoon. The next day, he held a press conference/rally at the LaSalle Parish Courthouse with family members of the Jena Six.

**September 14, 2007:** LaSalle Parish District Attorney J. Reed Walters issued his first public statement on the events of this past year, noting the noose incident did not constitute a federal or state

offense, and the attack at JHS on December 4, 2006, was exactly that...and not a “school-yard fight” that has been repeatedly reported in the news media.

The Third Circuit Court of Appeal announced on this date they have overturned Mychal Bell’s conviction and have thrown it out. They ruled the matter should have been handled in juvenile court and sent it to that jurisdiction for prosecution. Walters said he would appeal the decision to the Louisiana Supreme Court.

**September 20, 2007:** Around 15,000 people from across the nation and world were in Jena for a large demonstration/rally in support of the “Jena Six.” This is the day Mychal Bell was to be sentenced prior to the appeal court decision September 14. Even though the conviction was overturned, organizers for the massive demonstration continued with the rally as planned. The rally was peaceful, as predicted by organizers.

**September 27, 2007:** Mychal Bell was released on \$45,000 bond before a crowd of family and friends and a large contingency of national and local media. He appeared in front of the LaSalle Parish Courthouse alongside Rev. Al Sharpton and Martin Luther King, III, before going home after 10 months in jail.