

Chapter 5: THE PROPER VERDICT

“EVERYBODY KNOWS HE’S GUILTY.” —Conventional wisdom, June ’93 to February, ’97, before the verdict was announced in the civil trial of O.J. Simpson for the double homicide of which he was acquitted in 1995

After two trials and hundreds of hours of media commentary on the evidence against O.J. Simpson and its probable meaning, the second jury was about to deliver its verdict. Everybody who was paying attention to the facts was supposed to know—unless they were too stupid or too biased to see the truth—that O.J. Simpson butchered two human beings. Never mind the fishy socks, the sticky glove, the phantom weapon, the missing clothes, the shaky motive, the impossible timeline or the racist cop....Never mind race, period.

If you had sense, you were supposed to know that race had absolutely no place in a rational discussion of the O.J. Simpson case. People who insisted on bringing it up were either racists themselves or con artists, like Johnnie Cochran and F. Lee Bailey, seeking to turn the issue of one man’s guilt into an irrelevant guilt trip for white people in general. One of Simpson’s own lawyers couldn’t stomach that transparent, demagogic, red herring! The shoes, the blood, the fibers, the photos and the failed lie detector test were more than enough for an honest, intelligent and conscientious jury to render the proper verdict of guilty.

Unlike the first 12 member group of citizens pilloried for its decision to free the accused, the members of the civil trial jury were expected to weigh all of the evidence carefully, for many hours—and then find O.J. guilty. With no “nonsense” about planted evidence allowed by the judge to distract them from their duty, they were then expected to come to the only honest, intelligent, conscientious conclusion possible. It was like an old western movie where some hapless cowboy is told, “we’re gonna give you a fair trial, and then we’re gonna hang ya.” The only real question was whether or not the members of his new jury were as bright and honest as they appeared to be to Jeffrey Toobin and Geraldo Rivera.

IAGO IN BRENTWOOD

This was the intellectual and emotional environment in which all discussion of the O.J. Simpson case took place on the eve of the second verdict.

As you read this record of the Court TV Discussion Group's e-mail correspondence from my perspective, don't be fooled by the relatively smooth flow of ideas within each letter or the neatly structured flow of ideas from one letter to the next. That has been edited for your benefit. With e-mail, you have to read and write with an understanding of what can and cannot be communicated because of limitations in the medium. For instance, you don't have the option of using italics or underlines to separate thoughts from spoken words. You can't italicize or underline to stress certain words or highlight key passages. You have to use quotes, if anything, or caps. But caps are considered by experienced users to be shouting and therefore rude, so many times, there is simply no way to express yourself accurately and succinctly without causing offense.

Other than that, there are few rules to limit what people can say to each other and how they say it, probably because some of the best thinkers in cyberspace can't spell or punctuate worth a damn. The free flow of ideas is crucial, so spelling and punctuation don't count as long as the meaning is clear. Surprisingly, you learn to read in a different way, so those things become a problem only when you want them to. In these pages, they could be distracting, so all of the too's I could find that should have been to's and hind's that should have been hands have been changed. I hope that you will think of it more as a translation from one language to another than an editing change, because that's closer to the truth.

Staying as close to the truth as possible is the object of this entire exercise. The truth is, our correspondence was frequently chaotic. There again, I had to make some adjustments. E-mail subject lines are sometimes accidentally attached to messages that have nothing to do with them, and the date a message was sent can be overwritten by when and how it was copied. For the purpose of continuity and readability, you won't see much of that, but I never changed anything, including differences in Canadian and U.S. spelling, at the expense of content. Where I could keep everything the way it was written, that's what I did.

Chapter 5: THE PROPER VERDICT

When O.J.'s innocence becomes widely known, no one is going to believe how bad things really were when he was presumed to be guilty. This book was written to address both of those issues; to help make the fact of his innocence widely known, and to make sure that no one forgets how the real killer was able to get away with setting him up.

In June of '95, after hearing the coroner's testimony about the murder weapon and Nicole's blunt force injury to the head, my suspicion about a military kill was heightened to a point that I could no longer shrug it off. If O.J. wasn't the killer, it had to be Fuhrman. If it couldn't have been Fuhrman, I'd know it by his alibi and his shoe size. Surely that information would be easy to find since he mentioned being in the desert, and the soles of all the policemen at Bundy were checked to distinguish them from the killer's. Besides, how else could everyone be so sure he didn't do it?

Alas, I got no response in '95 and '96 from my faxes to CNN, Court TV or E! TV. My Internet searches came up empty, as did the inquiries I made on the CTV boards.

In the discussion group, all messages are posted on electronic bulletin boards that everyone can read, which is why they are called "posts" and the forum for the discussion group is sometimes called "the boards." The abuse I was taking for my MFG posts had gotten to the point where I knew ahead of time that OJG's would just use them for target practice and no information about Fuhrman's alibi or shoe size would be forthcoming. No one was even looking at what I said, only at what they thought my reasons were for saying it—which they were sure they knew.

The post-civil-rights-era stereotype of the so-called liberal who cries "racist!" the way Joe McCarthy cried "communist!" was being applied to me, and once that became my image in the minds of people who hadn't read my posts with an open mind, I knew I'd had it on the boards. I could see why the other OJ's didn't even want to think about Fuhrman as a murder suspect. They were taking enough heat as it was for saying he planted the glove.

Jamal and Trille were being savaged, and my posts were being paraphrased to mean something other than what I wrote if anything at all, then passed

IAGO IN BRENTWOOD

on as if I had written them that way. In short, the same thing that happened to Trille was beginning to happen to me. The only chance I had to fight my way out of the situation I was in, was to do it in a forum that allowed me to limit my correspondence to individuals of my choice. That's what the e-mail group did. But I still heard nothing about Fuhrman's alibi or his shoe size.

Then, shortly before the civil trial verdict was rendered in February of '97, I got a message telling me that Mark Fuhrman wore size 12 shoes. The first letter you are going to read is the one I sent back asking for conformation....

Subj: Size 12's

Date: 97-02-03 22:00:39 EST:

From: Trooper

To: Chameleon

CC: All

Yes Chameleon—Very interesting indeed. But what is the source? HOW DO WE KNOW FOR SURE that he didn't wear size 14's (size 11 through 12 ½ feet could fit into size 12 shoes—maaaybe size 13, but I wouldn't have much confidence in that)? If the shoes really do fit, there has to be a question of who wore them. —Trooper1

I got no answer from anyone. The OJI's greatest frustration had to do with their inability to follow up on all of the clues pointing to a drug hit. As a consequence, my greatest frustration was getting them to look at something else. It's a good thing I didn't know at the time that Hbhana was a psychologist. I would never have had the nerve to say what I did about "how the human brain is wired." She was gracious enough not to put me in my unprofessional place, and thoughtful enough to see that I was only trying to show what part I thought the science of psychology played in the killing and the setup. I was trying to show that the killer understood the psychology of the situation he created, and the drug hit theory was an idea he planted to throw the defense off his trail. I wanted to show that it was a fatally flawed argument which the killer wanted the defense to make.

Chapter 5: THE PROPER VERDICT

Subj: Drug hit theory

Date: 97-02-04 22:23:52 EST

From: Trooper

To: Hhhana, Crow, Petlady, Trille, Dorothy

Hhhana— This is exactly what the defense team tried to argue in the criminal case. I'm sure that's why they didn't take a hard look at Fuhrman. Once you see the evidence that says it could have happened that way, it's hard to see it any other way. It is the same phenomenon that makes it difficult for normal people to proofread their own work (you don't have to be dyslexic like me to make mistakes you can't see. Everybody does it to some extent). We see what we expect to see. It's a function of how the human brain is wired. That's why the discussion group broke down into OJI vs. OJG camps.

At some point, each of us forms a clear picture of what we believe the truth to be. After that, something extreme has to happen to change our minds, because now we have a template for the "truth" against which all other evidence is judged. It filters what we see and don't see, what we pay attention to, what we play down and what we ignore.

You can find all kinds of evidence to support a drug hit theory. The more evidence you find, the more compelling it becomes. But if you start taking shots at it, which you have to do with any theory at some time, you begin to see why some sane, reasonable people are OJG's. It leaves too many questions unanswered.

Yes, it could have been drug dealers coming after Faye Resnick. How many cops, working in concert or individually on their own doing their own little part—how many of them would have to be involved? Who could they have been? Who would they have to have been? Where did the gloves come from? What are the odds that the killer would have the same size shoes as OJ's? Did Riske plant the Bundy cap and glove? What was HIS motive? What makes you think so? Where is

IAGO IN BRENTWOOD

the evidence to support it? Riske was the first cop on the scene. He said he found them. If he didn't plant them, who did? If he did, why? Was he working with Fuhrman to frame OJ? Was he a rotten cop? Was he listening in on OJ to know that he didn't have a perfect alibi?

It gets stickier. A lot stickier. For every question there is a possible answer. But then you have to look at the probabilities. That's where the drug hit theory went down for me just as all of the OJG scenarios went down. Too many improbable things had to happen to support the theory. The more you learn, the more the probabilities should narrow.

Could say more, but gotta go. —Trooper

As I waited for my answer from Hhhana or any of the others who got a copy of my letter, the world waited for the verdict in the civil trial. Some of us had more hope for O.J. than others. I didn't know enough about the jurors to lean one way or another in my expectations. Trille made the mistake of looking only at the facts that proved O.J.'s innocence and hoping the jury would see what she did. I didn't have the heart to tell her that I didn't see it myself. Mark Fuhrman was my number one suspect, but O.J. wasn't off my list.

Subj: Jury deliberations

Date: 97-02-04 22:00:39 EST

From: Trille

To: Trooper, Hhhana, Crowe Petlady

Jasper—WHY OH WHY THE VERY NIGHT OF THE STATE OF THE UNION? I LOVE PRES. CLINTON BUT I ALSO LOVE OJ. WHY ARE THEY TAKING SO GOD-DAMN LONG. WHY IS THE JUDGE TORTURING US? WHY DOES IT HAVE TO BE LIKE THIS? WHY OH WHY? LET US HEAR THE VERDICT AND LET IT BE FOR OJ. PLEASE GOD, LET OJ WIN! —
Trille

Chapter 5: THE PROPER VERDICT

Then came the verdict. With it came a new urgency to learn the truth.

Subj: PAINFUL VERDICT
Date: 97-02-04 23:14:22 EST
From: Hhhana
To: Trooper

Hey Jasper— It's over for now...Are you getting tons of e-mail from the gloating OJG's? I sure am. I hope that the investigators working for OJ will be able to put it all together one day. If we accept the fact that OJ did not kill anybody, there are certainly a lot of ways to go. Please understand, I appreciate being able to look at Fuhrman as the number 1 suspect. It sure explains why he would engineer everything so carefully to shine the light of suspicion directly on OJ Simpson.

I feel so sorry for Jamal and Trille; they fought such a good fight. I hope they will take heart and know they stood strong against a tide of hate that few could. Have a good night and watch your e-mail box... —Hhhana

I did get tons of mail from OJG's. I didn't open any of them. But in the process of zapping them, I accidentally lost some of the OJI letters I wanted to keep. The letter from Hhhana suggesting how Fuhrman could have known that he would be called in on the case and how he could have used his phone to give a false impression of where he was that night is a prime example. Actually, I would have lost my reply to that letter as well, if Trille hadn't copied it and included it in her letter to me about the verdict (I hadn't learned how to do that yet).

Subj: Re: Down to business (In the Desert)
Date: 97-02-05 01:00:08 EST
From: Trille (Christine Armas)
To: Trooper

Trooper wrote:

IAGO IN BRENTWOOD

“Wow, Paula— Thank you. And please thank Joe for your help in filling in the gaps for me. Pat (Crowe), Chameleon and Christine have also been a big help to me. I’ve got the sharpest people in the world on my side (sure would like to hear from Jamal). We have to be able to come up with something solid on the MFG scenario one way or another. We’ve got enough to know that we could really have something here. The object now should be to try to shoot it down with facts that don’t support it. If we can’t find those facts, I think that a real investigation will show that we’ve got our man.

“It never occurred to me that MF could have answered phone calls from anywhere, giving the impression that he was somewhere he wasn’t, before and after the murders. I’ll keep that in mind.

“I haven’t had a chance to ask my brother about whether Fuhrman could have known in advance that he would be called in on the murder of Nicole Simpson (haven’t seen him in months). But I didn’t think to ask him about that before because he’s a Detroit homicide detective. I thought that different police departments might handle that kind of thing in different ways. Now, I think I’ll try to catch up to him and see what he can tell me. Maybe they do things the same way Joe’s department did. If not, maybe he knows somebody who knows somebody who knows.

“About the desert thing. I mentioned that on page 5 of my MFG scenario. I heard the same thing you did when MF (what fitting initials) was on the stand. Lion said he was at ‘a social function’ far, far away ‘with 200’ witnesses. I heard the same thing from somebody at work. But I can’t track down the details and I don’t know the source.

“On to your next installment.... Trooper1”

Jasper— It is over, there is nothing we can do except somehow help OJ file an appeal? There must be some way. This

Chapter 5: THE PROPER VERDICT

whole court case was so unbelievable; it reminded me of the Medgar Evers case, that is, in contrast to the white guy. Their case was set for him to get cleared, well, maybe it's the other way around with O.J....Doesn't anyone care? Hell, I am crying my heart out. Don't you people care, not about me, but about this whole thing! —Trille

Did anybody care? You bet we did!

Subj: Feeling the pain/sharing the shame:

Date: 97-02-05 12:01:27 EST

From: Hhhana

To: Petlady

CC: Trooper, Trille, Crowe

Racial divide, racial divide, oh yes, it's there, Peggy. It's mean, it's ugly, and it's real. Where do we go? I can't stay home, unfortunately. I have to go to work and face people every day that I don't know; who don't know me. Do I have credibility when meeting black clients? I don't think so. In fact, I find myself oozing guilt because of the great injustice we've watched. I want to tell them, I'm not a racist, I believe in the American justice system, of course OJ did not commit this terrible crime; that this action we've watched being handled so poorly, was purposely engineered to get "vengeance" for people who don't deserve it. I don't feel any pride today.

Hug the pets for me. I would have loved to get a little loving from my zoo this morning, but I'm too stuffed up and feverish to get near the hair.

You're a cool lady. I like thinking I know you and the others who will receive this note....later. —Hhhana

Subj: Chameleon

Date: 97-02-05 13:37:48 EST

From: Chameleon

To: All

IAGO IN BRENTWOOD

Peggy & Dianne— Good afternoon. I actually slept for 9 hours last night (3:30 AM to 12:30 PM) and awoke with the same outlook that I have had since these murders occurred.

Many do not understand my interest in this double murder case. It is not the victims, the murderer, or the ineptitudes involved. It is not other's reactions to step by step dissection of all aspects of the environment surrounding "that pebble dropped into the water"...watching those circles reverberate and envelope the surface. My interest is the reverberation "beneath the surface." The concepts I have witnessed the formation of, are all in some form of truth...however, not the complete truth. I wish to have the knowledge of "truth to completion," with "no doubt"...i.e.; the old saying when all knows the total facts are there. (Witness, I saw the sun arise and the sun is up....to which you would say, "No doubt.")

This million-piece puzzle we have been given the opportunity to "put together," is not complete. It is a microcosm of each of our lives that I "would love to finish" with that last piece. As my husband often says, when he no longer follows what I am saying, "You've lost it." This is the result of loss of interest.

Losing interest in this case is probably the best "thing" for each of us to do, at this point...for we have the means, the mode, the medium that survived the "hassle" of lady justice. We cannot apply logic here as A= not guilty, B= liable, C= not guilty, but liable. (My search was for the logic, which I have not found!) Please do not remind me that murder is not logical, for if you do, you are telling me that I am stupid. To which I will say, "I'm just out of my mind, back in 5 minutes." —Chameleon

Dianne wrote:

"Peggy, I returned home Monday to a computer that was going bonkers with my Internet browser and spent a couple of

Chapter 5: THE PROPER VERDICT

days getting it back and running. Last night I watched the verdict coverage, one that I expected, and then turned everything off. The way so many people have behaved since the criminal trial has left me with a deep sadness and concern for the lack of understanding of how our judicial system works. But I won't go into that.

“This verdict was expected, and I am glad they took the time to really examine the evidence in order to satisfy those who complained about the four-hour deliberation of the first trial. I can't help but wonder if those same people who complained about the four-hour deliberation of the first trial will also complain about the four-hour deliberation of the jury in the Texas case where the young mother was convicted of killing her son. Or do they only complain when the defendant is found not guilty?

“I sincerely hope that Mr. Goldman is satisfied now, and will get on with his life. Losing a loved one is hard, I know for I lost my husband, but acceptance of the loss is the first step in healing. I hope Mr. Goldman can heal now. One of the phases you go through in losing a loved one is anger; normally directed at the one who died but in Mr. Goldman's case apparently (and understandably) directed at the one he blames for Ron's death. If he can now get past that anger, then healing can take place.

“As for me, nothing is changed; I still have my questions; still believe the LAPD botched the investigation and this remains an unsolved mystery. ...Boy, being out of the loop for a while and I really can run on!! —Dianne”

Here is one of the OJG letters I didn't zap. I guess I wanted to see how my expectation matched reality. Then again, I may have picked Lion because she was the most widely respected OJG on the boards and once I knew what she had to say, that's all I needed to know about the other OJG's. Another reason I saved her letter may have been because she had the good habit of including

IAGO IN BRENTWOOD

the letters she was responding to and I might have found a lost one from Hhhana, Crowe or Petlady tacked onto it. Anyhow, it paid off. And since her letter was to Petlady, whom everyone adored, she would be on her best behavior and sound reasonable and tolerant regardless of what she was actually saying.

Subj: Chameleon

Date: 97-02-05 14:44:07 EST

From: Lion

To: Petlady

CC: All

Petlady wrote:

“I believe this is the first time since I have been communicating with everyone in this e-mail group that I did not look forward to my mail this morning. Not because of the verdict. I have read nearly all the evidence, and read the arguments at the bench with regard to evidence being let in, kept out, questions that were allowed to be asked, etc., and was not at all surprised at the verdict. Preponderance of the evidence was truly considered in this case. The jury did their job. It was just that I was still reeling from the news of losing Sarah, and then the reaction of the crowd when the verdict was read, and the reaction of the crowd when O.J. left the courthouse was so disheartening that I was, at that time, ashamed of my race.

“It just seems so sad to me that this man who was acquitted of these murders had to go through another trial that was just a rerun of the criminal trial, with new players, to be found responsible for these murders. And now, when Sydney and Justin go to school, they will have to face the ridicule and taunting of the children and will also be held liable. Believe me, there can be no one crueller than some children who have listened to their parents and have not necessarily formed their own opinions, but are parroting their parents in their jeering and taunting of these children. My heart goes out to them, just as my heart goes out to O.J.

Chapter 5: THE PROPER VERDICT

“This trial was not about justice, it was about revenge and money. And the reactions of the crowd just said to me that for some reason or the other, over the years, we have lost a lot of graciousness, dignity and compassion, and our main sense now is “get the bastard, no matter the cost.”

“This all should have ended with the criminal trial, but it didn’t, and it won’t end with this verdict. There will always be those of us who believe that someone else did this heinous crime, just as there will always be those who believe that O.J. did it. O.J. is finished in this country. He can find no peace here, and now his children can find no peace here. The Browns will undoubtedly jump on this verdict like white on rice (old Southern saying) and push for the custody of his children. They may even succeed now. I mean, that’s all he has left, let’s take them, too.

“I’m sorry if I sound cynical, but I feel cynical this morning. Anyhow, I’m glad the OJG’s will sleep better now. Personally, I’m going to go over all of this in my mind for a few days and try to make some sense of it, the verdict, the reaction and the animus.

“My husband has often remarked, jokingly, that I would make a good hermit. He’s right. The more I watch my fellow man (woman) the more I become that hermit. Conversing through the wires of my computer, and watching the world go by without the slightest desire to be caught up in the throng. Think I’ll go hug all my puppies and kittens and bake something. Talk to you all later. —Peggy (petlady)”

Peggy— I understand your disappointment. I know what you are feeling at this moment. I know because when the verdict was read at the criminal trial I felt the same disappointment.

I must tell you that your comment about feeling ashamed of your own race was a bit disturbing to me. You show so much

IAGO IN BRENTWOOD

compassion and understanding for O.J. Simpson, but can't understand those who believe in their hearts that Simpson took the lives of two young beautiful people.

You call it "get the bastard." Why? Do you not believe there were those of us who cheered because we felt that justice was finally done to some small degree. When this case started it wasn't about money, Peggy, it was about the murders of two people. And whether or not attorneys from both sides, jurors, friends and relatives wrote books really doesn't mean squat as to who killed these two people!

Yes, many made many dollars, but it doesn't matter. It doesn't change anything. If one book wasn't written, if one story wasn't sold, if all the people involved gave up their 15 minutes of fame, would it have made Simpson LESS guilty? Would it have made a difference in the blood evidence, the hair and fiber evidence the photos, the testimony of Allan Park?

You see Peggy, everything would be just as it is today... Allan Park's testimony would still be evidence that Simpson wasn't home, A.C. Cowlings testimony about the 1989 incident which Simpson denied would still be the same. The lack of credibility in Simpson's testimony would still exist. Peggy, these two people were slaughtered. This wasn't done by some drug hit man. If it were, Nicole would not have been nearly decapitated! You don't have to butcher someone to make them dead! It was done by someone who was totally out of control. Totally out of his mind with rage and anger.

My heart goes out to those two children, too. They will never feel the comfort of their mother's arms, or hear her voice, or know her love. And many, many people hold Simpson responsible for that and didn't take a dollar! I hope we can all put this behind us, say a prayer for the children now and then and hope that they will get through their lives with as little pain as possible. —Lion

Chapter 5: THE PROPER VERDICT

How did you like that part about Lion's concern for the children? Kinda made you feel warm all over, didn't it? I won't tell you how it made me feel. Instead, I'll tell you what she carved in stone for the children to read at their first opportunity to find it for themselves in the Court TV archives. Then, you'll know how I felt.... These are the words she put in 8-year-old Justin's mouth in a big bold headline that couldn't be missed: JUSTIN: MY DAD MURDERED MY MOM!

If it were up to the OJG's, that would have been the last word on the matter. It wasn't up to them. It was up to us.

Subj: Where are you?

Date: 97-02-05 17:18:42 EST

From: Hhhana

To: Trooper173@aol.com

Hi Jasper— I was expecting to hear something after the verdict last night. I'm not going to get ugly about it, but it's not justice. No justice in trying a man for a crime, finding him not guilty and putting him back in jeopardy because it wasn't a popular verdict. I know the civil action was legal, but it doesn't make it right. Anyway, Jasper, guess I'll chat with you later. Still thinking about the MF (yeah, like the letters for him) thing. The only way this mess will ever end right will be for somebody to prove who did it. You know that, don't you... —Paula

Date: 97-02-05 01:00:08 EST

From: Trille (Christine Armas)

To: Trooper

CC: OJI's

Hello, Jasper— It's all over. They won! Is there anything we can do? Do you care enough to really help? ...I am not giving up. The bastards have won this skirmish. We will win the war. Right, Trooper, and Jamal, and all you OJI's?I am so upset; I cried for 2 hours, but I am not crying anymore. NOW I WILL FIGHT. —Trille

IAGO IN BRENTWOOD