

# Newsday

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### JURY HANDS UP MIXED VERDICT

# 3 acquitted in disturbance

BY ZACHARY R. DOWDY  
STAFF WRITER

Nassau District Court jurors delivered a mixed verdict in the case of five men charged with disobeying and attacking police officers in a disturbance after a baby shower in Roslyn Heights last year, acquitting three of them of all charges.

The five men and one woman on the jury in the Hempstead courtroom of First District Court Judge Denise L. Sher decided that police overreacted when they descended on the Laurel Homes complex on Jan. 11, 2003 — a factor that influenced the jurors' decision to acquit the defendants on 11 of the 13 charges after three hours of deliberations yesterday.

"The police came in there like stormtroopers," said juror Charles Hollenstein of Bell-

more. "They were a little rough on the neighborhood."

Frederick K. Brewington of Hempstead, who like the other defense attorneys represented his client, Rahiem Brown, 23, for free, said, "It's a victory, but there's a cloud over it." Brown was convicted of disorderly conduct and acquitted of resisting arrest, inciting a riot and obstructing governmental administration.

Louis Agresta of Mineola, whose client, Raymond Johnson was convicted of resisting arrest but acquitted of inciting to riot, said, "I think the jury was half-right. I'm surprised and disappointed."

Agresta and Brewington asked Sher to set aside the guilty verdicts, arguing they were inconsistent with the evidence and the other verdicts. Kalif Williams, who the prosecutor said

charged at Sgt. Robert Psoinas, was acquitted of all charges, including menacing, disorderly conduct and resisting arrest. Williams was represented by Claudia Schultz of Garden City.

"I think justice was done," said Joseph Norton of Rockville Centre, who represented Brandon Jackson. Jackson was acquitted of disorderly conduct, obstructing governmental administration and resisting arrest charges.

Raymond Murray, who was represented by Frank Doddato of Garden City, was acquitted of resisting arrest.

Prosecutor Camille Russell told jurors that Williams charged at Psoinas when the officer "tugged" at Williams' sleeve. The officer testified his gesture was meant to indicate to the men that they should stay where they were while he

investigated a report of a fight.

Schultz poked holes in that scenario, telling jurors in her summation that Psoinas probably didn't "tug ever so lightly" at Williams' jersey, but likely used harsh words and shoved Williams when the men challenged his authority by walking away from him. After he sprayed Williams with pepper spray, Psoinas called for backup, bringing dozens of officers to the scene.

During closing statements yesterday, Brewington told jurors police had to make arrests to justify Psoinas' call for a massive response to an incident that yielded few arrests, no felony charges and no serious injuries.

Russell declined to comment, but Rick Hinshaw, a spokesman for Nassau District Attorney Denis Dillon, said, "The jury made a decision and we respect that decision."