

'We Were Scared For Our Lives'

Delray Strip-search Victim Tells Of Family's Ordeal With Deputies

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STUART — When five Jefferson County sheriff's deputies surrounded, detained and strip-searched Delray Beach resident Arnetta McCloud and her family five years ago, McCloud thought they were as good as dead.

"I didn't think we would be sitting here today," McCloud said Friday at the Stuart office of her family's attorney, Guy Rubin. "We were scared for our lives."

In July 2001, deputies pulled McCloud, her husband, Freddy, daughter Cynthia and nephew Marcus Frazier over on a desolate road. The family was headed to Tallahassee after celebrating a relative's birthday in Monticello.

After deputies searched the car for drugs and found none, the men were put in police cars and the women were strip searched by the side of the road. Cynthia was searched twice.

On Thursday, a federal court jury in Tallahassee awarded the McClouds and Frazier a \$2 million settlement, agreeing the deputies had violated their civil rights.

Cynthia McCloud initially couldn't speak as tears welled in her eyes. Later, she said she hoped the case would inspire other victims to fight for themselves.

"I hope that it shows everybody justice will be served," she said. "You tell somebody, 'Stand up for your rights. Do what you have to do.'"

The family has only traveled back to the area for the trial. Though some members of the family have moved out of Jefferson County, many were afraid of retaliation from police officers.

They all live in fear of police cars.

"Whenever I see them, I look down and make sure I'm going my speed and hope they don't pull me over," Frazier said.

The case wasn't about the money, Arnetta McCloud said.

"It's so it won't happen to someone else," she said. "My nephew and daughter, they were 15 and 16 at the time, they'd never been in a police car in their lives. If that happens to you, you stand up and go help yourselves."

Rubin said the sheriff's office stonewalled the entire investigation, dating back to a few weeks after the incident when the family first came to him.

He couldn't get documents he requested, nor the video of the incident, and had to go to court to get them.

Rubin called the verdict a victory for the Constitution and hopes it will help the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office teach its officers about legal and illegal searches.

"We all have the rights people like Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King fought for," he said. "They're the rights of everyone who passes under the Statue of Liberty have: blind justice and transparency."

[The McClouds were represented by Guy Rubin, Esq. of Rubin & Rubin, and by **Stuart M. Address, Esq., now of the Law Offices of Stuart M. Address, P.A.**, formerly of Rubin & Rubin.]