

DETROIT

NATIVE SUN

Black father-daughter lawyer team faces disciplinary action amidst racial discrimination



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An African American father-daughter pair of lawyers, Jerry, and Brooke Girley are in the eye of Florida’s ongoing racist storm after a judge recommended 30-day suspensions for their vocal criticism following the overturning of a \$2.7 million jury ruling in a racial discrimination case.

In addition to suggesting suspension, Judge Lisa Herndon, presiding over the Florida Bar’s disciplinary case against the Girleys, also ordered the duo to attend a professionalism workshop. However, the Florida Supreme Court holds the key to the final decision, with potential penalties ranging from suspension to disbarment.

The Girleys’ attorney, David Winker, said his clients planned to request a re-hearing, pointing out factual inaccuracies in the reports.

Advocates for the Girleys argue that the looming disciplinary action could have a chilling effect on free speech for lawyers in Florida, where Republicans control the governor’s office and both chambers of the state legislature. Jerry Girley previously cited concerns about racial discourse and expression within the state.

The controversy originated from Jerry Girley’s representation of a Black doctor dismissed from AdventHealth in Orlando in 2021. Despite a jury ruling in favor of Girley’s client, the presiding judge overruled the decision, contending a lack of evidence establishing racial discrimination in the dismissal.

The Florida Bar reported that Jerry and Brooke Girley publicly criticized the judge’s decision, accusing improper conduct within the court system. The Bar argued that their statements, both in interviews and on social media, undermined public confidence in the judiciary and were prejudicial to the administration of justice.

In her reports recommending disciplinary measures, Herndon asserted that the Girleys had violated their oath of admission to

the Florida Bar by failing to show respect to judicial officers and making false statements. She argued that the Girleys’ claims were not First Amendment-protected free speech, in opposition to their arguments.

Founded in 2007, The Girley Law Firm P.A. focuses on civil rights, criminal defense, and social security cases. Described as a community trust, the firm advocates for justice and equality for all, irrespective of race, color, or creed.

Brooke Girley, an accomplished attorney and media executive, has contributed to significant victories in civil rights cases alongside her father. Passionate about racial equality, she has served in various capacities, including as an adjunct professor and a media executive in the religious space.

Jerry Girley’s background includes service in the United States Navy, civilian employment with the Orlando Police Department, and a dedication to civil rights issues. He is the President and Managing Attorney of the Girley Law Firm and serves as General Counsel for Freedom Ministries Church.

“The state of Florida has a shameful history of discrimination and bias against racial minorities,” the ACLU of Florida noted on its website. “Though great strides have been made for equality during and since the Civil Rights Movement, racial minorities still face challenges and discrimination in our state.”

The ACLU’s statement continued: “Because so many of Florida’s voting problems, particularly those that became apparent during and since the 2000 Presidential election, fell most heavily on African Americans and language minority communities, much of the ACLU of Florida work is directed toward correcting voting irregularities that have a disproportionate impact on those groups. The ACLU of Florida also actively supports reforms such as the creation of effective civilian review boards for law enforcement that would bring changes in police policies and practices.”

Detroit man convicted of sex trafficking and production of child pornography

DETROIT - A Detroit man was convicted by a federal jury on charges of sex trafficking a minor and producing child pornography, United States Attorney Dawn N. Ison announced today.

Ison was joined in the announcement by Special Agent in Charge Cheyvorrea Gibson of the FBI in Michigan.

Lavonte Sampson, 39, was convicted following a five-day jury trial before United States District Judge Gershwin A. Drain. The jury deliberated approximately two hours before returning their verdicts.

Evidence presented at the trial established the investigation began when the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Southeast Michigan Trafficking and Exploitation Crimes Task Force conducted an undercover operation to recover a missing 15-year-old girl. A search of her cellular phone uncovered Facebook messages wherein Sampson recruited her to engage in commercial sex work. He took pictures of her and advertised her online for commercial sex. He took her to a motel in Detroit, where he arranged dates between her and other men and collected the proceeds. Sampson also had sex with the victim, recorded it without the victim’s knowledge, and sent that video recording to the undercover agent when arranging a date.

U.S. Attorney Ison stated, “This defendant exploited a vulnerable child. He sold her body to other men for his own personal gain. Combatting human trafficking remains one of our office’s top priorities, especially when it involves children. We will continue to use every tool in our arsenal to battle the sexual exploitation of vulnerable victims in our communities and ensure that predators are held accountable. And while we aggressively pursue this type of justice for all human trafficking victims, at all times, this verdict today, during the end of Human Trafficking

Prevention Month, puts a fine point on our unwavering commitment to this important work.”

“The FBI is deeply committed to protecting the most vulnerable members of our society, particularly our children, and bringing predators like the defendant to justice,” said Special Agent in Charge Cheyvorrea Gibson of the FBI in Michigan. “We would like to extend our appreciation to our wide network of law enforcement partners, particularly those on the FBI’s Southeast Michigan Trafficking and Exploitation Crimes (SEMTEC) Task Force, for their critical support in investigating sexual predators who commit crimes against children. The FBI encourages continued vigilance, cooperation, and reporting from the public to help identify and recover victims and bring perpetrators to justice. If you believe you may have any information on crimes of this nature, please contact the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children at 1-800-THE-LOST or online at report.cybertip.org.”

The Court will schedule a sentencing hearing at a later date. Sampson faces a mandatory-minimum sentence of 15 years in prison and a maximum up to life.

January is Human Trafficking Prevention Month, a time to educate ourselves and raise awareness in our communities about this devastating crime that violates the most basic human rights -freedom. If you are a victim of human trafficking or suspect you know one, please call the FBI, your local law enforcement, or the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Southeast Michigan Trafficking and Exploitation Crimes Task Force and was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys David Cowen, Jeanine Brunson, and Ranya Elzein.

Chinese nationals charged with illegally exporting U.S. Electronic components to Iran and Iranian military

Four Chinese nationals are charged in an indictment in the District of Columbia with various federal crimes related to a years-long conspiracy to unlawfully export and smuggle U.S.-origin electronic components from the United States to Iran.

According to court documents, Baoxia Liu, aka Emily Liu; Yiu Wa Yung, aka Stephen Yung; Yongxin Li, aka Emma Lee; and Yanlai Zhong, aka Sydney Chung, unlawfully exported and smuggled U.S. export controlled items through China and Hong Kong ultimately for the benefit of entities affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics (MODAFL), which supervises Iran’s development and production of missiles, weapons, and military aerial equipment to include Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs).

“For more than a decade, the defendants allegedly orchestrated a scheme to smuggle U.S. manufactured parts to the IRGC and the Iranian agency charged with developing ballistic missiles and UAVs,” said Assistant Attorney General Matthew G. Olsen of the Justice Department’s National Security Division. “Such efforts to unlawfully obtain U.S. technology directly threaten our national security, and we will use every tool at our disposal to sever the illicit supply chains that fuel the Iranian regime’s malign activity.”

“Aggressively combating illicit procurement networks that support Iranian military systems like radars and UAVs is essential to U.S. national security,” said Assistant Secretary for Export Enforcement Matthew S. Axelrod of the Department of Commerce. “Today’s indictment, tied to the work of the Disruptive Technology Strike Force, reaffirms that proliferators cannot hide behind front companies in

third countries to funnel technology to our adversaries.”

“Our indictment alleges a years-long, complex conspiracy to violate U.S. laws by procuring U.S. technology with military uses for entities in Iran who would do us harm - a serious offense that endangers our national security,” said U.S. Attorney Matthew M. Graves for the District of Columbia. “Our office, along with our federal law enforcement partners, will continue to turn over every stone to find those who break our laws and put us at risk. We are committed to making sure that U.S. technology is kept out of the hands of those taking aim at the United States and its citizens through robust enforcement of U.S. sanctions.”

“Our foreign adversaries use many tactics to gain access to critical U.S. technologies and innovation,” said Executive Assistant Director Larissa L. Knapp of the FBI’s National Security Branch. “In this instance, it is alleged that U.S.-origin equipment was smuggled by front companies to the benefit of end users in Iran. Any circumvention of U.S. export control law is simply unacceptable - the FBI will work diligently with its partners across the globe to hold all accountable who jeopardize our national security.”

According to the indictment, beginning as early as May 2007 and continuing until at least July 2020, the defendants utilized an array of front companies in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) to funnel dual-use U.S.-origin items, including electronics and components that could be utilized in the production of UAVs, ballistic missile systems, and other military end uses, to sanctioned Iranian entities with ties to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics.

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