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Juror at center of misconduct claim testifies in Sir Mario Owens death penalty appeal

Juror says she did not know relatives of Javad Marshall-Fields prior to the trial



RJ Sangosti, Denver Post file

Rhonda Fields, left, mother of Javad Marshall-Fields, and Christine Wolfe, mother of Vivian Wolfe, Sylvia Marshall, Javad's grandmother, and family friend gather outside the courthouse at Arapahoe County Justice Center May 14, 2008.



By **JOHN INGOLD** | The Denver Post

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CENTENNIAL — A juror at the center of a misconduct inquiry that could overturn a Colorado death sentence testified Monday in Arapahoe County District Court that she did not know relatives of the victim before serving on a high-profile murder trial that laid the groundwork for the death sentence.

Instead, the juror said that she first met the uncles of Javad Marshall-Fields after the trial was over. In other testimony Monday, Marshall-Fields' uncles affirmed the jurors' statement, a blow to defense attorneys seeking to prove that death row inmate Sir Mario Owens [should receive a new trial](#) in two separate murder cases.

Owens and another man, Robert Ray, were convicted and sentenced to death for the 2005 murders in Aurora [of Marshall-Fields and Vivian Wolfe](#). Before that trial, Owens was convicted of murder in a separate shooting death in Aurora's Lowry Park, an incident in which Marshall-Fields was wounded.

On appeal, Owens' attorneys have alleged misconduct by one juror in the Lowry Park trial — asserting that she lied on her juror questionnaire, knew and had contact with at least one witness during the trial and knew members of Owens' and Marshall-Fields' families. Most of those issues already have been debated, but a judge last month [granted a new hearing](#) to learn more about the juror's connection to Marshall-Fields' family.

On the witness stand Monday, the juror, Stephanie Manuel, said repeatedly that she did not meet Marshall-Fields' family until after [the 2007 Lowry Park trial](#), an assertion Marshall-Fields' [mother](#) and two of his uncles echoed. That conflicts with what at least two acquaintances have said, a defense investigator testified. It also conflicts with what one of Marshall-Fields' uncles initially told defense attorneys.





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Sir Mario Owens sits, Monday March. 13, 2006, in Arapahoe County Court during the first hearing after being indicted in the June 20 double homicide that killed a witness and his girlfriend.

But, on the stand Monday, uncle Michael Baxter testified that he had been mistaken when he said this year that he had known the juror for 20 years, a statement he recanted the next day.

“When you guys start bringing this up,” he said to a defense attorney, “it brings up all the bad memories and other stuff. And that’s hard. ... It took a big part out of me when this happened.”

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