

Congressman Tries to Move His Trial to Washington

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 7 — Representative William J. Jefferson said Friday that the Justice Department **was trying him in Virginia, and not Washington, because it knew that a jury in the capital would probably include many more fellow African-Americans.**

Lawyers for Mr. Jefferson, a Louisiana Democrat who is charged with corruption, **demand in court papers that the trial be moved to Washington, where the population is mostly black and where many of the crimes are said to have occurred, from the mostly white suburbs of Northern Virginia.**

Mr. Jefferson is accused of hiding \$90,000 in bribe money in his home freezer in Washington.

Negar Taghavi-Souza

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Ones Constitutional right, amendment 6—*“enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed....”*

“African Americans have become a significant force in American political life,” Dahl pg. 128.

Is this an example of modern segregation? Yes, I believe it is. I also believe that this request to move his trial is a direct result of historical events, and that it is a manipulation on his part to use the people’s feelings on past events. *“Now two generations later, Americans white and black still bear the deep wounds that slavery and its aftermath inflicted on human equality, freedom, dignity, and respect”*, Dahl pg. 125.

Department officials had explicitly discussed the

“The circumstances here present a prima facie case that venue was selected in the Eastern District of Virginia in order to obtain a jury pool with fewer African-Americans,” his lawyer, Robert P. Trout, wrote in papers filed in Alexandria, Va., where the lawmaker was indicted in June.

“The court has an obligation to ensure that the forum selection in this case was not tainted by radically discriminatory motive,” Mr. Trout added. “The center of gravity of this case is plainly not in the Eastern District of Virginia. The overwhelming majority of the events took place in the District of Columbia.”

The filing is Mr. Jefferson’s most **clear-cut effort to suggest a racial motivation by prosecutors.**

Outside lawyers with an expertise in criminal law said Mr. Jefferson would find it difficult to move his trial unless he demonstrated that Justice

“Yet, despite the fact that throughout human history equality has often been denied in practice, throughout the past several centuries many claims to equality, including political equality, have come to be much more strongly reinforced by institutions, practices, and behavior”, Dahl pg. 126.

Is there really liberty for all citizens? I think Dahl stated correctly, it depends on which citizens!
When we speak of freedom, liberty, or rights it seems to me essential that we go beyond answering the question, “What liberty or right?” An answer to that question only specifies the domain of liberty. But we are also obliged to answer the question, “Liberty for whom?” Dahl pgs 132-133.

potential racial makeup of the jury.

Traditionally, the Justice Department has had wide discretion in bringing cases where it chooses, so long as some of the criminal acts occurred in the district in which the trial court is situated. The experts also said it was valid for Mr. Jefferson's defense to raise the objection.

A spokesman for the Justice Department, Dean Boyd, **said the jury's racial makeup had "absolutely nothing" to do with deciding to prosecute Mr. Jefferson in Virginia,** where the indictment says some of the criminal acts occurred and where two co-defendants have pleaded guilty.

The indictment describes a meeting in Virginia between Mr. Jefferson and a cooperating witness as central to the scheme.

"The venue is appropriate, as we have indicated in public court filings," Mr. Boyd said.

"The desirability of political equality and thus of democracy follows, in my view, from two fundamental judgments. One is moral, the other practical", Dahl pg. 131

Doesn't the U.S. Constitution protect his rights to a trial with an impartial jury? Does the constitution even serve its citizens? No, it does not seem to because if it did it would follow what Dahl believes a constitution should serve its citizens.

"...A constitution should serve those ends by helping to maintain political institutions that foster political equality among citizens and all the necessary rights, liberties and opportunities that are essential to existence of political equality and a democratic government", Dahl pg 139

Mr. Jefferson, who was re-elected last year, is accused of bribery, racketeering, conspiracy, money laundering, obstruction of justice and other offenses.

His indictment says that from 2000 to 2005, he sought hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes, often in exchange for using his Congressional office to promote business ventures in Africa. He has pleaded not guilty.

The [F.B.I.](#) has said that it found the \$90,000 in a search of Mr. Jefferson's freezer and that he intended to use it to bribe an African leader.