

# Letter To The Editor: Uhe Deserted Baby Kwayera and His Family

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## To the Editor:

I would like to share my thoughts about the recent controversy involving the release of Kwayera Jackson from the Illinois Department of Corrections after serving half of his sentence of 40 years. In short, I was First Assistant State's Attorney for many years. I prosecuted Kwayera Jackson. So I can tell you: Crystal Uhe totally abandoned her duty to baby Kwayera and the citizens of Madison County. And now she is trying to cover it up with a fictional legal excuse - a "standing objection" - that Illinois authorities have confirmed does not exist. This conduct is inexcusable and shows a total lack of the

leadership and integrity necessary to fulfill the responsibilities of the Office of State's Attorney.

I, along with now Judge Kyle Napp, prosecuted Mr. Jackson for the murder of his five-month-old son. He had a jury trial and was ably represented by the prominent law firm of Scott Rosenblum of St. Louis; he was convicted of the malicious death of Kwayera Jr., who was under his care and custody while the child's mother was at work. The child suffered a very painful death with internal bleeding in his stomach and head. Mr. Jackson was provided with DCFS services and told a visiting caseworker that the baby was sleeping. In reality the baby was dying in his crib. This callous behavior was a significant factor cited by Judge Ann Callis in rendering her 40-year sentence.

This prosecution was a joint effort of the State's Attorney's Office, the Coroner's Office headed by Steve Nonn and the Bethalto Police Department to bring justice. Victory in the courtroom is only the beginning in the journey for justice for this child! The family expects and believes that they will be represented in the Appellate Court and any future hearings that might arise. This was the practice in the State's Attorney Office when I was First Assistant under Bill Haine. Mr. Jackson received his further day in the Appellate Court and his conviction was affirmed.

The duties of the First Assistant are to see to the day to day operations of the Office and to delegate responsibilities within the Office. As First Assistant under Bill Haine, the responsibility of responding to all communications made to the Prisoner Review Board was mine. I delegated this to the civil division, in particular John McGuire. Mr. McGuire responded to every letter sent from a prisoner. He would always check with the prosecutor who handled the case at issue for assistance in responding to the request, or to the First Assistant if the prosecutor was gone. NEVER was this responsibility abandoned!

Until Crystal Uhe became First Assistant. When Mr. Jackson applied recently for relief from his 40 year sentence to the Illinois Prisoner Review Board, the State's Attorneys Office led by Tom Gibbons and First Assistant Crystal Uhe let down the victim. No one objected to his request. That Office was silent. They could easily have located Judge Napp or myself if they were too busy running for election to respond. No one did. They recently claimed they had a standing objection to any pleas for clemency or sentence reduction; this claim has been flatly rejected by the Illinois Prisoner Review Board.

The facts are clear: Uhe deserted baby Kwayera and his family and further tried to cover it up. Let the voters of Madison County decide if such actions are those of a good leader for our justice system.

**Susan Jensen, Glen Carbon**

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