THE READERS' PAGE

Justice Blind? No Way

Juror's verdict: Local court system working quite well

By Pasquale Bartoli

COMMENT

Recently I had the honor and privilege to serve as a juror on a criminal case in Onondaga County. This was my first experience as a juror, and I was eager and in reality, a little nervous.

Upon arrival at the Onondaga County Courthouse, I was impressed by the professionalism and talents of the commissioner of jurors, Sidney Oglesby, and his staff to process more than 250 of us. After our initial swearing in, we were each assigned to a particular court proceeding. I was in one of the larger groups assigned to a criminal case under Judge Anthony Aloi.

Unfortunately, a number of my fellow potential jurors were quite disengaged during jury selection. This troubled me, as selected jurors have to be, as Judge Aloi pointed out, "judges of the facts." Many lives rest on the decisions of the 12 jurors.

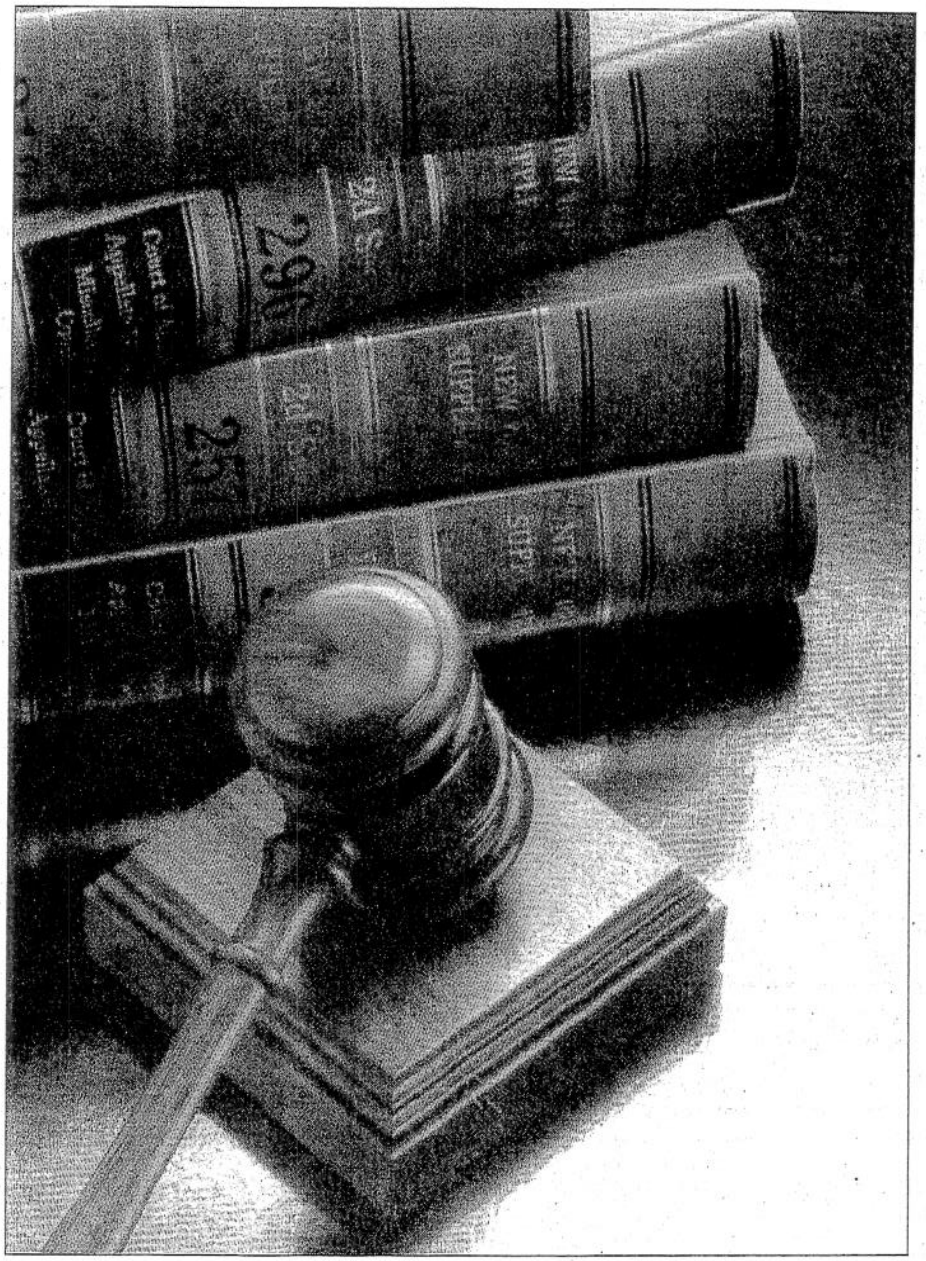
To my great relief, the *voir dire* process (preliminary examination of the jurors by the court and attorneys) did an excellent job weeding out those who just didn't care. I was selected for the trial and was able to experience the entire process.

Our judicial system is working quite well. The district attorney and the defense attorney were very well-prepared and did excellent jobs, as did Judge Aloi.

During the deliberation phase, we jurors had the time we needed to reflect and discuss the case. Contrary to media portrayals, the facts are not always black and white, and there isn't a CSI squad ready with a key piece of evidence.

To all future jurors out there: Please don't look at the summons as an inconvenience or a chore. Justice may be blind; however, we citizens cannot turn a blind eye to our civic responsibility.

Pasquale Bartoli lives in Liverpool.



Liquidlibrary