

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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WESSON JOINED BY COCHRAN FAMILY AND SCHOOL OFFICIALS IN UNVEILING "JOHNNIE COCHRAN VISTA"

LOS ANGELES -- Councilmember Herb J. Wesson, Jr. (10th Dist. Mid-LA) was joined by members of the family of the late Johnnie Cochran, Jr., and LAUSD Board of Education Member Marguerite LaMotte in unveiling the new street signs renaming a portion of 17th Street "Johnnie Cochran Vista," terminating at "Johnnie L. Cochran Middle School.

"Johnnie Cochran was more than a great lawyer. He was also a great role model for our youth. The renaming of this school and this street represent a great tribute to someone who was a passionate defender of people's civil and human rights," said Wesson.

Speaking for the Cochran family was his sister Pearl Cochran Baker, who expressed her appreciation to Wesson and the LAUSD, saying, "Johnnie is looking down from heaven right now, and I know he is smiling and very pleased."

Other family members present included Cochran's 90 year-old father, Johnnie L. Cochran, Sr., and his sister, Martha Cochran Scherrard.

Also present at the event were Principal Scott Schmereson and 80 teachers from the middle school, many of whom had advocated renaming the former Mount Vernon Middle School for Cochran, who attended the school as a youth.

Although Cochran became famous from the O.J. Simpson trial, he had a long and distinguished career in law that included work as a prosecutor in the offices of the Los Angeles City Attorney and Los Angeles County District Attorney.

In private practice, his notable cases included representing Leonard Deadwyler in 1966, who was shot by police while rushing his pregnant wife to the hospital. He defended Elmer "Geronimo" Pratt on murder charges in 1972. Cochran lost the case, but worked for the next 25 years to have the conviction reversed and his client released. He also represented the family of Ron Settles; a college football player whom police said hanged himself in jail in 1983. Cochran had the body exhumed, and a coroner's examination revealed that Settles had been strangled by a police choke-hold. He also represented Reginald Denny, the trucker beaten by a mob during the riots in 1992.

Cochran died in 2005 following a courageous battle with brain cancer. The following year, the Los Angeles Unified School District renamed Mount Vernon Middle School in his memory. Today, Johnnie Cochran Vista street signs were installed between Bronson Avenue and Norton Avenue in front of the school.

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