

Judge unmoved by AIDS

By **SUSAN MILLIGAN**
Daily News Staff Writer

A Manhattan Supreme Court justice has denied a dying AIDS victim early release from jail because of the inmate's long criminal record and told him that instead, "It might be appropriate for you to plead guilty."

The letter to Rikers Island inmate Archie Crawford from Justice James Leff has raised ethical questions among lawyers, who say Leff should not have advised a defendant before his court.

The letter, dated Jan. 12, was a response to an impassioned plea for early release from Crawford, who is dying of AIDS. "It's like a living nightmare wondering if you will spend your last days in a jail cell," Crawford, 33, wrote Leff.

The judge has a rep

But Leff — notorious for writing acerbic letters — wrote back that Crawford's "condition will obviously not be affected in the slightest by a release."

Noting Crawford's 61 prior drug-related arrests and two felony convictions, Leff added, "It might be appropriate for you to plead guilty to the crime you were charged with or have an early trial, if you claim to be innocent."

Crawford has been in the Rikers AIDS ward since last June, when he was put in jail because he couldn't come up with the extra \$8,000 bail Leff ordered in light of Crawford's extensive record. Previously, Crawford had been out on \$2,000 bail since his arrest last April for third-degree burglary.

Donald Weinberger, a lawyer for Legal Aid, which is representing Crawford, called Leff's letter "very troublesome" and said Legal Aid was working on a response.

Leff responded that "that's just too bad" if Crawford and others are concerned about the letter. "The fellow was caught at the scene of the crime, and he thinks that because he has AIDS he should be allowed to run the streets," Leff said.

Like many inmates with AIDS, Crawford's case has dragged on as he missed court appearances because of his illness. Now, Crawford says he is afraid he will die without the comfort of his two children and his wife, who is a correction officer at Rikers.

Sharpton: I never spied on activists

By **JERRY CAPECI**
and **STUART MARQUES**

Daily News Staff Writers

Black activist minister Al Sharpton yesterday admitted giving authorities information about organized crime, drug dens and possible voter fraud, but vehemently denied spying on other activists and boxing promoter Don King.

Sharpton—backed by several black activists, including one he purportedly informed on—took the offensive in denying parts of a published report that quoted law enforcement sources about his cooperation.

"I never wore a wire, I never saw any videotape (in which he allegedly inquired about buying drugs from an undercover FBI agent) and I never went after any black activists," Sharpton said.

"I turned in crack houses, I told them about some Mafia guys exploiting black entertainers and I told them about a threat on my life by mob guys," Sharpton said.

"This is a conspiracy by the government and the media to get rid of a social conscience. But it failed because I'm not going away."

Still plans protest

Sharpton said he still plans to lead a Day of Rage protest slated for today and said he did not think the report of his FBI cooperation would hurt his role in the black movement.

Sharpton launched his offense as law enforcement sources told the Daily News yesterday that Sharpton began working with the FBI after an incident in which he was asked by an undercover agent to find him drug customers.

The sources said the flamboyant Sharpton, 33, agreed to make inquiries, but later said his friends were not interested in buying drugs.

The News' sources said Sharpton committed no

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THE REV. AL SHARPTON ponders question yesterday about his role as an informer for authorities.

BILL TURNBULL DAILY NEWS

Lots of ink, lots of links

By **JERRY CAPECI**
and **STUART MARQUES**

Daily News Staff Writers

Al Sharpton's world is one of extremes—fighting poverty in Brooklyn's toughest ghetto and hobnobbing with some of the high-rollers of big-time

boxing.

An ordained minister since age 12, the portly Sharpton, 33, has an uncanny knack for getting himself on TV news programs and in newspapers on an almost daily basis—organizing Day of Rage protests

and blasting authorities for allegedly mistreating blacks and condoning racial attacks.

But Sharpton, a pal of equally flamboyant boxing promoter Don King, also has a knack of popping up in federal investigations involving

mobsters.

In 1986, a Manhattan federal prosecutor described Sharpton as a front man for mob-controlled private sanitation companies. Sharpton,

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'Dead' suspect prodded

By RUBEN ROSARIO

Daily News Staff Writer

Reports of Gabriel Infanti's death may be greatly exaggerated, but the missing mobster has three months to prove he's alive or risk losing his estate to Uncle Sam without a fight, officials said yesterday.

The 50-year-old reputed Bonanno family capo and gambling kingpin—named by the federal government in a civil racketeering suit—was reported missing by his wife Dec. 22 when he failed to return to their New Jersey home. Authorities believe Infanti was the victim of an "intra-crime-family dispute" that led to his death, but no body has been found.

The Brooklyn U.S. attorney's office imposed the unusual deadline on Infanti by filing a legal paper called a "suggestion of death," which gives a defendant 90 days to prove he's alive.

If the waiting period passes and the defendant is ruled to be legally dead, the government can shift the lawsuit to his estate because a dead person cannot be sued, said Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas Carr.

\$1 million sought

The suit, filed last August in Brooklyn's federal court, seeks \$1 million in damages from 17 defendants, including Infanti and convicted boss Philip Rastelli, 69, and di-

vestiture of three New Jersey hotels, a radio cab company and three properties allegedly used for gambling.

Investigators are now probing a possible link between Infanti and Vicent Rotondo, a long-time Bonanno associate and reputed underboss of a New Jersey crime family shot dead Jan. 4 outside his Brooklyn home.

Sources said Rotondo was rumored to become either a co-defendant or a possible witness in the case before his murder.

The ongoing suit seeks control of the Bonanno crime family's multi-million-dollar financial holdings, both legal and illegal, and to prevent it from operating and expanding.

Authorities said the suit represents the first time a Mafia outfit and its members have been sued in a civil proceeding by the government.

Among other properties and financial holdings, prosecutors are seeking to wrest control of the defunct West Fourth St. Cafe in Manhattan, where Infanti is alleged to have operated a gambling ring. Another reputed gambling spot linked to Infanti is J&S Cake, a bakery in Maspeth, Queens.

Infanti's lawyer, Joseph Benifante, expressed doubts yesterday that his client was still alive.

"Knowing the man, I believe he is dead, but any theories to his death would be pure speculation at this time," the lawyer said.

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crimes but may have agreed to cooperate because "maybe he had a guilty conscience."

The fact that Sharpton—a longstanding critic of law enforcement authorities—had cooperated with the FBI came to light in a report in Newsday.

Newsday—quoting unnamed law enforcement sources—reported that for five years Sharpton secretly provided federal agencies with information about King; King's stepson, Carl; black activist Sonny Carson; Brooklyn Assemblyman Al Vann, Brooklyn Congressman Major Owens, Bronx Councilman Wendell Foster, sports agent Norby Walters and mobsters Sal Posillo, Joey and Danny Pagano and Michael and Sonny Franzese.

Newsday's sources said Sharpton agreed to cooperate with the feds in 1983, after he was shown a videotape of his discussions with the undercover agent, who was posing as a South American drug dealer.

Says FBI tried 'sting'

Sharpton yesterday said he was never shown a tape and denied being interested in buying drugs. He also charged the FBI tried to "sting" him and King, but failed because "an offer was made and I turned it down."

Sharpton also denied giving information about Carson, the Kings or Foster. He admitted that he made voter-fraud allegations about Vann



LAWYER AND ACTIVIST C. Vernon Mason expresses support for the Rev. Al Sharpton at news conference yesterday afternoon.

MONICA ALMEIDA DAILY NEWS

and Owens, both Democrats, and said he gave some information about alleged mob ticket-scalping and an alleged murder threat against him by Posillo.

Carson and other black activists, including Viola Plummer, and lawyers C. Vernon Mason and Alton Maddox, spoke in support of Sharpton.

"No one among us is of the mind that Rev. Sharpton is a snitch," said Maddox, who vowed to bring a defamation suit against Newsday. "It is very clear that Newsday would like to create hysteria within the movement."

Newsday managing editor James Toedtman said the paper "stands by its story." He

denied the story was an attempt to undermine the black movement.

"There was no effort here to discredit anyone," Toedtman said. "It was certainly not a witch hunt."

Reached for comment in Atlantic City, where he is promoting tomorrow night's

heavyweight championship fight between Mike Tyson and Larry Holmes, King said he did not believe Sharpton betrayed him.

"I don't believe that (stuff) about Sharpton," King said. "If it's true, it makes you sad in the heart . . . They (government) try to get any black leader."

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John Jacobs, said Franzese's "relationship with the Rev. Sharpton was 100% above board. They knew each other because my client was a movie producer and Sharpton, who was close to James Brown, had contacts in the record industry."

who is based in Bedford-Stuyvesant, was listed as a potential prosecution witness at the racketeering trial of six private carting company owners, including mob capo

Matthew (Matty The Horse) Ianniello. All the defendants were acquitted.

Prosecutor James Rather told the jury Sharpton had approached Con Edison "about becoming a garbage carter for Con Ed" and told them that he was about to become a 51% owner of the Consolidated Carting company.

The deal never materialized and Sharpton never testified. There was testimony at the trial that Sharpton had

links to Clarence Jones, a former special counsel to Martin Luther King who was convicted of a \$450,000 loan scam in Chicago in 1981.

Jones testified that Sharpton told Con Ed he (Sharpton) had spoken to Mayor Koch about picking up Con Ed's garbage.

Also in 1986, Sharpton was picked up on a state Organized Crime Task Force wiretap on the Rockland County home phone of Genovese

crime family mobster Daniel Pagano, a son of reputed Genovese capo Joseph Pagano, sources said.

Scalping scheme

Sources said Sharpton implicated himself in a scheme to scalp tickets for boxing matches and rock concerts and was eventually contacted by state task force agents. The sources said Sharpton admitted his involvement and agreed to cooperate with

them, but later reneged on the deal.

The sources said Sharpton and Pagano are targets of a Rockland grand jury investigating the ticket scalping scam.

Sharpton also has been linked to Michael Franzese, a mob-linked businessman who is serving 10 years for a \$15 million tax scam. Franzese is the son of legendary Colombo capo Sonny Franzese.

Michael Franzese's lawyer,