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## High court: No barring jurors because of race

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WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court sent a message to prosecutors and judges Wednesday that it will cast a skeptical eye on the exclusion of blacks from juries.

The justices, voting 7-2, threw out a murder conviction and death sentence because a Louisiana prosecutor kept blacks off the jury in a trial he called his "O.J. Simpson case."

Although the high court ruled previously that jurors cannot be excused solely because of their race, the practice has continued, often with the approval of judges, legal scholars said.

"Courts have consistently been willing to accept any explanation, however farfetched, as to why the exclusion of a minority juror wasn't actually based on race," Hofstra University law professor Eric M. Freedman said.

The justices said state prosecutor Jim Williams improperly excluded blacks from the jury that convicted Allen Snyder in 1996 of killing his estranged wife's companion. Snyder is black; the jurors were white.

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