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THE DEATH OF MICHAEL JACKSON

DR. CONRAD MURRAY ON TRIAL

October 18, 2011

Where did all the Michael Jackson fans go?

Posted: 07:28 PM ET



On Thursday, 53-year-old Michael Rico stood quietly outside the Los Angeles County Courthouse. Though the weather was hot, and court had already begun, Rico calmly remained, holding a signed photo of Jackson and a sign reading, "Soldiers of Love."

"I come here every day to support Michael," said Rico, a Hollywood resident who spent years working security for Jackson. "He was not only a friend, but I'm a fan as well."

Rico comes to the courthouse each day to hold his sign and show his support. He said he feels obligated to defend the late music legend, who he said he saw the day before his death.

"I know for a fact that he got killed by Dr. Murray," Rico said. "All the medicine shows Michael was not able to overdose himself. Conrad Murray gave it to him."

At the close of last week (week three) of the Michael Jackson death trial, in which Dr. Conrad Murray is charged with involuntary manslaughter of the singer, fanfare was sparse, with fewer than 20 vying for seats in the courthouse.

More than 40 sought seats on the first day of the Murray trial, but for the late pop star, a man so often associated with fiercely loyal fans, the turnout pales in comparison to other Jackson-centered events.

Steve Moglia, a freelance audio technician, who worked with "CourtTV" (now "In Session") to cover Jackson's molestation trial, says fan turnout for the 2005 proceedings was overwhelming.

"The streets were packed," said Moglia. "They'd come and go, and you'd have the hardcore ones that were there and then those that would find out he was going to be there and fly in."

According to "In Session" senior field producer Grace Wong, who also covered the 2005 trial for "CourtTV," the number of demonstrators was in the hundreds, particularly near the beginning and end of proceedings.

"It's nothing like the attendance that was at Michael Jackson's trial," Wong said. "You had the length of two city blocks. There was an international presence I have never seen at any other trial."

She said each day when Jackson arrived to court, he was greeted with a roaring crowd of fans holding signs, playing his music and dancing. When he was ultimately acquitted of all charges of child molestation, a fan outside the courthouse released doves in celebration.

"His fans as a group felt misunderstood by society, and he was misunderstood by society," said Mark Somers an "In Session" producer who has covered Jackson since his 2005 trial. "They felt like he was in their corner. It was alright for them to fight for him. He allowed them to feel like they could be themselves in a united front under Michael Jackson."

The 2005 trial was not the only demonstration of Jackson fan loyalty. After his death, supporters gathered in masses at Jackson's home, the hospital where he died and at his star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Fans around the world held candlelight vigils, embraced and sang his songs.

"Clearly these are people who have in some way an emotional connection to Michael," said psychotherapist and author Beatty Cohan. "I think it [his death] was a shock. Maybe for them they needed that kind of closure to go and know and see that it was really all over."

Fans also showed up in droves for the Michael Jackson tribute concert in Wales on October 8, with a turnout of 50,000. On August 29, what would have been the star's 53rd birthday, fan observations included a multi-day celebration in Jackson's hometown of Gary, Indiana, and a flash mob in Hollywood.

"I think what Michael Jackson had with fans over others is they felt a connection with him on a superhuman level," Somers said. "They felt the need to protect him even though they didn't know him."

Though fan presence at the trial has dwindled, Cohan said the lower turnout makes sense, considering the trial's somber tone and less controversial nature.

"With the molestation trial it was more of a soap opera," she said. "People were really split with whether or not he did it or whether or not he didn't do it. For people who like to come out and protest or demonstrate the molestation case was much more exciting than this."

Somers agreed, saying during the 2005 trial, fans were more driven to protest what they viewed as unjust allegations.

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Your online home for HLN and In Session on truTV's up-to-the minute, comprehensive coverage of the trial of Dr. Conrad Murray. Our anchors, analysts and producers are teaming up here for trial reporting and observations that stretch from what witnesses and attorneys are saying in the L.A. court room to what you're saying in the office break room.

From opening statements to closing arguments, you won't miss a bit of powerful testimony as a California jury weighs whether Murray is to blame for the death of the King of Pop, Michael Jackson.

Be sure to tune in to In Session on tru TV from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. ET and HLN ALL day for LIVE wall-to-wall coverage and key analysis of the trial.

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InSession 9:57 pm ET October 18, 2011

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InSession 7:28 pm ET October 18, 2011

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Get ready testimony in the Dr. #ConradMurray resumes tomorrow morning! Read all about what to expect here: <http://t.co/10TUdLw>



InSession 6:10 pm ET October 18, 2011

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"They felt the right to stand up for people who are abused by people in positions of authority," Somers said of the mindsets of many Jackson fans.

Beatty adds that the mere absence of Jackson, whose arrivals at the molestation trial incited roars of applause and cheering, contributes to the smaller turnout.

"Michael is dead," she said. "Nobody is going to see him. He isn't going to be waving to anybody."

While fans may not be present in numbers comparable to past Jackson events, turnout at the tribute concert and celebration of the singer's would-be birthday shows his supporters remain united.

"You still see it today," Wong said. "I see it at this trial. He had this incredible relationship with his fans. They felt that they knew him. They really shared a bond. The fans adored him and he could do nothing wrong."

Complete courtroom coverage of the Conrad Murray trial airs live on [HLN](#) from gavel to gavel. It's also on [In Session](#) on truTV from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. ET every weekday.

Posted by: [In Session's Cara Hutt](#)

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