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By JAMES W. WADE III

Staff Reporter

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Many gathered on the corner of East 123rd and Imperial, including family members of some of the murder victims, rallied Friday to call attention to the trial of alleged serial killer Anthony Sowell.

This week, Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Judge Dick Ambrose spoke to a new group of potential jurors. The judge explained that Sowell is facing 11 counts of aggravated murder with felony murder specifications, which means it carries a possible penalty of death.

This rally was organized by Imperial Women, a group that was formed following the discovery of 11 victims inside the home of accused serial killer Anthony Sowell in 2009. The group said it wanted to bring community awareness concerning domestic violence, rape and how missing person cases are handled.

It was clear everyone at the rally all wanted the same thing, they want accused serial killer Anthony Sowell found guilty and punished for murdering 11 women. Some even touched on him getting the Death Penalty.

From day one, the community has spoken out about the way police did not take the victims reports seriously. Even more criticism came of the feeling that it was not taken serious because of them being poor, Black and female.

Family members of the victims also spoke about their pain. Denise Hunter, sister of victim Amelda Hunter and cousin of victim Crystal Dozier, spoke about the need to stick together. “It's important that we as a public and a people voice our opinion and strength for these women murdered on this street,” said Hunter. “They need and deserve justice.”

Adlean Atterberry, mother of Michelle Mason, talked about her daughter’s only crime was being too friendly and walking to the store. “It hurts me so bad,” said Atterberry.

Activists Art McCoy from Black on Black Crime and Judy Martin Survivors/Victims of Tragedy Inc. was there to help lead the chant “No Justice, No Peace.”

Political officials like Councilman Ken Johnson, Councilman Jeff Johnson and Councilwoman Mamie Mitchell expressed support for the rally. Councilman Kevin Conwell expressed his desire to be at the rally first as a man, then as a councilman.

State Rep. John E. Barnes Jr. who was also present, stated something has to be done to protect our residents. Representatives for U.S. Rep. Marcia Fudge were on hand for support to the fact of bringing awareness.

Sowell's attorneys did offer to have him plead guilty but prosecutors said, “No deal.” In fact, in the past, Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Bill Mason has said if any case deserves the death penalty it's this one. Meantime, out of sight, the court brought in about 300 possible jurors.

The trial was supposed to start Monday, so why did the court bring in possible jurors early and in secret? The court administrator says he didn't want jurors to assume they'd be hearing the Sowell case.

This week a petition filed by some family members, urges prosecutors to take the deal in order to avoid the emotional trauma of the trial. That petition was delivered to Mason's office on Tuesday.

“The death penalty for Anthony Sowell is not necessary or even desirable, in comparison to the grief we families will continue to suffer under the realities and uncertainties of the criminal justice system,” stated the letter.

Of those victims represented in the letter are Tonia Carmichael, Telacia Fortson, Janice Webb and Leshanda Long.

“We feel that our voices have not been heard as victims' families. A prolonged trial and re-enactment of Sowell's demented actions will create great distress on the families of the victims.”