

# \$1.5 million in shooting by cop

## Jury says testimony by officer who killed man was not credible

BY CURTIS LAWRENCE  
Staff Reporter

Finding that a Chicago police officer lacked credibility on the stand, a Cook County jury Thursday awarded \$1.5 million to the family of 20-year-old Michael Russell, who was fatally shot in the back by the officer five years ago.

Officer Kenny Lunsford fired eight shots at Russell on April 5, 1998, after police responded to a gang-related shooting at the Cabrini-Green public housing development. One of the bullets struck Russell.

Russell's mother, Mildred Hamilton, let out a quiet sigh and



Michael Russell's mother, Mildred Hamilton (left); aunt, Pam Russell, and sister, Crystal Hamilton, talk after court Thursday. —JOHN H. WHITE/SUN-TIMES

rocked back and forth when the verdict was read.

"You took his life for nothing, for nothing at all," said Hamilton,

who stood with her sister, daughter and other supporters outside the courtroom. "We have got justice for my son."

Just before Russell was killed, Craig Winn had shot another gang member, Marrio Morgan. Lunsford's attorney argued that Russell and Winn were acting in concert, though Winn took sole responsibility at his criminal trial.

Lunsford, who is retired and was not present in court Thursday, had argued that it was actually Russell who fired the shot at a rival gang member.

Police pointed to tests they claim showed gunshot residue on Russell's clothing.

But attorneys for Russell's family—Jon Loevy, Michael Kanovitz and Amanda Antholt—countered that Russell was not armed and that the residue tests were inconclusive. The jury agreed.

"For five years, they've been saying over and over again that Mr. Russell had a gun in his hand," Loevy said. "The lie the police have been telling . . . has been exposed."

Law Department spokeswoman Jennifer Hoyle said the city was "disappointed . . . and would be reviewing all of our options," including having the verdict reduced and appealing the ruling.

Jury foreman Dorcas Wether spoon, of Chicago's South Side said the defense "did not have enough proof."

Juror Paul Fredericy of Wrigleyville cited "inconsistencies in Lunsford's testimony. "When he came on [the witness stand] the second time, stuff changed," he said, rating Lunsford's credibility "50/50."

Pam Russell, Michael Russell's aunt, hopes the verdict will encourage other victims of wrongful police shootings to "step up and let the world know what's going on."

Asked what her son would think, Hamilton said, "I think he would be proud because he know I'm a fighter."