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Jackson to speak today in Jena

Town Talk staff

The Rev. Jesse Jackson is coming to Jena this afternoon to meet with family members of the "Jena Six," ministers and community leaders.

According to the press release from the Rainbow PUSH Coalition, Jackson will hold his meeting at 3 p.m. at the Goodpine Middle School.

"There has to be a choice between the Christian spirit and political muscle," Jackson said in the release. "There is a tug-of-war going on between the adults: parents, lawyers, district attorneys, etc."

The Jena Six -- Mychal Bell, Carwin Jones, Robert Bailey Jr., Bryant Purvis, Theo Shaw and Jesse Ray Beard -- are six black students who have been charged following a December incident at Jena High School in which white student Justin Barker was left unconscious, bleeding and suffered facial injuries.

Charges of attempted murder against Jones and Shaw were reduced to aggravated second-degree battery and conspiracy to commit same this past Tuesday. A jury trial for Jones is set for 9 a.m. on Jan. 28, while no trial date was set for Shaw.

Bell, the first defendant to go to trial, was convicted in June of aggravated second-degree battery and conspiracy to commit same.

However, also on Tuesday, Judge J.P. Mauffray Jr. with the 28th Judicial District Court threw out the charge of conspiracy to commit aggravated second-degree battery, saying the adult court should never have had jurisdiction for that charge, but retained the other charge of aggravated second-degree battery. The judge also denied all motions for a post-verdict acquittal.
