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Huey Newton Murder Trial Set to Begin

By Peter Fimrite

Chronicle East Bay Bureau

Black Panther co-founder Huey Newton died two years ago on a dark West Oakland street, but the final chapter of his life will be played out over the next few weeks in an Oakland courtroom.

Convicted bank robber and reputed cocaine dealer Tyrone Robinson will stand trial at Alameda County Superior Court on Monday for allegedly pumping three bullets into Newton's head in the early morning hours of Aug. 22, 1989.

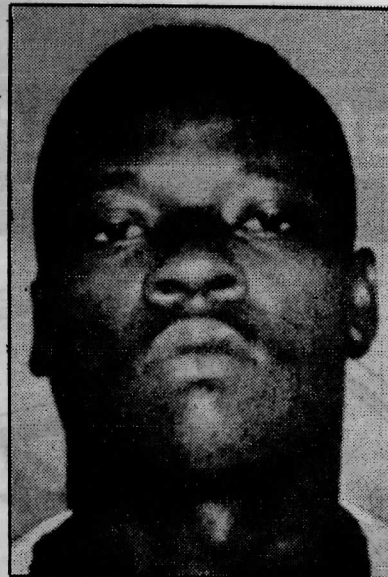
The prosecution contends that Robinson shot Newton in an attempt to bolster his position in the Black Guerrilla Family prison gang. Robinson told police that he killed Newton in self-defense after Newton tried to shoot him during an argument over cocaine.

The defense hopes to describe Newton's turbulent life as a Black Panther, which began in 1966 and ended in the late 1970s.

Defense attorney Al Wagner said he will try to prove that Robinson feared Newton.

"He was a violent guy, and there will be some evidence of his past violence," Wagner said. "It's plausible that if he was violent then, he was violent this time."

Wagner said Newton's drug use



TYRONE ROBINSON

Suspect is reputed cocaine dealer

and allegations that he had been stealing drugs and money from narcotics dealers may also be a factor in the murder trial.

Once an articulate revolutionary determined to use violence as a means of achieving black equality, Newton was fighting a battle with cocaine addiction at the time of his death. Toxicology tests showed that he had alcohol and a large amount of cocaine in his body when he died.

Prosecutor Kenneth Burr said testimony from witnesses who saw the shooting and heard Robinson brag about it later is enough to prove Robinson's guilt.

"My contention is he killed Newton and he later bragged about doing it," Burr said. "Why he did it may or may not be relevant."