

Broward County, Florida, Circuit Judge Larry Seidlin is considered a judicial embarrassment by many other judges. They want to retreat behind the closed doors of their courtrooms from Seidlin's week-long Anna Nicole Smith hearing, replete with digressions, philosophical waxings and weeping, and make Seidlin the poster child for why court proceedings shouldn't be televised.

They shouldn't though.

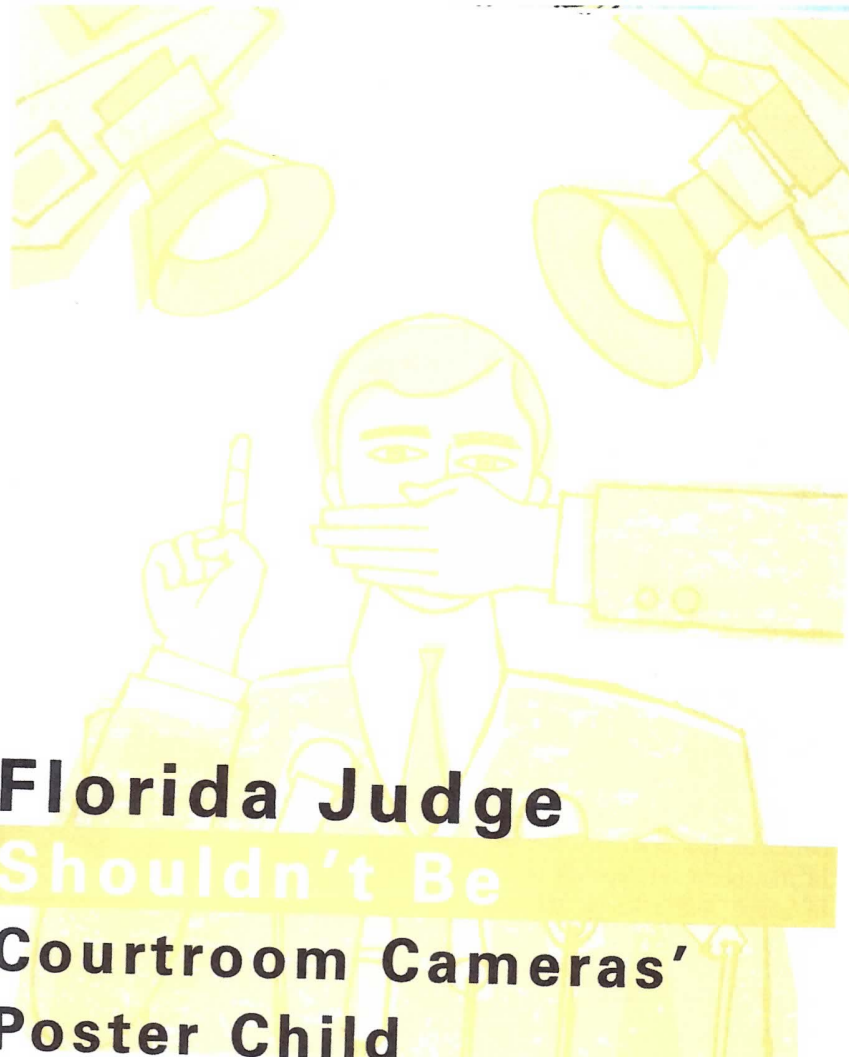
Rather than ban cameras, judges should welcome them. As retired San Diego Superior Court Judge William Mudd said in the wake of the 1995 O.J. Simpson verdict and who permitted camera coverage of the 2002 Danielle van Dam murder trial of David Westerfield, if judges are competent, they shouldn't fear cameras.

Were cameras the norm, they would lose their voyeuristic appeal and novelty. Californians Aware General Counsel and open-government expert Terry Francke, says that "... to the extent you deliberately make camera access rare, it will ... have a greater impact on all in the room than if courts were to say, 'Cameras. They're here. They're staying; get used to it.'"

Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Larry Paul Fidler, in ruling that cameras could cover the murder trial of music producer Phil Spector, said it's time to get over the "fear of cameras" that has gripped judges since the Simpson trial made an unwilling celebrity of his fellow judge, Lance Ito.

Rather than Seidlin, the courtroom camera coverage poster child should be a Wisconsin high-profile trial of the horrific torture and murder of a young female photographer.

"The Steven Avery trial at the Calumet County Courthouse in Chilton is a good lesson in how the criminal justice system handles high-profile cases," editorialized the Manitowoc Herald Times Reporter in February 2007. "It is in sharp contrast to the image most television viewers have of what goes on in courtrooms. ... We have been broadcasting live video from the courtroom on



Florida Judge Shouldn't Be Courtroom Cameras' Poster Child

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our Web site (<http://www.htrnews.com>). There is no narration or talking heads to tell you what you just saw. Just cameras set up in the courtroom to capture the sights and sounds of the trial as they happen."

Court TV Managing Editor Fred Graham says Court TV streams its coverage of many trials onto the Internet every day without incident.

And in New York state, where televising court proceedings is banned, a Poughkeepsie newspaper quoted a county prosecutor in Indiana where cameras were recently permitted as saying, "The more the public knows about how we do our jobs, the better off we all are in government. We have nothing to hide."

Neither do most judges. And cameras, appropriately installed and operated—preferably by the court—would enable the public to see that. Or would they rather that Seidlin remain the indelible—

and only—image the public has of a judge presiding over a courtroom?

And as for Seidlin, shouldn't people be allowed to see him and decide for themselves if he's the kind of judge they want presiding in their courts? ■



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