

POLITICALLY CORRECT THANKSGIVING

When a Honolulu jury acquitted 47 year-old Junior Stowers of abusing his son, he raised his hands in the courtroom and exclaimed, "Thank you Jesus!" His joy quickly faded, when the judge rapped his gavel, holding Stowers in contempt of court for the "outburst" and threw him in jail. After the remark, Stowers asked permission to approach the bench to apologize, but the request was denied. After six hours, the judge granted a hearing on the contempt charge and released Stowers because though the judge had ordered both sides not to show emotion when the verdict was announced, Stowers' counsel did not have time to tell him before the verdict was read. The judge did not comment but referred reporters to the court minutes, which said the judge viewed Stowers' "nonverbal gestures and outbursts to be disruptive and improper regardless of content."

Family and friends watching from the gallery said they were shocked that those words could land somebody in jail. Stowers' Public Defender Susan Arnett said she did not think he wasn't treated fairly. She said Stowers is a devoutly religious man active in his church who spontaneously expressed his thanks to the higher power in which he believed. She said, "I don't think there's anything about saying, 'Thank You Jesus' that rises to the level of contemptuous behavior in this case."