

STATE SEEKS WARRANT IN SLAYING CASE

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The Wayne County Prosecutor's Office, in a surprise move Tuesday, revealed it is seeking a search warrant to gather more evidence before retrying **Karen Norman** for first-degree murder.

Neither Assistant Prosecutor Dianne Odrobina nor defense attorney Marjory Cohen would reveal what evidence is being sought.

The warrant request, which Cohen said indicated the prosecution was "clutching at straws," was revealed during a pre-trial hearing before Recorder's Court Judge Beverley Anne Jasper, who set a Jan. 25 hearing on the request.

Jasper also set a new trial date of March 18 for **Norman**, 20, who is accused of murdering Lamont Powell, 25, in May 1984. The first trial ended in a hung jury Dec. 28, when the eight-woman, four-man jury was unable to reach a unanimous decision after a week of deliberations.

THE CASE has received widespread publicity, and **Norman** has gotten support from feminist organizations because of her contention that she killed Powell while defending herself against a brutal rape.

However, Odrobina, in her final argument in the first trial, said it was likely that a drunken Powell, who suffered 47 knife wounds, was killed while he was dozing or passed out. Powell's blood alcohol level, according to the autopsy, was nearly twice that of legal intoxication.

The search warrant request, which Cohen has asked Jasper to deny, sparked intense speculation. Because the knife was recovered and much of the prosecution's case during the first trial was built on medical testimony, it was not apparent what other evidence the prosecution was seeking.

The prosecution might be trying to bolster its contention that **Norman** and Powell had a long-term relationship.

POWELL'S RELATIVES testified in the first trial that he had brought **Norman** to a family gathering about a year before the slaying. But **Norman** testified that she had first met Powell the day before and dated him only once.

Outside court, Cohen said the prosecution was scrambling to bolster a weak case by seeking the search warrant.

"The prosecution has invested a lot of energy in trying to vindicate their position," Cohen said. "So far, they have been unable to secure a conviction, and they want one desperately. They are clutching at straws to vindicate their position."

Cohen also is going to the Michigan Court of Appeals, trying to overturn Jasper's ruling in the first trial that Althea Grant, director of the Detroit Rape Counseling Center, could not testify.

Grant's testimony was crucial, Cohen said, to explain **Norman** 's behavior after the incident. **Norman** 's behavior, including the conflicting stories she told her relatives and police about the killing, was part of the "rape trauma syndrome" experienced by many rape victims, Cohen said. Odrobina called the discrepancies a tangle of lies in an effort by **Norman** to escape responsibility.

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