

GRAND JURY INVESTIGATING DEFENSE LAWYER

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Detroit criminal lawyer W. **Otis Culpepper**, who gained notoriety through his high-profile defense of alleged members of the Young Boys Inc. heroin ring, is the target of a federal grand jury investigation.

Ann Arbor attorney Dennis Hayes, representing **Culpepper**, confirmed the probe and said its focus appears to be on possible income tax violations, but that it may have other goals.

"I'm sure that, like in the dance of the seven veils, it doesn't get interesting until you get to veil six or seven," Hayes said. "This tax thing may be just the first or second veil."

The real federal interest may be in law enforcement speculation that **Culpepper** was somehow involved in the Young Boys enterprise, Hayes said.

U.S. ATTORNEY Roy Hayes, who is not related to **Culpepper**'s lawyer, refused to comment on any federal grand jury matters.

"The reasoning is that black street kids couldn't run a \$100 million operation by themselves," Dennis Hayes said.

In the past, **Culpepper** has denied he has done more than provide legal representation for individuals charged with crimes, and belittled the speculation as "the ridiculous belief that I have been retained by (Young Boys) or that I am their corporate counsel. That's ridiculous."

According to people familiar with the investigation who asked not to be named, the grand jury has subpoenaed former legal associates and **Culpepper**'s records.

One of those said federal authorities are trying to track down millions of dollars believed reaped by Young Boys but never recovered after the ring was smashed by a federal sweep in 1982 and 1983.

DENNIS HAYES said **Culpepper**'s often-successful defenses of the alleged drug figures and the gang's reputed hit men, coupled with **Culpepper**'s flamboyant style, drew the scrutiny.

Among **Culpepper**'s clients have been Young Boys figures Milton (Butchie) Jones, Kurt (Kurt McGurk) Napier, Cary Vincent Goins and Dennis (Frank Nitti) Franklin.

Jones is one of the reputed founders of Young Boys and the others were identified by authorities as top lieutenants or enforcers. As a teenager, Napier was described as Detroit's Public Enemy No. 1 by the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office.

Culpepper also won dismissal of murder charges in the controversial case brought against former Highland Park High School girls basketball coach David Payton, who was charged in a series of prostitute killings.

"It used to be guilt by association, now it's guilt by representation," Dennis Hayes said. "Law enforcement now seems to be trying to drive a wedge between alleged felons and their seeking legal help and representation. . . . But I don't think they have anything more than mere suspicion."

AT 37, **Culpepper** is said by some to be one of Detroit's top criminal defense lawyers.

By 1982, **Culpepper** 's counter-culture persona -- cowboy boots and patched blue jeans in court -- started giving way to Brooks Brothers suits and a 1976 Rolls Royce Silver Shadow. The suits, however, are often topped with a Greek fisherman's hat or a New York Yankees cap, and he has been seen recently driving a battered and rusty pickup.

Although declining to comment on the grand jury proceedings, **Culpepper** said of his Rolls Royce: "It's a used car. In 1982, when I got it, it cost as much as a new Mercedes. . . . I should have bought a Volkswagen instead. That car's been a pain ever since I got it."

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