

EXPERT SAYS HE MIGHT'VE JUMPED, TOO DEFENSE THEORY HURT IN BELLE ISLE DEATH

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A key defense witness called Thursday to buttress claims that **Deletha Word** was drug-crazed and irrational when she jumped to her death from the Belle Isle bridge conceded under dramatic cross-examination that he might have done the same thing.

The reluctant admission by behavioral psychologist Michael Abramsky appeared to blow a gaping hole in the defense theory that murder suspect Martell Welch Jr. was not responsible for the 33-year-old woman's death by drowning.

The development came on the third day of testimony in the Detroit Recorder's Court trial, in which several witnesses have said the 290-pound Welch beat **Word** so severely that she jumped to escape further pounding.

Welch was charged with murder because prosecutors contend that his actions led **Word** to jump and drown in the Detroit River. Police say the beating came after **Word** hit Welch's car and then drove off, stopping at the congested bridge at about 2 a.m.

After initially testifying Thursday that **Word's** jump from the bridge was consistent with the "destructive behavior" of someone addicted to the drug phencyclidine, or angel dust, Abramsky faced a barrage of hypothetical questions from prosecutor Kevin Simowski that turned the tables.

Previous testimony indicated **Word** was addicted to the drug.

Moments before, Simowski had read the psychologist's testimony from a 6-year-old case where Abramsky said major "stressor" events could induce zombie-like behavior. According to earlier testimony, **Word** seemed dazed as she made her way to the bridge rail after the beating.

"Assume you were alone in this car," Simowski began, "and somebody who weighed over 260 pounds takes a tire jack and smashes a windshield twice. Would that be a minor event or serious event?"

Abramsky said it would be serious. He also conceded that being dragged out of the car and beaten, as witnesses said **Word** was, would be a major traumatic event.

Finally, Simowski asked what Abramsky would do given the choice between jumping from the bridge or staying put as a massive Welch approached with a large car jack.

Abramsky quietly said that it might be smart to jump.

The prosecution has yet to rest its case.

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