

## Nothing Seems To Be Lil Kims Fault

Written by Robert ID998

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For two days in a row, prosecutors tried to cast doubt on female hip-hop rap artist Lil' Kim's integrity Friday (March 11), walking the jury through perceived inconsistencies in her financial records and even dredging up a magazine article in which the rapper brags about transporting illegal drugs.

Lil' Kim, born Kimberly Jones, again took the witness stand to defend herself against charges of lying before a grand jury two years ago concerning a February 2001 shooting outside New York hip-hop radio station Hot 97 .

Jones denied seeing her former manager, Damion Butler, at the scene of the shooting and also claimed not to recognize the man in a photo of Suif "Gutta" Jackson, a member of her former group Junior M.A.F.I.A. As part of a plea deal offered by prosecutors, both Butler and Jackson have admitted to participating in the shootout and both have testified as prosecution witnesses.

With financial records as the main weapon in her arsenal, prosecutor Cathy Siebel attacked Jones' character and tried to accentuate supposed contradictions in her testimony. First, Siebel detailed Jones' federal income tax dereliction, saying the rapper owes close to \$1 million in back taxes, an amount that's been accumulating since 2000. Jones testified that she's done everything she could to settle the matter.

Siebel then challenged statements Jones made on Thursday concerning the theft of some jewelry during a 2001 Miami vacation. Siebel presented the court with insurance claims filed for the filched jewels that included an estimated total loss considerably lower than the figure Jones had provided the previous afternoon.

The prosecutor also grilled Jones on a 2003 incident during which \$500,000 of the rapper's jewelry was stolen from John F. Kennedy International Airport but later recovered. Siebel presented federal income tax filings signed in August 2004 that declared Jones' "personal assets" at the time to be \$49,000 — a far cry from \$500,000, the prosecutor said.

Siebel also charged that if Jones were making a good-faith effort to pay back her debt to the government, she would not have purchased a \$2.3 million home in Alpine, New Jersey, in 2002.

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Jones' benevolence was the next target. Filings with the IRS put the entertainer's combined income for 2002 and 2003 at close to \$2 million, of which not even \$2,000 went to charities. Jones responded by saying she doesn't claim most of her altruistic offerings when she files her returns (which defense attorney Mel Sachs was quick to point out "saves the government money") and that she lets her accountant and her manager handle all of her paperwork — suggesting she's so far removed from her financial affairs that if errors are found, it's not her fault.

"Management, my accountant tells me what to do, and I sign the papers," said Jones, sporting a cream jacket embroidered with daisies over a pink woven skirt with matching bow tie. "I have nothing to hide. I just sign the papers."

Yet another attack on her character came when Siebel presented the court with a magazine article that featured a Q&A interview in which Jones boasts of transporting illegal drugs. The rapper called that portion of the article a fabrication, admitting to having something of a split personality.

"When I'm being interviewed as Lil' Kim, that's a different persona than Kimberly Jones — just like my music is Lil' Kim the entertainer," she explained.

Jones was again asked about the 2001 shootout in front of Hot 97, an incident she said could have claimed her life, and a moment in time as traumatic for her as the slaying of her mentor/boyfriend Notorious B.I.G. and the 9-11 attacks.

Before court adjourned around 3 p.m., both sides rested. Final summations are scheduled to start on Monday. As Jones left the courthouse, she was swarmed by media and fans, many of whom wished her well and expressed admiration for her ("We love you, Kim" chants were followed with calls of "Brooklyn!").

Said Sachs to reporters: "We know justice will be served."

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