



Virtual juries use 'fuzzy logic' to render verdicts

December 30, 1995

Web posted at: 1 a.m. EST

From Correspondent Christine Negroni



NEW YORK (CNN) -- A speedy trial in front of a jury of peers is one of our constitutional rights. But there are those who think that the Sixth Amendment ought to be amended to include trial by mainframe. Using computer technology, New York University has developed the Solomon Project which proposes to try cases through artificial intelligence.

While the O.J. Simpson double murder case wasn't the first trial where the jury's verdict was criticized, it has focused attention on the jury system. That's why technology to conduct trials by computer is getting attention.



Bonuso

When jurors found Simpson not guilty of murdering his ex-wife and her friend Ron Goldman in October, more than a difference of opinion separated them from New York computer scientist Joseph Bonuso. "We found O.J. guilty (of murder) beyond a reasonable doubt," he says. ([43K AIFF sound](#) or [43K WAV sound](#))

Bonuso is one of many who sustain an objection to a jury's ability to mete out justice. "A jury is a manipulated group of puppets," he says.

Defense lawyer John Ray says that jurors commonly violate the judge's instructions. "And the instructions are not difficult to follow, they just don't want to," Ray says. ([77K AIFF sound](#) or [77K WAV sound](#))

The Solomon Project at [New York University](#) is designed to take the jury out of jurisprudence, casting all trials to the impartiality of artificial intelligence.

Solomon was tested on some highly sensational cases. Testimony, evidence, and precedents were entered into the computer and a complicated formula, using fuzzy logic, a multi-valued logic that allows for answers to a question somewhere between yes and no, helped render a verdict. "We found Mike Tyson to be innocent. We found William K. Smith to be guilty. We found Claus Von Bulow to be guilty. Heidi Fleiss was guilty, we went along with the jury. We found the Menendez brothers to be guilty," Bonuso says.



Mike Tyson was found innocent

But to critics, the ability to conduct a fair trial by mainframe is a moot point. Forget the big

cases, they argue, Solomon can't find a way around the constitutional right to a trial by a jury of one's peers. "A computer is not a peer. It's not human. It never can be. And no criminal defendant would want to take the risk of facing a computer," Ray says. ([111K AIFF sound](#) or [111K WAV sound](#))



Some experts are not impressed. "It looks to me like Star Trek meets the jury--more like artificial nonsense than artificial intelligence," says Professor Jeffrey Abramson of Brandeis University. ([64K AIFF sound](#) or [64K WAV sound](#))

According to experts, the preponderance of evidence at this point is that Solomon won't replace juries anytime soon. But it could find an audience among lawyers looking to present their cases in a trial run and get a computerized verdict that will predict what human jurors might decide.

Related Site:

- [The U.S. Bill of Rights](#)

 [\[Imagemap\]](#)

| [CONTENTS](#) | [SEARCH](#) | [CNN HOME PAGE](#) | [MAIN TECHNOLOGY PAGE](#) |

*Copyright © 1995 Cable News Network, Inc.
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.
External sites are not endorsed by CNN Interactive.*