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U.S. news

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Chief Judge Richard W. Roberts of the U.S. District Court for the Federal District of Washington.U.S. District Court

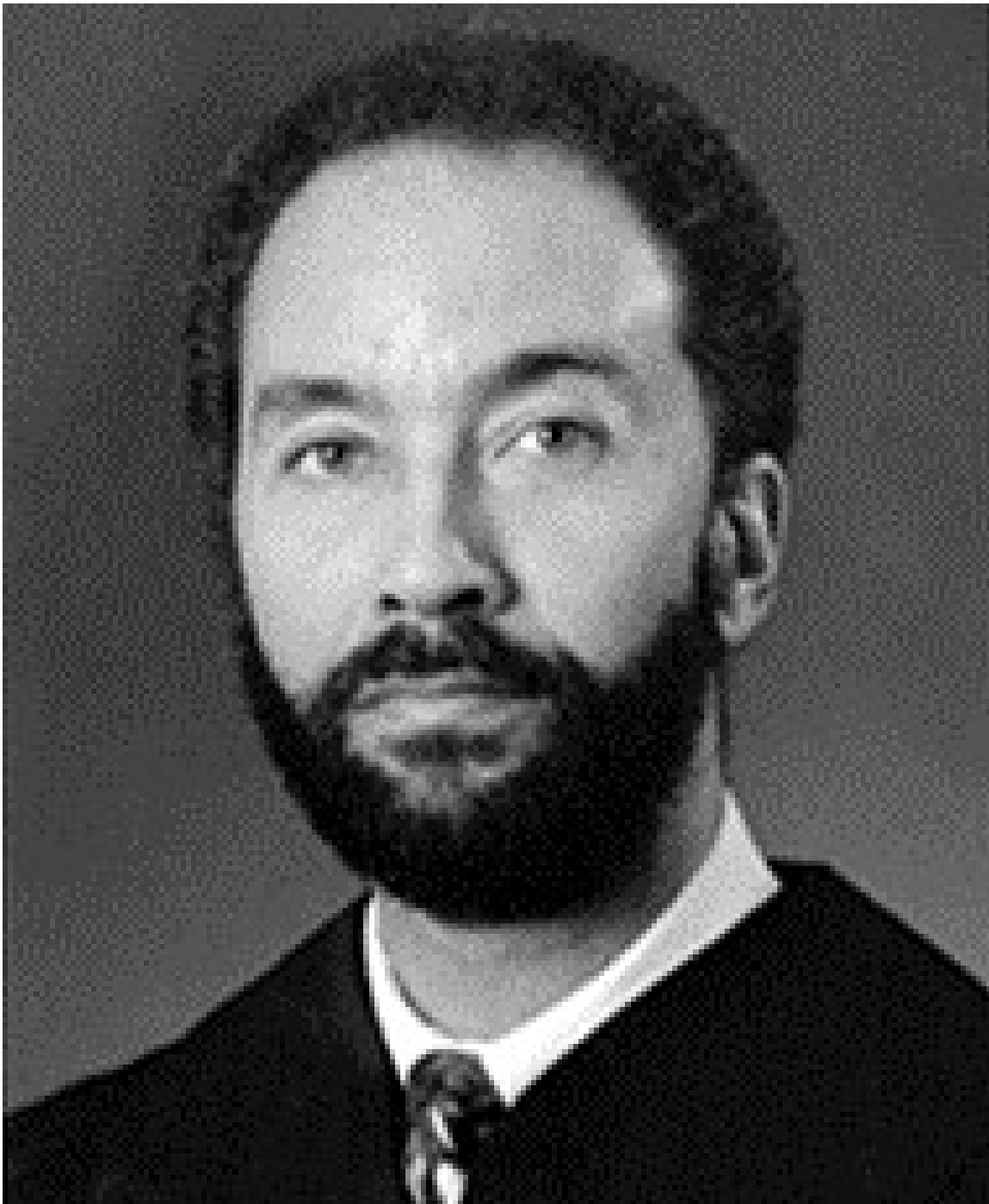
March 16, 2016 / 9:19 PM MDT / Updated March 17, 2016 / 1:16 AM MDT

By Alex Johnson

The chief U.S. district judge in Washington, D.C., could face a congressional investigation in connection with a sexual abuse lawsuit filed Wednesday by a Utah woman.

Richard W. Roberts, the chief U.S. district judge for Washington, D.C., submitted a letter of resignation Wednesday as news of the suit emerged, [The National Law Journal](#) and [The Washington Post](#) reported. The Post reported that he cited health reasons.

The court didn't immediately respond to a request for comment Wednesday night, and Roberts was still listed as chief judge on the court's website.



Chief Judge Richard W. Roberts of the U.S. District Court for the Federal District of Washington.U.S. District Court

As chief judge, Roberts – who was appointed to the court in 1998 by President Bill Clinton – is in charge of many sensitive cases, including a civil suit against the federal government brought by Abu Zubaydah, the senior Al Qaeda operative who claims the United States tortured him during interrogations at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

In the suit filed Wednesday in U.S. District Court in Salt Lake City, the woman, Terry Mitchell, seeks a jury trial on her claims that Roberts raped her repeatedly in 1981 when she was a witness in the trial of Joseph Paul Franklin, the white supremacist serial killer who shot Hustler magazine publisher Larry Flynt.

Mitchell was 16 years old at the time, according to the suit.

Roberts, then a civil rights lawyer for the U.S. Justice Department, was part of the team prosecuting Franklin, who was executed in 2013.

NBC News does not usually publish the names of alleged victims of sexual assault or of juvenile victims of violent crimes in most circumstances, but Mitchell told The Associated Press that she wanted her allegations made public.

In a statement to The Post, Roberts' attorneys called the allegations "categorically false" — but they acknowledged that the judge, who was 27 and unmarried at the time, did have a "relationship" with the woman some time later.

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"Roberts acknowledges that the relationship was indeed a bad lapse in judgment," the statement said. "However, the relationship did not occur until after the trial and had no bearing on the outcome of that trial."

According to the suit, Mitchell was already the victim of sexual assault by several other men, including her step-grandfather, and in his role as a prosecutor, Roberts had access to her mental counseling records.

The suit claims that Roberts used that access to deceive Mitchell and her parents into trusting him. After gaining their trust, he drove her to a hotel, where he forced her up to a room and raped her, the suit alleges.

Afterward, "Defendant Roberts intimidated, coerced, and manipulated Mitchell to have sexual intercourse nearly every day for several weeks," the suit alleges. It says she repressed all memory of the alleged abuse until 2013, when Roberts emailed her about a new development in the 1981 case in which she'd been a witness.

NBC station KSL of Salt Lake City reported late Wednesday that the Utah attorney general's office investigated Mitchell's claims in 2014. But because Utah's age of consent was 16 in 1981 — it's 18 now — investigators concluded that she was old enough at the time to have consented to sexual relations.

Rep. Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, chairman of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, said in a statement Wednesday that the Utah attorney general's office had recently informed the committee of the allegations, which he said "caused alarm and distress over their serious nature."

"We will work with the House and Senate Judiciary Committees to determine next best steps to ensure justice is served," Chaffetz said.

U.S. news

Mother accused of murdering teenage son, shooting two others in Oklahoma home

"We do not have a motive at this time. We are still investigating this," Okmulgee County Sheriff Eddy Rice said.



Amy Hall
Okmulgee County Jail
Nov. 1, 2018 / 12:07 PM MDT

By Minyvonne Burke

An 18-year-old man in Oklahoma was gunned down by his mother Thursday and two female teens, also believed to be her children, were also shot, officials said.

Deputies were called to the Nuyaka-area home around 6:30 a.m. CT (7:30 a.m. ET) for reports of a shooting. When authorities arrived, they found the 18-year-old dead and two other teens suffering from gunshot wounds, Sheriff Eddy Rice said during a news conference.

Rice said Hall is the mother of the 18-year-old man, who has not been named, and believes she is also the mother of the two female teens.

The two girls were taken to the hospital. One is in critical condition and the other is stable, authorities said.

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Rice told media he believes the 911 call came from a guest in the home and said the father of the children was not there when the shooting occurred.

Deputies arrested Amy Leann Hall, 38, Thursday and charged her with first-degree murder and two counts of shooting with intent to kill.

"We do not have a motive at this time. We are still investigating this," he said.

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