

Trial(s) For Blacks Set To Start April 20

Arrestment of the six Northern Michigan University black students charged by civil authorities with creating a disturbance at the December sit-in in the Dean of Students' office took place Monday in Marquette District Court.

The six entered not guilty pleas

during the session Monday afternoon before Judge George E. Hill which lasted three and a half hours.

Judge Hill set Monday, April 20, at 10 a.m. as the starting date for the trial or trials by jury for the six.

A request for separate jury trials was filed by the six blacks through their attorney, J. Kent Bourland, of Hancock. Judge Hill took the motion for separate trials under advisement.

Bourland based his motion for separate trials on a "conflict of interest." He stated that the alleged acts were different and there was no conspiracy involved.

Monday afternoon, prior to the arraignment, Judge Hill denied a motion by Bourland to dismiss the charges. Bourland claimed in a lengthy presentation that the legal definitions of the charge, creating a disturbance, are vague and as a result unconstitutional.

During Monday's arraignment, it was revealed by Bourland that the defendant at one time considered requesting a change of venue for the trial because of "widespread negative toward black Americans is evident in Marquette." They changed their minds, he said, because "they feel that they are a part of the Marquette County community and should be tried by people they live with, although they be prejudiced whites."

"We'll take our chances with Marquette people," he said.

The six charged with creating a disturbance are Vernon Smalls, David Williams, Patrick Williams, Christopher Poole, Phillip Harper, and Loren Lobban. All six appeared in court Monday and were accompanied to court by approximately a dozen other black students.

The six are free on \$100 personal recognizance bonds.

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