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The ACLU's National Prison Project is the only national litigation program on behalf of prisoners. Since 1972, the NPP has represented more than 100,000 men, women and children. The NPP continues to fight unconstitutional conditions and the "lock 'em up" mentality that prevails in the legislatures. Learn more about our project and take action to protect the rights guaranteed to all Americans.

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Prison Sex Slave Trial Set to Begin in Texas (9/16/2005)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WICHITA FALLS, TX- After enduring 18 months in a Texas prison where gangs bought and sold him as a sexual slave, Roderick Johnson will appear in federal district court Monday for the first day of his civil trial against the prison officials who failed to protect him, the American Civil Liberties Union announced today.

"Roderick Johnson was brutally raped by prison gang members," said Margaret Winter, Associate Director of the ACLU's National Prison Project and Johnson's lead attorney. "The devastating horror of the first rape was multiplied many times over the next 18 months because prison officials refused to intervene to protect him."

Beginning in September 2000, Roderick Johnson was housed at the James A. Allred Unit in Iowa Park, Texas where prison gangs bought and sold him as a sexual slave, raping, abusing, and degrading him nearly every day for 18 months. Johnson filed numerous complaints with prison officials and appeared before the unit's classification committee seven separate times asking to

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Prison officials moved Johnson out of the Allred Unit and into a wing designated for vulnerable prisoners in April 2002, only after the ACLU intervened on his behalf. The ACLU lawsuit seeks damages against seven Allred officials for ignoring his pleas for help and failing to protect him against continued sexual attacks.

Johnson's story is not an isolated case, Winter said. In 2001, Human Rights Watch identified Texas as the worst state in the nation for prison rape. This summer, a Department of Justice publication found that prisoners in Texas reported six times as many allegations of prisoner-on-prisoner sexual violence than in any other state. Gay prisoners in Texas like Johnson (who is no longer in prison) are highly vulnerable to rape and exploitation perpetrated by prison gangs.

The trial in *Johnson v. Wathen* is set to begin September 19 at the

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Federal Courthouse in Wichita Falls, Texas, located at 1000 Lamar Street, before U.S. District Court Judge Barbara M. G. Lynn in courtroom 222. Johnson is represented by Winter and Jeff Monks of the ACLU's National Prison Project, Tim Hoffman of Hoffman, Sheffield & Sauseda in Amarillo and civil rights attorney Edward Tuddenham of Austin.

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