

Stalking reports under investigation

By Sally Ann Stewart
USA TODAY

LOS ANGELES — Nicole Simpson's friends have hired a private investigator to nail down suspicions that O.J. Simpson was stalking her in the days leading up to her death.

"We're trying to confirm dates and times," says Denver investigator R.W. "Pete" Peterson, who says he can't name who hired him. "We know he showed up several times, pushing and grabbing her in public places."

"We're not going to be commenting on this case outside of the courthouse," says District Attorney spokeswoman Sandi Gibbons.

Simpson, 47, has pleaded not guilty to charges he stabbed to death his ex-wife and her friend Ronald Goldman, 25.

Prosecutors aren't required to come up with a motive for murders, but jurors serving on a murder trial generally expect to hear one.

"If the prosecution doesn't give them that, then they will not win their case," says criminal defense lawyer Blair Bernholz, who's closely following the case.

And stalking could be a timely motive, Bernholz says.

"It dovetails very nicely into an issue-of-the-moment," she says. "There are new anti-stalking laws, a greater awareness of domestic abuse. It's very likely the prosecution will attempt to exploit that."

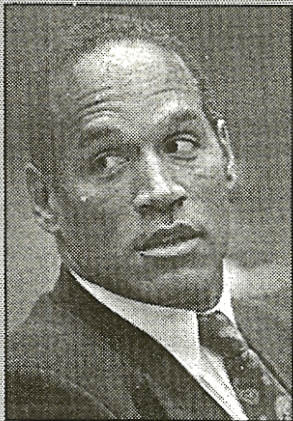
They should, says psychotherapist Susan Forward.

"She talked extensively about him being out in the bushes, about how he'd show up at restaurants and glare at her and her friends," says Forward, who counseled Nicole Simpson twice. "She had a sense she was in a prison."

That's why Nicole Simpson repeatedly moved in and out of O.J. Simpson's Brentwood mansion — leaving for the final time just weeks before her murder, Peterson says.

Men who batter their lovers can easily turn into stalkers, and then into killers, Forward says.

"It's not uncommon at all because they can't let go," Forward says. "Crossing the line to murder is what we see with obsessive people who won't let go because the person who is their key to happiness becomes the cause of their misery."



By Douglas C. Pizac, AP
SIMPSON: Ex-wife moved in and out of mansion.