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MS NAACP Joins Stonewall Community in Call for Justice in Jonathan Sanders Killing

Again, we face another questionable traffic stop. Again, we suffer another African American male losing his life at the hands of law enforcement. Again, a man has died while uttering the words 'I can't breathe'.

The Mississippi State Conference NAACP is saddened and angered at the recent death of Jonathan 'Mop Top' Sanders in Stonewall, MS at the hands of part time officer Kevin Herrington. Herrington allegedly held Sanders in a chokehold for about thirty minutes during a traffic stop, according to witness accounts. The reason for the traffic stop remains unknown, as Sanders was riding a horse-drawn buggy down a main road in Stonewall.

The NAACP supports the efforts of the Sanders family and the Lumumba and Associates Law Firm to seek justice in this tragedy. The sheer gravity of yet another callous death at the hands of law enforcement demands a full and independent investigation at the local, state and possibly federal levels.

The NAACP demands an outside authority address accusations of tension between Stonewall's largely white police force and its minority population, which complains of frequent and unnecessary police traffic stops. Our concern is buttressed by the absence of a clear and obvious reason why an officer would intercept a horse and buggy driven by a man with no outstanding warrants.

This investigation should include a thorough investigation of Officer Kevin Herrington, including a background check, a mental health evaluation and drug testing. The sheer brutality of the killing of an unarmed horse-driver begs the question of whether or not the officer's aggression was driven by medical factors, such as steroid abuse, or other chemical sources. A growing number of police brutality cases involve steroid abuse among officers, and the DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) has reported high steroid usage levels among police officers, resembling the usage in pro sports.

“We want to make sure that this officer wasn’t under the influence of drugs that might have caused him to engage in ‘hyper-aggressive’ behavior’ that could have led to Jonathan Sander’s death,” says Derrick Johnson, President, MS State Conference NAACP. “The NAACP urges all law enforcement officials to make sure that officers are not using anabolic steroids or other potentially mood-altering medications or substances while on the job. The safety of citizens must be a priority.”

Again, the Mississippi State Conference NAACP offers our sincere condolences to the family of Jonathan Sanders and we will remain side by side with you in your fight for justice.

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Founded in 1909, the NAACP is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. Its members throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities, conducting voter mobilization and monitoring equal opportunity in the public and private sectors. For more information about the Mississippi NAACP or news stories, call 601-353-8452 or log on to www.naacps.org. Like us on Facebook by searching Mississippi NAACP and follow us on Twitter @MSNAACP.