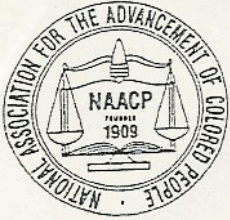


NORTH CAROLINA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

114 WEST PARRISH STREET, SECOND FLOOR • DURHAM, NC 27701
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Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, II
President

Michelle Cotton Laws
Executive Director

November 13, 2014

U.S. Attorney Thomas Walker
U.S. Courthouse
Raleigh, NC

RE: Request for U.S. Department of Justice to Join the Current Investigation of the Suspicious Death of Lennon Lacy in Bladenboro, NC on the night of August 28-29, 2014

Dear U.S. Attorney Walker:

On behalf of the family of Lennon Lacy of Bladenboro, NC and of the NC NAACP, I respectfully request the U.S. Department of Justice, pursuant to its authority under the Hate Crimes Prevention Act (HCPA), 18 U.S. Code § 249; the Conspiracy Against Rights Act, 18 U.S. Code § 241; and the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, 42 U.S.C. § 14141; actively join the current investigation of the suspicious hanging death of Lennon Lacy.

The investigation is now being conducted by a team of SBI investigators, working under the general direction of the Bladen D.A., Mr. Jon David. The NC NAACP's preliminary investigation suggested this team had made a "quick call" that Lennon Lacy killed himself with no involvement of anyone else. When the family or the NC NAACP have made any suggestions that this was a premature call, this team has not looked into other possible scenarios that night, but instead takes steps to bolster its hasty conclusion that there was "no foul play" involved in the young man's death. Given evidence uncovered by the NC NAACP, there are several other possible explanations for his death besides a simple suicide.

On November 11 2014, NC NAACP lawyer Heather Rattelade received a report from Dr. Christina Roberts, an experienced medical pathologist retained by the NC NAACP. Dr. Roberts had met with NC Medical Examiner Dr. Deborah Radisch to review the Chief Medical Examiner's notes and final report. (Dr. Roberts' report of this meeting is awaiting Dr. Radisch's final approval. We expect its return within a couple of days, and we will provide it to you as soon as we receive it. We have promised a copy to D.A. David also.) Dr. Roberts' Report to the NC NAACP included the following statement:

Review of the Background and Investigative Information:

When conducting a death investigation to determine COD and MOD [Method of Death—suicide] it is necessary to gather all of the information about the person's medical, social and psychiatric history and the events of the days leading up to their death. The information provided to the Medical Examiner Office was that Lennon was depressed over the recent death of his uncle. The family reported that Lennon's great uncle had died. He was asking questions

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about death that he had not discussed before but there were no expressions of wishing to bring about his own death. He did not express a desire to hurt himself or to a wish to [no] longer be around. He was not making preparations to put his life in order. For instance, some individuals may give away prized possessions or let someone know they care about that they won't be around. He did not write a suicide note or send any text messages that would be thought to represent a suicide note or saying goodbye. The medical records are not available at this time for review but there is no report that Lennon had attempted suicide in the past or expressed suicide ideations. There is no long term history of depression. There is no history of alcohol or drug abuse.

In contrast to be[ing] depressed, Lennon was looking forward to playing the next day in a football game as a lineman. In a conversation that he had the night before his death he explained that his grades from the previous year hadn't been good enough to allow him to play varsity football. He had been working very hard at school to improve his grades and was being rewarded with the opportunity to play in the game the following day. This conversation was with a man who worked for the funeral home at a dinner gathering following some portion of his uncle's funeral events

On 12 November 2014, Lennon's mother and brother, with NAACP attorneys Heather Rattelade and Alan McSurely, met with D.A. David and pointed out some of the reasons why the family and the NAACP were not satisfied with the thoroughness and direction of the current investigation. D.A. David re-iterated he was committed to a thorough investigation, as he has assured the family in the past.

The NAACP is not equipped with forensic resources such as those used by the FBI. We have, unfortunately, some experience with the southern phenomena of *quick call suicides* where suspicious deaths of Black men are quickly classified as 'suicides.' This assures they receive less than vigorous crime scene preservation and investigation, incomplete or no autopsies, and a racialized outcry from the public is encouraged to discredit the traumatized family's disbelief of law enforcement's quick classification. Often the law enforcement team consciously or unconsciously blames the family for its skepticism of the suicide classification, by saying the family is in denial, and it does not want to admit the family member was 'mentally ill' or 'suicidal.'

This cycle of distrust happened here. Given the deep distrust that had developed between the family and the current investigators; given the possible race-based animus toward Lennon and his family by some of their neighbors; given the close connections in this small town between local law enforcement and witnesses involved in interactions with Lennon just before, during, and after the night of his death; given the illegal drug transactions in and around this case; we believe that the intervention of the U.S. Department of Justice is necessary. When we suggested this idea to D.A. David, he was receptive.

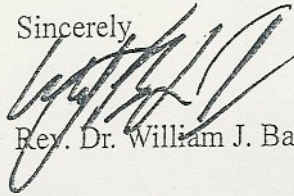
Therefore, we hand-deliver this request that you, after a preliminary investigation to determine U.S. jurisdiction, open a federal investigation of the circumstances leading up to Lennon Lacy's death, the handling of the crime scene, the Medical Examiner, preserving DNA and other evidence that might lead to others involvement in what has been called a suicide, and whether there has been any conspiracy to develop a common explanation for some of the questions that have come to the public's mind as evidence that contradicts the suicide finding trickles out.

We would be pleased to meet with the investigators you ask to conduct a preliminary investigation to determine federal jurisdiction and, if you decide you do have jurisdiction, to work with

your office in making sure the Lacy family achieves the truth . . . the whole truth . . . about the ugly events surrounding Lennon Lacy's death.

Thank you for meeting with us so quickly.

Sincerely



Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II

Enclosed: Leads for preliminary federal investigators.

C: Lennon Lacy Family
Allen Rogers, Attorney
Heather Rattelade, NAACP Attorney
Alan McSurely, NAACP Attorney