

May 08, 2009

On behalf of my son Justin Elmore and my entire family, I would like to express my displeasure with the Richmond County Sheriff's Department and the media. The Richmond County Sheriff's Department abused their authority, and the media portrayed false information to justify the murder of my son.

Even though the District Attorney claims the main video that showed the entire incident was broken, it is clear in the video that was shown that Justin was not trying to run over deputies Jose Rivera Ortiz and Michael Hodge. Yes, he was wrong for trying to get away, but they were even more wrong for taking his life the way they did. It is clear that they were firing their weapons to kill. If they really wanted to apprehend him they could have shot out the tires on his vehicle. They had no regard for Justin's life (nor for any of the residents of Cherry Tree Crossing), because they felt he had no redeeming qualities.

Not only was my son murdered by the deputies, but my family has been repeatedly harassed by the same people that are suppose to protect and serve us. On Sunday, February 02, 2009, my 12 year old grandson was handcuffed and beaten at the skating rink on Windsor Spring Road by two RCSD deputies; they abused him because he would not take off the t-shirt he was wearing with a picture of his uncle (Justin Elmore) on it. I spoke with Internal Affairs and gave them evidence of the incident. As of today May 08, 2009, nothing has been said or done. It has been swept under the rug.

Despite the fact that my son was killed, the media has decided to convict my entire family to justify the murder with false information. Even though false accusations of a stolen vehicle, with guns and drugs was the so called reason for pulling him over, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation report clearly shows that was not the case.

Justin has continuously been portrayed by the media as a violent criminal instead of a victim. The wrong doing of deputies Jose Rivera Ortiz and Michael Hodge have been backed up by their superiors and the media. His life meant nothing to you all because of his social status and because of various misdemeanor charges in his record. Because of the reckless and careless actions of deputies Jose Rivera Ortiz and Michael Hodge, his children have been left fatherless, and I am grieving the loss of my son who is still being attacked in the media for his own murder.

A lot of things were reported in the media that the "family" (people whom I have never met) said that are not true, including the blatant lie that my son was taken off life support by his family. First of all, my son was dead on arrival to the hospital. I watched him lay in bed with brain matter coming out of his head and blood on his hand. I had to ask the hospital staff to clean him up. Secondly, I was told that it was already pre-arranged for him to be taken off life support in two days. His body was only placed on life support for organ preservation. His organs were donated and helped save another person's life, but the media never bothered to mention that.

In closing, I would like to ask, what does my family and their history have to do with the murder of Justin? The reality is that many of your children have done some of the exact same things as mine, but the only difference is that you have money and status to cover it up. Man judges the outward appearance, but God judges the heart, and He is the final judge of us all.

A Grieving Mother

*Dana Ward*