



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Founding President



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November 17, 2009

Honorable William Eddins
Office of State Attorney
190 Governmental Center
Pensacola, FL 32501

RE: Request for Independent Investigation of Death of Victor St

Dear Mr. Eddins:

This letter is to request an independent investigation into the death of 17-year Pensacola youth Victor Steen who died in a taser-related accident on October 3, 2009. The young man was killed when Jerald Ard, a Pensacola police officer, attempted to subdue him by firing a taser gun from a moving police cruiser while Steen was riding a bicycle. Mr. Steen crashed his bicycle and Officer Ard struck him and dragged him under the cruiser where he was killed. Reports indicate that Steen remained under vehicle for nearly three hours.

In the week following the death, members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference met with the Assistant Police Chief, Assistant City Attorney and other representatives of the Pensacola Police Department. During this meeting it was revealed that a handgun was found on the victim's body but that Officer Ard made no claims that the victim brandished the weapon. The handgun was allegedly found not by police investigators but by medical personnel. We are sure that you understand there may be a rise in community mistrust if final report from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement comes back and declares the officer acted appropriately and reveals evidence of a handgun whose existence has not been made public by local law enforcement. If such a finding comes back, there will be a number of persons who will allege a cover-up.

The National SCLC was founded on Feb. 14, 1957 by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rev. Dr. Ralph David Abernathy, Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, Rev. C.K. Steele, Rev. Dr. Joseph E. Lowery and other clergy "to redeem the soul of America," is a nonprofit and interfaith, social advocacy organization committed to nonviolence to achieve social, economic and political justice.



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Therefore, we are respectfully requesting that your office perform an independent investigation into this matter to ensure that the proper chain of custody has been maintained for the evidence in the case and to ensure that excessive force was not used in this case. In addition, we would ask that you investigate whether or not the department is engaged in racial profiling as no charges were ever presented nor was a crime ever shown to have occurred.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Art Rocker

Dexter M. Wimbish, Esq

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