

Darrius Stewart Comments- Rev. Keith Norman Press Conference

Good Morning and Thank You for Coming.

My Name is Keith Norman, and I serve as the President of the Memphis Branch of the NAACP and am surrounded by members of the executive committee along with our Executive Director, Mrs. Madeline Taylor.

The Memphis Branch of The NAACP is aware of the National sentiment surrounding the unjust killings of young African American Males at the hands of law enforcement officers all throughout the United States.

We are often saddened and disappointed at the slow process towards finding justice in police involved killings like the one that sadly brings us here today in the case of Darrius Stewart.

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I would like to first express the condolences of the Memphis Community to the Family of Darrius Stewart. As we journey towards justice to find the facts and details of how Darrius' life ended, we do not rush past the fact that a mother is grieving and his friends and family alike are hurting. We are sorry for your loss.

I have spoken to his mother and assured her that we will assist her in finding justice in this matter as much as it possible and the facts are made available to us.

I have been in touch with our State and National Offices and we are poised to move as the findings and facts are being revealed should it become necessary.

Although we are keenly aware and extremely frustrated by the lack of transparency that often surrounds these kinds of investigations that should lead us to the truth. We will not rush to judgements that will divide our community.

With this in mind we have sought to clarify the facts as we await the findings and ask everyone to please remain patient as we await the outcomes.

First We Believe that No Police or Sheriff's Department involved KILLING should be investigated by the Police Force by which the law enforcement officer responsible for the death is employed.

In such cases, independent proceedings by The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation is standard protocol for all counties throughout Tennessee, except for Shelby, Davidson, Hamilton and Knox Counties. It is the solely the responsibility of the District Attorney (in this case Amy Weirich) to establish the mechanism by which an investigation should proceed and justice should be sought.

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These investigations should occur as soon as possible and without the interference of local law enforcement.

In order to move this investigation forward The DA has worked with complete approval of the Police Director in this matter to insure transparency.

I have confirmed this process personally as we seek to stay informed and to keep the Memphis community informed about this case.

I have also personally spoken to TBI Director Mark Gwyn prior to and since this killing. Prior to this incident we agreed that this is the protocol that should be accepted and we are still in agreement that this should be the process. Because of TBI's familiarity with these matters I have full faith in Director Gwyn and the Bureau to achieve a timely and transparent investigative process.

I would encourage all citizens however to get involved and petition the process by which information from such investigations are shared with the public. People have a right to know where the has either worked or failed them in their process of seeking justice.

However the TBI is not our only resource. As recently as last night, Executive Director Taylor and myself have confirmed the process for action outside of the TBI should such action become warranted.

There are fundamental Issues at Hand that we would like to have answered as a right to proceed with maintaining calm as we seek justice together; such as...

What are the rights of passengers under the rule of law in a mere traffic relation violation?

Were all protocols such as calling for assistance and back up before apprehending the victim occurred?

On a Local Level-

We also affirm that The City Council should move to reinstate The Police Civilian Review Board. However the reinstatement of such a board should require a threshold of those willing to be well informed and they too should be subjected to the rule of transparency as they carry out their civic duties.

And when they have concluded their findings and made recommendations these recommendations should be given the utmost considerations. Whether or not such a board should hold the power to subpoena an officer is a matter that the courts should decide but absent of this power the Review Board needs to be reestablished immediately. I would like to add one final note. Please do not judge Darrius by any standard other than the events of the night of July 17,

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2015. Darrius was a passenger in a car, no other information was known about him at the time the car was stopped.