



Justice for Roger Sylvester

NEWSLETTER NO. 2

Roger Sylvester Justice Campaign

JULY 1999

THE EMERGING FACTS:

On that very night. Roger telephoned a friend to say that he was being followed by the police.

Shortly before the incident he talked cheerfully to a friend outside his home.

The police have confirmed that he was not under arrest, nor had he been violent, yet he was restrained by 8 officers.

Throughout his tragic ordeal, Roger was left naked on the coldest night of the year.

He had to be carried into the van.

Whilst handcuffed he was placed naked, on a cold floor in St Ann's Hospital, still being restrained.

The police were alone with him when he collapsed.

On 11 January 1999, Roger Sylvester, a 30 year old black man, was restrained outside his home by eight police officers, from Tottenham Police Station. He sustained numerous injuries and was later in a coma on a life support system. Seven days later, Roger was dead. Roger was finally laid to rest on Friday, 16 April 1999.

ABOUT ROGER:

p Roger worked for Islington Council for the last 6 years.

p He was a supportive and loving person and was loyal to family and friends.

p He was a committed Christian, and a dotting godfather to five children.

p They are investigating Roger. Many people have been questioned at length about Roger's background, including his family and friends.

p They have seemingly forgotten that 8 Police officers laid hands on him.

CONCERNS ABOUT THE INVESTIGATION BY ESSEX POLICE:

p There was a two week delay before forensics were carried out.

p The collection of evidence has been selective.

p The PCA have not effectively supervised the investigation.



Roger Sylvester

OUR DEMANDS:

- Police officers involved in custody deaths are suspended until investigations are completed.
- Officers responsible for deaths should face criminal charges even if retired or otherwise.
- All deaths in custody should be investigated independently.
- Police Complaints Authority (PCA) to be replaced by a body independent of the police.
- Police forces are made accountable to the communities they serve.
- Legal aid and full disclosure should be made available to the relatives of the victim(s).
- Where an unlawful killing verdict is returned, a prosecution should follow automatically.

ROGER'S FUNERAL

Roger was finally laid to rest on Friday 16 April 1999. Over 1000, mourners joined a funeral procession to Roger's home.

The church service was attended by over 2000, people. Mourners came from as far afield as the Caribbean, USA, Canada and Africa.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE?

RSJC Public Meeting

The RSJC campaign was launched at a public meeting held on the 21 March. It was attended by over 600 people. Speakers included: Roger's mother, father, brother; Bernie Grant MP, INQUEST and the family Solicitor.

Meeting with Paul Boateng, MP

The family met Paul Boateng on 12 April to air our concerns at first hand.

Meeting with Home Secretary

On 26 April 1999 a meeting was held between families who have lost their loved ones in custody and the Home Secretary. To air their grievances about how deaths in custody are investigated.

Support from Bernie Grant, MP

Bernie Grant has raised concerns about Roger's death in the House of Commons. He has also tabled an Early Day motion calling for a public inquiry.

Apology from the MET

On 27 April, a 'measured' apology was given by the MET

about their inaccurate press statement on the events of that night.

Meeting with Grenadian Prime Minister (PM)

The Family met with Keith Mitchell, the Grenadian PM on the 21 June. He has agreed to raise this matter with the British Government.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- p Visit/write your MP stressing your concerns, and ask them to sign the Early Day Motion.
- p Sign our petition.
- p Buy our ribbons/T-Shirts
- p Support our fundraising events.
- p Invite us to speak at your events.

Confusion about the suspension of the 8 Officers

Despite the community's outrage. The MET have consistently refused to suspend the officers. Many believe this should have been their first step.

John Stephens (Deputy Commissioner)

On 21st April, John Stephens, Deputy Commissioner said "the policy on suspension was **not** an admission of guilt and

suspension was based on any of the following criteria:"

1. Individuality of the case
2. Seriousness
3. Evidence
4. Likelihood of the officers coming into contact with the defendant or family/friends or witness
5. Previous record
6. Public confidence
7. "Gravity", i.e. Murder or Manslaughter

We believe these criteria have been met.

Dennis O'Connor (Assistant Commissioner)

At a Justice Forum Conference on 25 June, Dennis O'Connor contradicted John Stephens and said "in the police service, suspension is an admission of guilt."

Is this an excuse for not suspending them?

Support The Roger Sylvester Justice Campaign:

I would like further details about the Roger Sylvester Justice Campaign:

Name/Organisation _____

Address _____

Post Code _____ Telephone No. _____

I wish to donate £..... To the Roger Sylvester Justice Campaign.

All cheques should be made payable to: **Roger Sylvester Justice Campaign.**

Account No: **31238892** Sort Code: **40 03 33** Bank Name: **HSBC**

Roger Sylvester Justice Campaign; PO Box 25908; London N18 1WU.

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