

“Three Years On, No Justice, No Disclosure And No Inquest”

On night of 11 January 1999, Roger Sylvester, a 30-year-old black man, was restrained on his doorstep by eight police officers from Tottenham Police Station. He sustained numerous injuries, fell into a coma and was put on a life support machine. Seven days later, Roger was pronounced dead.

Newsletter 6 rev2 January 2002



Justice delayed is justice denied

In May 2001, Lord Chief Justice Woolf urged the Metropolitan Police to be 'generous' with disclosure and that an inquest date be set.

Despite this, the Sylvester Family has not received generosity nor has an inquest date been set. Since then, only a list of the surnames of the eight officers who restrained Roger has been given to the Sylvester Family's Solicitors. This is just not good enough.

Three years ago, the inquest into Roger's death was opened and adjourned; this is notably the longest delay between an inquest

adjournment and it being re-opened. Why is the Sylvester Family being denied justice?

Officers back to normal duties

In June of 2001, the Family discovered that the officers concerned had returned to normal duties in January of that year and that one had been promoted. The Family was not consulted and discovered this accidentally. Does this mean disciplinary action/prosecution has been ruled out?

Disclosure

All information is owned by the MET. Disclosure of information in death in custody cases is voluntary. So far, and the Family expects this to continue - the MET will use the Coroner to limit disclosure.

The police investigation team's version of events is provided to a coroner. Not all of the evidence gathered by the investigation team has to be given to the Coroner.

The Coroner then uses the evidence received from the

investigation team to produce a provisional list of witnesses. The family then gets to see only evidence for that list.

This is the full extent of disclosure a bereaved family will receive 28 days before the inquest. The Home Office circular 20/1999 says families should have everything in the coroner's hands.

Inquest

Few are aware that the purpose of the Coroner's Court is to help the Coroner fill-out a death certificate.

The process starts with the premise – No one is to be blamed for the death of the victim, except may be the victim. The Sylvester Family feels strongly that the Officers should be prosecuted for manslaughter instead of an inquest hearing.

BBC Wins hands-down

Unknown to the Sylvester Family, seven Police Officers issued a claim for damages for defamation against the BBC.

Their claim arose from



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something said during a broadcast of Roger’s funeral.

Lord Justice Steele concluded their claim struck him as “.. an entirely empty gesture.” He referred to the time delay and the fact that the officers’ names were not known at the time of the broadcast.

Who Killed Roger Sylvester?

Throughout the criminal investigation into Rogers’ death, the officers remained silent.

As a result of the action against the BBC, Roger’s Family are clear that Philip John Steedman, David Alan Clohosy, Ian Alexander Smith, Sean Kiernan, Andrew Philip Newman, Simon Paul Creevy and John Anderson are key people who can provide quality information regarding the circumstances surrounding Roger’s death.

Injustice Film

Injustice is a documentary on deaths in police custody. It primarily covers the deaths of Joy Gardner, Shiji Lapite, Brian Douglas, Ibrahim Sey and Christopher Alder.

Other deaths covered in the film are David Oluwale, Wayne Douglas, Sarah Thomas, Harry Stanley and Roger Sylvester.

Several venues that planned to show the film have had legal notices served on them by the Police Federation’s Solicitors: Russell, Jones and Walker. As a consequence, several planned showings have been

cancelled. To combat this, the filmmakers, Migrant Media have developed a strategy of shifting the venue to defy the police ban.

In 1969, David Oluwale was the first recorded Black death in police custody. From then until now not one Police officer has ever been convicted of any death in custody.

This film must be seen, why not organise a viewing? Visit <http://www.injusticefilm.co.uk> for more information.

RSJC Diary of events

July 2001:

RSJC Aerobathon to raise funds for legal costs.

Police officer disciplined for destruction of a page in his notebook. Family barred from hearing.

RSJC Member spoke at the Respect Festival organised by the GLA, in Finsbury Park.

August 2001:

Screening of Injustice film at the West Indian Cultural Centre.

Vigil outside New Scotland Yard.

September 2001:

Meeting with Toby Harris to voice general dissatisfaction with Roger’s case.

October 2001:

Mr and Mrs Sylvester speak at the Fire Brigade Union Black Section.

Wrote a letter of complaint to the Home Office raising concerns about no inquest date being set and threatened to take the matter to the

Parliamentary Ombudsman.

BBC wins case against seven of the eight officers involved. Their names were published in the judgement.

November 2001:

Family wrote to Lord Chief Justice Woolf and David Blunkett complaining about the lack of progress.

Haringey Police Consultative Group AGM moved a motion calling for the Home Secretary to conduct a public inquiry into Roger’s death.

Meeting with David Lammy MP to raise our concerns about the delay and to request an Adjournment Debate and an Early Day Motion.

David Lammy writes to the Parliamentary Ombudsman and The Lord Chancellor complaining about the delay.

Family member spoke at the National Assembly Against Racism AGM.

December 2001:

The new Coroner, Susan Hungerford, writes to the family informing them of a pre-inquest hearing date.

Family speak at INQUEST AGM

January 2002:

Vigil outside Tottenham Police station.

3rd Memorial service.

General Medical Council finds Dr Patel guilty of breaching his professional duty of confidentiality to Roger Sylvester, his family and HM Coroner.

Roger’s family do not qualify for legal aid. The RSJC will therefore have to continue to raise funds to meet all legal costs. All donations will therefore be gratefully received.

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

Name/Organisation _____

Address _____ Post Code _____

Email Address _____

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**