

Family wants names in deputy-involved shooting

Gross, Daniel J . The Greenville News ; Greenville, S.C. [Greenville, S.C]14 Apr 2018: AA.1.

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FULL TEXT

The family of a man killed in a deputy-involved shooting last month is urging the Greenville County Sheriff's Office to release the names of the deputies involved.

They've also asked the Federal Bureau of Investigations to look into the case, the family announced in a news conference outside the Greenville County Law Enforcement Center on Friday.

The Greenville County Coroner's Office ruled Jermaine Massey's death a homicide on Thursday.

Massey, 35, was shot behind his 3rd Avenue home in the Poe Mill community on March 19 after calling 911 to seek help during an apparent mental health crisis.

"We're still going to keep coming down here until justice is served. We will do this no matter who is in that office," said U.A. Thompson, a community activist representing the family. "If it's wrong, it's wrong. If it's right, it's right. We have to fight for justice, Justice for Jermaine. Release those names so that this family can get help with closure." Thompson said knowing the deputies' names will help shine light into the deputies' disciplinary files to see if there's a pattern of improper use of force.

"My brother is gone. He's not coming back, so where do we go from there?" said Massey's sister, Tamika Gordon.

"We do need the names. I think it's imperative. We all think it's imperative. The community deserves it."

Massey left behind three children ages 2, 5, and 8 as well as a longtime girlfriend whom he was planning to marry, the family said.

During the 911 call, Massey told a dispatcher he had bipolar disorder and that he was "fixing to do something stupid." He asked for someone to come take him away from his home, where his family was at the time.

Sheriff Will Lewis has said deputies responded there for a reported disturbance and found Massey armed with a knife at the house. He said Massey charged at the deputies with the knife before deputies fired and struck him, killing him.

The four deputies involved were placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of an internal investigation.

The State Law Enforcement Division is also investigating.

Thompson said the FBI has agreed to look into the case.

The Greenville News has sent Freedom of Information Act requests to the Sheriff's Office and the 13th Circuit Solicitor's Office to seek the names of the deputies involved.

Initial requests for the identities were denied.

"We have to have transparency," Thompson said. "Is there not a shred of humanity left, where we hurt when someone else hurts?"

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