

For Immediate Release: 7/28/2020

Occupy the Block Regarding 55 Peaceful Protester Arrests in 21 days, and Video Footage of John Neville's Death

On day 14 of Occupy the Block #OccupyWSNC, demonstrators gathered at Bailey Park at 10am.

At approximately 3 PM, demonstrators from #OccupyWSNC marched from Bailey Park to the Forsyth County Public Safety Center, where we demanded Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough answer our demands. After no response from Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough, demonstrators marched back to the intersection of Liberty and Fourth, the site of the first sit-in victory in Winston-Salem. Demonstrators marched around the four corners with signs and chants outlining our four demands. Ten more civil disobedience arrests were made, bringing the total to 55 arrests of peaceful protesters in the past 21 days in Winston-Salem, NC. Several individual protesters were arrested by multiple officers at once, and over half the officers were outfitted in tactical gear. At the detention center, officers placed protestors in three holding cells, mostly all still restrained, and collected and attempted to view the contents of their cell phones.

It was announced today that [John Neville's family supports the release of the video](#) from the Forsyth County Detention Center related to Mr. Neville's death. The hearing for the release of the video footage is scheduled for tomorrow, July 29 at 11am in Forsyth County Superior Court. If it is decided by Judge Horne that the video will be released, it will likely be made public on the same day.

Triad Abolition Project and Unity Coalition have always supported the wishes of the Neville family regarding the release of the video, and recently welcomed two of his children, Kris and Brienne, at Occupy the Block. We stand with the Neville family in wishing for the release of the video footage as a method of achieving full transparency for not only the death of Mr. Neville, but the state and nationwide injustices of the prison industrial complex.

Organizers intend to maintain the occupation until our demands are met. Those demands are as follows:

1. Respond to all questions posed by TAP and UC (outlined below).
2. Ban the use of the prone restraint (hogtie) on ANY civilian, incarcerated or not, sick or not). Make relevant policy changes in the FCDC around protocol for inmates in medical distress.
3. Notify the public of any death involving an officer or deputy immediately. Make relevant policy changes around transparency and accountability in deaths of citizens in custody of the county (including in FCDC and other guardianship situations).
4. Dismiss all charges against arrested peaceful protesters.

Our Questions

Why are you covering up a murder?

We demand answers to all of the following questions: Was Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough at any time on the scene during the hogtying of Neville? Why has the hogtie remained an acceptable restraint in Forsyth County when it has been banned in the majority of police precincts across the country years ago? Have there been any changes in the medical provider since Neville's death? How many other deaths have occurred at the detention center since the death of Neville? Have there been changes to the handcuff policies of sick inmates? When was the last time the FCSO conducted an overall use of force training and handcuffing training for its deputies and detention officers? Were the detention officers that handcuffed Neville certified to handcuff him? Have there been any policy changes for how to handle handcuffs when the key breaks, for when bolt cutters are necessary? When did Sheriff Kimbrough and DA O'Neill become aware and view of the contents of the video footage, specifically viewing Mr. Neville being hogtied and calling out, "I can't breathe"?

Why was Guilford County never notified of John Neville's death? What would have happened had Guilford County ADA Spiker known that John Neville was resuscitated after losing his pulse in FCDC custody when she was asked to release his unsecured bond? Would these staff members have still been charged had SB 168 not been vetoed by Governor Cooper? Why were these staff members allowed to continue working with our incarcerated siblings for seven months after their involvement in a murder? Would the public have been notified of this murder had SB168 not been vetoed by Governor Cooper? Was the passing of SB168 intended to shield the murder that took place in the FCDC from the public? What involvement did Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough have in the proposal of SB 168 the night before news reports on the death of John Neville were to become publicly available?

Furthermore, according to the Grace, Tisdale, & Clifton website, "Mike and the firm Grace, Tisdale & Clifton are one of the two local firms who represent local law enforcement through the Police Benevolent Association." Michael Grace, the lawyer for the John Neville estate, has been representing the Sheriff's Department since Sheriff Shatzmen's tenure, and presented Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough to the court and to the public at his swearing in ceremony. What rules of professional conduct under the NC State Bar Rule 1.7 Conflict of Interest are implicated by Michael Grace representing both the estate and the Sheriff's Office?

Why are you, Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough and DA Jim O'Neill, covering up a murder?

For further information, please see @TriadAbolitionProject and @_theunitycoalition_ on Instagram. All press release documents can be found at www.triadabolitionproject.org.

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