

December 21, 2021

Keith Carson, President
Alameda County Board of Supervisors
1221 Oak Street, Suite 536
Oakland CA 94612

Re: Demand for Independent Investigation: 3 Deaths, Santa Rita Jail, Housing Unit 1,
From November 18, 2021 through December 13, 2021

Dear President Carson:

We are alarmed at the unending number of deaths that occur in Santa Rita Jail. The most recent on December 13, 2021, in Housing Unit 1, the 7th this year, is the third death to take place in Santa Rita since mid-November. All three deaths involved men who were mentally ill, and we believe in the same housing unit. The deaths of Maurice Monk and Devin West occurred around November 18, 2021. The third is a death that occurred on December 13, 2021.

We understand that the Alameda County Sheriff has classified this third death as “unknown” because there was no sign of suicide or foul play. We do know, that community organizations and local attorneys have received calls from inmates who are also housed in that housing unit, 1, that the person who died, was severely mentally ill, and had difficulty for quite some time, with the needs of daily living. The reports received state, that the inmate who died on December 13, 2021, was also not eating, or eating irregularly.

All three, we believed were housed in a maximum security, locked down housing unit that the Sheriff holds mentally ill men. During the past month, there have also been reports regarding Housing Unit 1. We have heard that these prisoners are locked down 23 hours a day. There are reports that because of their mental illness, they are unable to maintain personal hygiene. We received a report that in one instance, a deputy will order the inmate to “stay on your bunk”, the deputy will then unlock the cell door, and “throw “a food tray onto the ground, and then quickly lock the cell door. There’s no one to clean-up the cell of the uneaten food and dirty food trays, leading to an unsanitary accumulation of decaying food, mold in the cell, and the stink of the decay permeating the entire POD and negatively affecting all the prisoners housed there. There is also no verification of whether this inmate was eating, or how much. We do not know if this is the same person as the person who died.

This is an untenable situation. We are demanding that there be an independent investigation of these deaths, so that we the public, and you, the responsible government officials, can be fully informed of all the contributing factors to these deaths. Corrective measures must be implemented, and we are not confident that the Babu settlement will do anything to fix this unacceptable problem. In Babu the Sheriff proposes that the jail be monitored by “experts”

he has chosen, he pays for and who he can fire at will. This is not accountability, nor does it bode well for successful reform.

These deaths must stop. We recommend that you retain a retired Alameda County Judge such as Ret. Gordon Baranco or Ronald M. Sabraw to conduct this investigation., so we can be assured that the investigation will be independent and thorough.

Very truly yours,

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