

Answers sought in hanging death

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A state lawmaker asked for an investigation into the death of a black man whose body was found hanging from a tree in East Texas earlier this month.

The family of Clarence Otis Cole believes he was killed because he was dating a white woman, Rep. Ron Wilson said. Cass County authorities contend Cole committed suicide.

Cole, 43, had been missing for several days when his body was discovered on April 2, hanging by an electrical cord from a pine tree in a wooded area of Cass County, about 180 miles east of Dallas. A suicide note read: "I'm sorry. I love you all, but I hate myself. Don't know no other

way to fix this. I'm sorry, Love u all, Tank." Tank was Cole's nickname.

Wilson, a Democrat, said he has sent letters to the U.S. Attorney General and state police seeking an investigation.

"I understand the family has had difficulty getting any information from the sheriff's office about its investigation," Wilson said. "We don't know if there is any evidence or not."

"I believe they killed him and took him there," said Azzi Cole, Cole's mother.

County sheriff's Sgt. Dale Gentry, who is leading the investigation, said Thursday there's no evidence of foul play or a racially motivated slaying.

Report defends cops who killed immigrant

NEW YORK (AP) — Four policemen who killed an unarmed African immigrant in a hail of 41 bullets two years ago were defending themselves and should not be disciplined, according to a preliminary police report.

An investigative panel, which included several police commanders and a police officer, said the four men should instead be retrained in tactics and firearms use.

The panel ruled that the officers did not violate departmental guidelines because they believed Amadou Diallo had a gun, two police sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Thursday.

Diallo's mother, Kadiatou, said she was surprised by the report.

"I'm here to denounce the system," she said at a news conference. "If the New York City Police Department is supposed to be the best in America, someone will have to denounce this conduct."

The recommendation is the first step in an administrative review of the officer's actions, with Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik making the final decision. Federal authorities have declined to pursue civil rights charges.

The officers - Kenneth Boss, Sean Carroll, Edward McMellon and Richard Murphy - encountered Diallo in the vestibule of his Bronx apartment building on Feb. 4, 1999,

while searching for a rape suspect.

They opened fire when they saw Diallo pull out what they thought was a gun; it turned out to be his wallet. Diallo was shot 19 times.

Diallo was black, and his slaying by the plainclothes officers - members of an elite street-crime unit - heightened racial tensions in New York.

All four officers were acquitted of criminal charges last year. They were placed on desk duty pending the outcome of the review; two have applied to join the Fire Department.

Attorneys for the four officers did not immediately return calls seeking comment.

At a news conference with Diallo's mother, the Rev. Al Sharpton called the report "outrageous, insulting, offensive but expected."

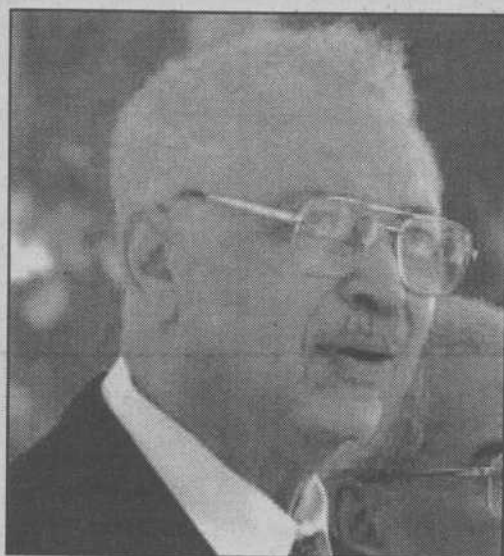
"There should be no police department in the world that says it's acceptable procedure to shoot at someone 41 times," Sharpton said.

The Diallo family has filed an \$81 million civil lawsuit against the officers.

"It's been over two years since I came to America. The only thing that I can claim still is justice," Kadiatou Diallo said. "Unfortunately, it is not happening and I don't understand why."

Leukemia claims the Rev. Leon Sullivan

WASHINGTON — The Rev. Leon Sullivan, the veteran civil rights leader who created "The Sullivan Principles" and organized bi-annual summits between Africans and African-Americans in Africa since 1991, was buried this week after waging a battle with leukemia. He was 78.



REV. LEON SULLIVAN

Sullivan died as the sixth of his African-African American summits, originally slated for next month in Abuja, Nigeria, had been postponed. Its shelving was due to scheduling concerns not related to Sullivan's health, spokespersons said.

"It is my father's wish that we continue our efforts in his mission and keep his fight for African, particularly the 6th African-African-American Summit, on course," Hope Sullivan-Rose, Sullivan's daughter, said in a statement.

Sullivan-Rose, deputy summit manager of the gathering, said she will lead the summit efforts on her father's behalf.

The Philadelphia-based Sullivan, who in 1971 became the Black to serve on the board of directors of General Motors Corp., was best known for "The Sullivan Principles," a code of conduct he created in the 1970s for

U.S. businesses in South Africa during the apartheid era.

Sullivan expanded his principles to include businesses operating worldwide.

His four decades of civil rights work earned him a Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1992 by President George H.W. Bush.

He also received the Eleanor Roosevelt Award from President

Clinton in 1999.

Rev. Staccato Powell—who succeeded Sullivan as director and CEO of the Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America, the nationwide job training organization Sullivan founded in 1964 in a Philadelphia abandoned jailhouse—said he had "mixed" emotions about Sullivan's death.

"I applaud his work and his legacy, but the weight of the loss is heavy," Powell told NNPA. "We'll go on. He prepared us to do that. And we'll do that," he added.

Sullivan was born in Charleston, W.V. in 1922, and was pastor of Zion Baptist Church in Philadelphia from 38 years before retiring in 1988.

He is survived by his wife, Grace; three children, Hope, Julie and Howard, and seven grandchildren.

California court rejects Simpson appeal

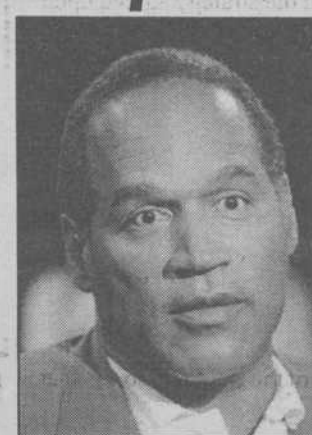
SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The California Supreme Court has rejected O.J. Simpson's bid to overturn the \$33.5 million civil court judgment against him for the deaths of ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend, Ronald Goldman.

None of the justices voted to review Simpson's appeal.

The former football star was acquitted of criminal charges in the case in 1995. He was then sued for wrongful death by the victims' survivors, found liable for the killings and ordered to pay \$33.5 million in damages.

Simpson, who has said he can't afford to pay the sum, had asked the Supreme Court to reverse the judgment, saying the civil case was "built on top of a failed prosecution, a prosecution which was suspect for corruption, fraud, contamination, coercion and collusion."

Contacted at his Florida home, Simpson said he intends to take his appeal to the federal courts, perhaps as



O. J. SIMPSON

high as the U.S. Supreme Court.

"There is no way you can tell me this was a fair trial," Simpson said. "If you're right, you fight."

Simpson, who wrote his appeal without the assistance of counsel, was told by his lawyers to "throw in the towel" on further appeals, according to Henry Johnson, a Simpson friend and adviser.

Simpson had argued that he was denied a fair civil trial because he was unable to question disgraced police Detective Mark Fuhrman,

who invoked his Fifth Amendment right to remain silent. An appeals court ruled that Fuhrman's exclusion from the civil trial was legal.

Simpson also said his trial was unfair because he could not introduce missing phone records that he says would exonerate him. Simpson claims the records would show his ex-wife was alive at the time he entered a limousine for a ride to a Los Angeles airport.

Edward Horowitz, a lawyer for the Brown family, said Simpson has paid "a couple hundred thousand" from the judgment through the sale of furnishings and his Heisman Trophy but doesn't think the families will collect much more.

Simpson lives in Florida on a hefty pension plan. Pensions are exempt from civil court judgments, but any money Simpson earns could be seized immediately by the court. Florida law prevents the victims' families from seizing Simpson's house.

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