

Family eyes answers in arrested man's death

By Olu Alemoru
Special to Sentinel-Voice

CARSON, Calif. (NNPA) — Three months after he died on the steps of a South Los Angeles church while in Los Angeles Police Department custody, the parents of the then-high school football star have sought legal help to demand answers into his death.

Rodney Jerome Redmon, 41, died Aug. 26 outside the doors of Faithful St. Mark Missionary Baptist Church on Figueroa Street, after police officers from the Southeast Division were called to a disturbance at the location.

According to a police report, Redmon had been in an altercation with several others on a nearby basketball court. The others fled, but Redmon was believed by authorities to have been under the influence of drugs or alcohol when officers responded to a 911 call.

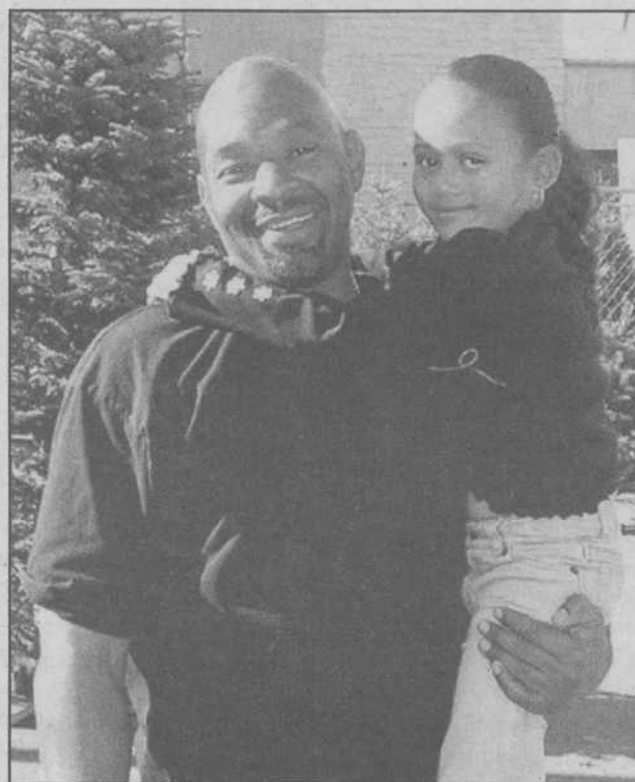
The report said Redmon was ordered to the ground but

fell backward onto the street, "sustaining head trauma." Redmon then went into "full arrest," according to the report, before paramedics initiated CPR and transported him to Centinela Freeman Regional Medical Center, where he was pronounced dead.

However, an official coroner's investigative report appears to contain contradictory statements from two LAPD detectives who work in the unit handling the inquiry.

One detective agreed that Redmon sustained an injury to his head after falling backward; another reported that Redmon was "lying supine on the street while in LAPD custody."

The initial autopsy into the cause of death was carried out on Sept. 2, but a spokesperson for coroner's office said the results have been "deferred" while authorities [await] toxicology



Rodney Jerome Redmon died mysteriously in police custody.

and neuropathology reports."

Det. Martin Garcia of the LAPD's force investigation division declined discuss specific statements made in

the case, but said the division's investigation is "ongoing."

"The family often retains an attorney if the case is, unfortunately, not moving as quickly as they would like," Garcia said.

His parents, Thomas and Addie Redmon, have retained attorney David Koller to consider a formal complaint against the police de-

partment. The Redmons are backed in their fight by the AME Justice Group, part of the Ward AME Church, of which they are longtime members.

Justice Group and family representative Richard Wright said that Redmon is the eldest of two siblings. The Redmons' other son, 28-year-old Thomas Jr., is a married father of one serving as a soldier in Iraq.

Wright said the older Redmon brother was a standout running back at Culver City High School but the family moved to Carson in 1982, with Jerome transferring to Gardena High.

"Jerome had to leave his friends and the football team and got involved with the wrong crowd at his new school and started dabbling in drugs," Wright said. "Over the years, he was in programs, and there was the church, but he could never kick [his addiction]."

Still, Wright said that the police account of the incident doesn't "add up." He said he has visited the neighborhood surrounding Faithful St. Mark, and heard a different version of the events leading up to Redmon's death.

According to witnesses that Wright spoke with, officers placed Redmon in handcuffs after they arrived, and slammed him to the ground — causing the trauma to his head. "They roughed up Rodney pretty bad," Wright said he was told by one witness.

Wright also revealed that Koller's office called the LAPD this week and was told that the department was planning to return to the scene and re-interview witnesses.

"Well, I'd like to know what they've been doing for the last three months," Wright said. "There has been a blatant disregard for justice."

Meanwhile, Addie Redmon, 63, would like some answers to ease her family's pain. Her 69-year-old husband is on medication, and has still not come to terms with his son's death.

"We're trying the best we can, [and] we need to get some closure, but nobody is saying anything," she said.

"We just want some answers, and we have that right as a family."

Olu Alemoru writes for the WAVE newspapers.

Volunteers document how Calif. shoppers get treated

By Gene C. Johnson Jr.
Special to Sentinel-Voice

LOS ANGELES (NNPA) — Armed with checklists and informed by their experiences, an army of volunteers have set out to document how shoppers are treated in South L.A.

The grassroots organization has launched a campaign to gather data on the quality of food and availability of fresh, healthy choices in South Los Angeles supermarkets.

The campaign, Neighborhood Food Watch, officially began in early October, said Gwendolyn Flynn, policy director for the Community Health Council. Organizers plan to make the results public and will present the findings to Kroger Co., the parent company of Ralphs and Food-4-Less, by early January.

More than 150 people have signed up to become Neighborhood Food Watch members, said Flynn.

"Members are given the NFW Shopping List and Store Quality Checklist to periodically conduct surveys assessing the quality and availability of healthy foods options and the stores themselves," said Mia Boykin, a Community Health Council community liaison.

According to Flynn, the

campaign is targeted at stores in six postal zip codes. The exact number of markets involved is unclear, she said.

Flynn said her observations on supermarket shopping in the area are not unlike what has been witnessed by many of those now volunteering for Neighborhood Food Watch.

"For the most part, I've seen fruits and vegetables that have seen better days," she said. "They are bruised and soft — and they start to deteriorate. I have individuals that just happen to be into tofu and they've seen expired dates [on the product]," she continued.

"When you walk into a store, you are hit with a smell. It smells like old meat. I'm not sure if it's an old store," she said.

"Probably, the people working there don't notice [the smell] anymore. It's dark and the floors are old and need to be replaced. We haven't seen any improvement."

One of the volunteers, Johnnie McCray, said she spotted some disturbing trends while conducting a tour of a Food-4-Less at Western and Slauson avenues.

"I noticed that they were selling meats that were outdated," McCray said.

"[Also], they were putting groceries and vegetables on the shelves that were bad, next to those that were good... We don't complain because we figure if we complain, [supermarket management] will raise the prices or do nothing at all."

There are differences between South L.A. markets and those located in more affluent areas, said Louis Green, who manages a Ralphs in the Crenshaw District.

"You find a lot of people don't care about their environment, their neighborhood," said Green, an employee of the supermarket chain for more than 20 years, as he mopped up a spill in one of the aisles.

"You know, someone came and dropped this on the floor, and do you think they came in and said, 'I spilled something on the floor?'" Green said.

"It's just a matter of caring," he added. "This goes on all day long. I'm not knocking the community. I'm not knocking anyone, but if you cared a little more, our stores would be a little better."

Ralphs spokesman Terry O'Neil said the chain welcomes the Neighborhood Food Watch campaign.

"We always want to know (See Shoppers, Page 11)

Loretta

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KW: Where in L.A. do you live? Have you been affected by the fires?

LD: No, I live in the 'hood? In View Park, right off [bleep] and [bleep]. Don't be putting that in no articles, so people are going to be finding out where I live, and be riding around my house. ...Don't be telling people where I live. I can't have people bothering me. I need to go to work and stuff. You know the paparazzi in L.A. They're crazy.

KW: Can you go to the mall or to a supermarket?

LD: I can go wherever I want to go. I don't know how it is for others with their fans, but because I play very lovable characters, women come up and are very complimen-

tary, and they only want to talk briefly. You just have to make sure you have extra time whenever you going in public, because you know you're going to have to give some time away. Nancy Wilson once told me, "If you don't feel like dealing with people, then you shouldn't go out of your house, because it's a part of the business you're in." So, usually it's cool for me. But sometimes it's a little weird, and you have to watch your back. But I can basically go anywhere I want. Sometimes, people are shocked to see me in a place like Costco. They go, "What you doing in Costco?" [Laughs]

KW: Thanks so much for the time, Loretta.

LD: It was really great talking to you, Kam. Hope we can talk again.

Threats

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charged in the beating of a White schoolmate during racial tensions after three nooses were hung in a so-called White tree then in the school yard.

The security concerns also come in a year in which the Alabama-based Southern Poverty Law Center has reported a 40 percent increase in hate groups since 2000. The FBI last month also reported an 8 percent rise in reports of hate crimes last year, from 7,116 in 2005 to 7,722 last year. Most were racial attacks.

Sharpton is quick to recall one of the key reasons that he takes the new threats seriously.

"You must remember, I was stabbed once leading a march."

On January 12, 1991, he was protesting the killing of a Black teenager in the predominantly White Bensonhurst neighborhood in Brooklyn, N.Y., when he was attacked and stabbed in the chest by Michael Riccardi, an Italian-American wielding a five-inch knife.

Riccardi, who was con-

victed of first degree assault and served eight of a 15-year sentence, said he had attempted to kill Sharpton because he thought it would make him a hero in his community. It was Sharpton's security detail who stopped that attack, apprehended Riccardi and turned him over to police.

"Of course we've got to pay more people, pay more for them to travel, and all of that," said Sharpton. "But, we take these things seriously, 'cause I know what they can be, 'cause I almost got killed."