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Family Members Speak Out at Martin Lee Anderson's Grave Site

Say They Still Seek Justice

It has been more than two years since drill instructors and a nurse were acquitted in the Martin Lee Anderson boot camp case. But, the family is pushing for federal civil rights charges against the guards.

Posted: 9:10 PM Jan 11, 2010**Reporter:** Matt de Nesnera**Email Address:** matthew.denesnera@wjhg.com

11-month-old Martin Lee Anderson sat in his grandmother's arms Monday morning, watching his family celebrate his uncle's life while continuing the struggle to find peace.

The child is not yet old enough to know the story that most in Bay County know all too well. On January 5, 2006, 14-year-old Martin Lee Anderson was admitted to the Bay County Juvenile Boot Camp. He collapsed during a fitness run.

Camp guards thought he was faking, and tried to force him to continue the run. At some point in the altercation, they realized he was in medical distress and called for help. But, Anderson died the next day at a Pensacola hospital. □

The first autopsy found the teen died of complications from sickle cell trait. A second autopsy found the guards were responsible. A grand jury indicted the guards and the camp nurse on aggravated manslaughter charges.

In October 2007, they were acquitted, and Anderson family supporters immediately began lobbying for federal civil rights violation charges. That's the story everyone knows; what we don't know is if U.S. attorneys will ever file those charges.

At her son's grave site Monday, Martin's mother, Gina Williams, spoke out for the first time since the trial. She asked, "Why is it taking so long for justice? Everything is right there in black and white, everything that was done to him, how he was killed on the field."

Martin's grandmother, Reto Williams, said she is trying to heal, but still thinks justice was denied in her grandson's death: "I do forgive the seven guards and the nurse, and I want to make that clear. But, I also believe they need to be held accountable. They are the ones that have to live with that. We do not, my conscience is clear."

But, not all of Martin's family members forgive. Gina said, "I don't think so. Something was taken away from me, my child. I would never forgive those. All that were involved in killing my son. The answer is no, no forgiveness for me, his mother."

The Bay County chapter of the NAACP and the RainbowPUSH Coalition support Martin's family, saying they did not get a fair trial. But last week, one of the guards' defense attorneys said he thinks this case is over.

"I've got news for them. Justice was served a couple of years ago when the jury found those men not guilty, and it disappoints me that they just will not let this go, they will not let this go," said attorney Waylon Graham.

Martin Lee Anderson would have turned 19 on Friday.

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