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Four Years Later: Martin Lee Anderson Boot Camp Death

It was four years ago Wednesday that 14-year-old Martin Lee Anderson died in a Pensacola hospital after collapsing at the now defunct Bay County Juvenile Boot Camp.

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 [4th Anniversary Of Martin Lee Anderson Death](#)



By now, the story of Martin Lee Anderson's death has been well-documented. During his first day at the Bay County Juvenile Boot Camp, Anderson collapsed during a fitness run.

Boot camp drill instructors thought he was faking to get out of the exercise, so they pushed Anderson to complete the run. The camp's cameras recorded an agonizing twenty-minute confrontation, which thrust the case into the worldwide spotlight.

Once the guards realized Anderson was truly in distress, they called for help. But, it was too late. The teen died early the next morning, January 6, 2006, in a Pensacola hospital.

The Medical Examiner's initial autopsy found Anderson died as a result of complications from sickle cell trait. Those results, and the results of a second autopsy conducted several months later, became the central evidence in the criminal trial of seven of the drill instructors and the camp nurse. A year and a half after Anderson's death, they were all acquitted of aggravated manslaughter charges.

Since the trial, Anderson family supporters, including the local NAACP chapter, have continued to push for federal civil rights violation charges against the defendants.

Bay County NAACP president Rev. Rufus Wood said, "I want it to be clear that this is not as much about black and white as it is about right and wrong. This is about right and wrong, and it's about wrong. What happened to Martin was wrong."

The U.S. Attorney's Office will only say that the Anderson case is still under review. But, the attorney for one of the former boot camp guards says he thinks this case is over.

Waylon Graham said, "I think they have figured out that they have the same problem the state did, that the scientific evidence just does not support their case."

Graham also believes NAACP officials need to find closure: "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."

Things have changed in the four years since Anderson's death. The boot camp has shut down, but one thing remains -- a family's grief for their lost loved one.

Reto Williams visited her grandson Martin's grave site Wednesday. She says the family is still mourning his loss, and they too believe those involved in the now infamous incident should face more charges.

Martin Lee Anderson would have turned 19 on January 15.

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