



Sacramento County District Attorney's Office

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 26, 2020

TO: Sheriff Scott Jones
Sacramento County Sheriff's Office
4500 Auburn Blvd
Sacramento, CA 95841

FROM: Sacramento County District Attorney's Office

SUBJECT: In-Custody Death – Rakeisha Holdman
SSD Report No. 2019-106287
Date of Incident: March 28, 2019

The above case was referred to this office for review of the circumstances surrounding the death of Rakeisha Holdman while in the custody of the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department on March 28, 2019. Multiple media sources were reviewed, including recorded witness statements and surveillance and cell phone videos.

On March 28, 2019, at approximately 8 a.m., Rakeisha Holdman attempted to exchange a \$100 bill at a Brookfields Restaurant in Sacramento. A Brookfields employee suspected the bill was counterfeit and returned it to Holdman. Holdman left the restaurant and approached Clay Gary, from whom she had received the \$100 bill. When she entered Gary's vehicle, a physical altercation ensued. Witnesses from the restaurant saw Gary striking Holdman in the chest and face while the two of them were seated in his vehicle.

Holdman escaped from Gary's car, slipping through the arms of her sweatshirt as she ran topless from the vehicle. Holdman then ran to the Brookfields while Gary gave chase. She made it inside, but a witness stopped Gary from entering. Holdman ran out the back door of the restaurant and went to her husband Ernest Holdman's car,¹ which was parked near the rear of the Brookfields. Gary began yelling at Ernest about the money and in response Ernest brandished a knife. Upon seeing the knife, Gary retreated a short distance away until the police arrived.

Sacramento Sheriff Deputy James Galovich was assigned as a Safe School Officer with the San Juan Unified School District. At approximately 8:11 a.m., he pulled into the parking lot of the

¹ Because Rakeisha Holdman and Ernest Holdman share the same last name, for ease of reference Ernest Holdman will be referred to by first name. No disrespect is intended.

Brookfields and was waved down by a witness who had called 911 due to the dispute. Deputy Galovich had not been dispatched to the call, but he stayed and requested an additional unit to assist him. Deputy Galovich contacted Gary in the parking lot. As Gary explained his dispute with Holdman, Ernest approached and started arguing with Gary.

Deputy Galovich then saw Holdman leaning against the back of a tan Cadillac and he asked her to come over to him. She yelled that she could not walk. Deputy Galovich then instructed her to sit down. Additional deputies arrived and assisted Deputy Galovich. Deputy Galovich and Deputy Bobi Griggs approached Holdman, and Deputy Galovich explained to her that Gary thought she had taken his money. She replied, "I can't talk if I can't breathe," and Deputy Galovich saw that she was breathing heavily. He asked her if she wanted the fire department to check on her and she said no. Another witness approached Holdman and handed her a cup of milk to drink. Holdman drank some milk and was no longer breathing heavily. She told the witness that she suffered from asthma and asked the witness to pat her on the back.

Deputy Griggs discovered Holdman had an outstanding warrant out of Solano County. Deputy Galovich again asked her about the money at which point she resumed breathing heavily and said she couldn't talk because she needed to catch her breath. Deputy Galovich again asked Holdman if she wanted the fire department to respond and she again declined.

Ernest gave Deputy Galovich consent to search his car. The search revealed suspected narcotics and smoking paraphernalia. Deputy Galovich asked who the drugs belonged to. Holdman, now breathing normally, said they belonged to her. Deputy Galovich again tried to ask her about the missing money but she resumed breathing heavily. He again asked her if she needed medical attention and she stated "no."

Based upon Holdman's breathing issues, her outstanding arrest warrant, and the suspected narcotics, Deputy Galovich decided to detain her and request medical attention for her. Again, he asked if she wanted medical attention. She again declined, and he told her he was detaining her. He handcuffed her in front of her stomach. She was sitting upright, yet still had difficulty breathing.

At approximately 8:32 a.m., Deputy Galovich requested the fire department to respond. Holdman told Deputy Galovich she needed to lean back. He had her lean against the rear bumper of the Cadillac and she continued with deep breaths. Deputy Galovich stayed with Holdman until the Sacramento Metro Fire Department arrived. During this time, he noticed she was awake, coherent, and looking around. He observed her breaths to be less deep and more normal. Deputy Galovich informed fire personnel that when he would ask Holdman questions, she appeared to breathe deeper, but when she was not being questioned, her breathing would return to normal.

Fire personnel began to talk to Holdman, who was still in the seated position and leaning against the vehicle. Holdman was mumbling. Her pupils rolled upwards and she fell to her right side. Fire personnel could not locate a pulse and a clear, brownish liquid ran out of her nose. Deputy Galovich immediately uncuffed her. Fire personnel transported her to Mercy San Juan Hospital, where her pulse returned.

Deputy Eric Frizzie went to the hospital and issued Holdman a notice to appear citation for misdemeanor methamphetamine possession. Holdman was released from custody.

Holdman remained at the hospital on a ventilator for two days before her death.

A medic who arrived on scene to treat Holdman was later interviewed and stated, “[W]hatever went wrong with her must have happened within seconds of me arriving on scene. It appeared to me that she was trying to hold her breath.”

The substance found in the Holdmans’ vehicle was booked, weighed, and sent to the Sacramento County District Attorney Crime Lab. Lab results confirmed the substance as methamphetamine weighing approximately 0.4 grams. Another dark brown substance was found to be marijuana and weighed 1.3 grams.

The Sacramento County Coroner’s Office classified the manner of Holdman’s death as likely a combination of heart issues and cocaine toxicity. Pathologist Keng-Chih Su, M.D., conducted an autopsy and concluded that the cause of Holdman’s death was cocaine intoxication. Contributing conditions, but not related to the immediate cause of death, were blunt force injuries to the head and dilated cardiomyopathy. A toxicology report indicated the presence of cocaine and THC in Holdman’s system.

In Ernest Holdman’s later interview to investigators, he stated that his wife was in the passenger seat of their car when Deputy Galovich contacted them. He said that Deputy Galovich instructed Holdman to get out of the car and that Ernest had to take her hand and help her out. He said that Holdman was “manhandled” by Deputy Galovich “as if she was able to stand up and run.” However, no other witnesses support this account. Gary was interviewed and stated he did not see a struggle between Deputy Galovich and Holdman. Another witness, a Brookfields employee who saw the initial struggle between Gary and Holdman, stated Deputy Galovich had nothing to do with the medical issues Holdman experienced. He related that he saw no fight or struggle between Deputy Galovich and Holdman.

Based on the evidence, there was no criminal misconduct on the part of law enforcement. As such, the District Attorney’s Office will take no further action in this matter.

cc: Mark Evenson, Office of the Inspector General
Sacramento County Sheriff’s Department Lieutenant Gail Vasquez
Kimberly Gin, Sacramento County Coroner’s Office