

Sheriff Evades Oversight While #NicholasRobertson Goes Viral

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Press Conference: Tuesday December 15th, 9:30 a.m., outside the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 W. Temple Street 90012

Los Angeles, C.A. – This past Saturday two Los Angeles County Sheriff’s deputies fired 33 shots at 28-year-old Nicholas Robertson, ultimately killing him after he was walking then crawling in the other direction. This incident is one of 19 public deaths this year at the hands of LASD deputies, and one of several caught on video. This past week also marks the public release of Sheriff Jim McDonnell’s proposed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the sheriff’s department and the Office of Inspector General (OIG), originally intended to clarify the department’s relationship with the Inspector General and the impending Civilian Oversight Commission. Local social justice organizations say that the proposed MOU leaves many critical questions unaddressed.

The Coalition to End Sheriff Violence in Los Angeles Jails, the group of organizations who have been fighting for over 3 years for independent oversight, say that the MOA evades sheriff responsibility to the civilian commission offering limited access to the Inspector General while virtually restricting access for the commission. They are concerned that the department is waiting for the commission to be established to see who is appointed before clearly defining its powers and avenues, which signals that there is an interest in weakening the commission if it is perceived as not in the department’s favor. The coalition demands are that the supervisors **1) create efficient avenues for the commission to get information from the sheriff's department independent of the OIG, 2) establish a clear timeline to asses LASD compliance with the MOA with enough time to pursue a change in county charter to grant the commission subpoena power, 3) make sure the selection process for the commission includes community input for nomination and appointment of commissioners, 4) prioritize staffing and budget for the commission.**

“It’s time for the Civilian Oversight Commission to start working – and to do so with power. The commission shouldn’t have to rely on the whims of the Inspector General and the Inspector General should not be positioned to broker information from the sheriff’s department based on its capacity, priorities, or political interests,” says Mark-Anthony Johnson, director of health and wellness at Dignity and Power Now. “In the time the supervisors have taken to establish commission recommendations *19 people* have been killed by deputies outside of the jails. For us this isn’t about bureaucracy or politics, it’s about the lives and wellbeing of our loved ones and communities.”