

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Killing of Giovanni Martinez Sparks Protest in Fairfax

Fairfax, Virginia – September 14, 2016 – Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Northern Virginia will be at the intersection of Fairfax Boulevard/Main Street and Lee Highway on Wednesday, September 14, from 4:00pm to 6:00pm, to protest the killing of Giovanni Martinez one month ago outside Inova Fairfax Hospital.

On August 15, Giovanni Martinez approached a police cruiser in Annandale seeking help, saying that he wanted to die. Martinez, who had been exhibiting signs of mental illness in recent months, was later discharged from the hospital and escorted to a bus stop. When Deputy Patrick McPartlin responded to a call about a person at the bus stop wielding “a weapon,” Martinez reportedly swung a sign post at McPartlin. McPartlin opened fire on Martinez several times and killed him.

Deputy Patrick McPartlin is one of six Fairfax County deputies already notorious for causing the death of Natasha McKenna in the Adult Detention Center in 2015. On February 3, McKenna, mentally ill and deteriorating, was removed from her cell while naked, wrestled to the ground by six sheriff’s deputies in hazmat suits, strapped to a restraint chair with her face covered in a spit mask, and tasered four times while restrained, creating a medical crisis. She never recovered and died on February 8, 2015.

For a year since Commonwealth Attorney Ray Morrogh declined to prosecute the six deputies who tortured Natasha McKenna to death, Black Lives Matter DC, BYP 100 DC, SURJ Northern Virginia, and other organizations and individuals have been demanding that they be fired. September 14 marks the one-year anniversary of a massive demonstration at the Fairfax County Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission’s Public Forum, and protests have continued since.

At a community forum on March 5, Sheriff Stacey Kincaid admitted the community wouldn’t find closure until the men who killed Natasha McKenna were fired. She said that her department was still reviewing the case and making changes. Black Lives Matter organizer April Goggans challenged Kincaid, saying that if another person was killed while Kincaid was reading and reviewing documents, blood would be on her hands.

In July, when SURJ delivered for the second time a petition calling for Sheriff Kincaid to fire the six deputies, Cayce Utley, a lead organizer with SURJ Northern Virginia, said “We are tired of waiting for Kincaid to determine whether black lives matter. If Natasha McKenna’s life doesn’t matter enough to the sheriff to hold these men accountable, she needs to resign.”

Neither the changes proposed by the Fairfax County Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission nor the county’s Diversion First program would have prevented what happened to McKenna or Martinez.

“This isn’t about one bad apple, but a racist system that refuses transparency and accountability at the expense of people’s lives,” said SURJ NoVa organizer Cat Clark.

Fairfax County maintains, on the basis of a survey released in April, 2016, that county residents are generally satisfied with local policing. The survey significantly underrepresented Black people, Asians, Latinx, immigrants, people without college degrees, and young people living in Fairfax County.

SURJ Northern Virginia is a chapter of Showing Up for Racial Justice, a national network of groups and individuals organizing White people for racial justice. Through community organizing, mobilizing, and education, SURJ moves White people to act as part of a multi-racial majority for justice with passion and accountability.

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