

Florida prosecutors cover up murder of Darren Rainey, inmate boiled alive

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The Miami Dade's State Attorney's Office issued a report Friday announcing that no charges would be brought in the horrific June 2012 death of inmate Darren Rainey at the Dade Correctional Institution.

The report is an attempt to conclude the nearly five-year cover-up of Rainey's murder at the hands of correctional officers in the prisons Transitional Care Unit (TCU), a mental health ward within the prison.

On June 23rd, 2012 Rainey, a diagnosed schizophrenic, was taken from his cell by prison guards after allegedly defecating in his cell. He was taken to a specially rigged shower within the unit that allowed guards to control the temperature from the outside.

Inmates have reported that Rainey screamed and begged for his life as the guards turned the temperature of the water up to 180 degrees and left him in the shower for two hours. When they finally retrieved him he was found dead, face down in three inches of water.

A prison nurse told the *Miami Herald* that upon removing Rainey his skin was found to be "peeling" off of his body and that his body temperature was too high to be measured by a thermometer. Rainey had been boiled alive.

Of the four guards involved in Rainey's murder, none were given disciplinary infractions. In fact, several officers involved in the killing were given promotions soon after the incident. The two guards who locked Rainey in the shower both moved on to other careers in law enforcement, with one becoming a Miami Gardens policeman and the other taking a job in the federal prison system.

State officials began to cover up the death immediately. Detectives questioned only prison staff and did not take any statements from inmate witnesses. Rainey's murder was ruled an "unexplained in-custody death" and the investigation went no further.

Rainey's brother, Andre Chapman, told the media that prison officials successfully pressured his indigent family to have the body immediately cremated.

Harold Hempstead, an inmate who was present at the incident and who contacted various law enforcement and media sources in an attempt to seek justice for Rainey, told the paper that the customized plumbing that was used in the shower was dismantled in the aftermath of Rainey's death.

It was not until 2014 that state officials, spurred on by a series of investigative reports by the *Miami Herald* on the dreadful conditions within Florida prisons, re-opened the case.

The *Herald* recounted a description of the incident by Mark Joiner, an inmate who was made to clean up Rainey's remains: "Mark Joiner was roused from his cell earlier than usual on June 24, 2012. He was handed a bottle of Clorox and was told it was clean-up time. Joiner was used to cleaning up cells in Dade Correctional Institution's psychiatric ward, and many of them were frequently brimming with feces and urine, insect-infested food and other filth. On the floor of a small shower stall he was ordered to clean, he saw a single blue canvas shoe and what he later realized was large chunks of human skin."

Joiner recounted to the *Herald* what he had heard on the night of Rainey's death: "'I heard them lock the shower door, and they were mocking him,' Joiner said, as the guards turned on their retrofitted shower full blast and steam began to fill the ward. 'He was crying, please stop, please stop,' Joiner said. And they just said 'Enjoy your shower, and left.'"

The *Herald* reported that at least six other inmates have told investigators that the shower in question had been modified by prison guards to be able to run at both extremely hot and cold temperatures and that it was

used to torture “unruly” inmates. They also reported that guards laughed and taunted Rainey as he pleaded for his life.

In January 2016, over three years after the incident, the Miami-Dade Medical Examiner’s office concluded an autopsy report that whitewashed the circumstances of Rainey’s death.

Portions of the still unreleased autopsy leaked to the *Herald* outline the dimensions of the cover-up. The report claims that the cause of Rainey’s death was caused by complications related to “schizophrenia, heart disease and ‘confinement’ in the shower.” The report also makes the absurd claim that the peeling off of Rainey’s skin, referred to as “slippage,” was due to “prolonged exposure to water, humidity and the ‘warm, moist’ environment,” rather than the scalding hot water he was exposed to.

According to the *Herald*, the autopsy report also claimed that Haldol, an anti-psychotic drug Rainey had been prescribed, was a contributing factor in his death.

The conclusions of the autopsy report have been widely challenged. Dr. Michael Baden, a well-known forensic pathologist and former chief medical examiner for New York City, disputed the conclusions of the report in an interview with the *Herald*.

“Well, you don’t die from schizophrenia,” Baden remarked suspiciously, “And skin just doesn’t slough off by itself.”

Baden explained that sloughing off of the skin is a “hot water trauma” that could only be the result of prolonged exposure to water at extreme temperatures. “If pieces of Rainey’s skin peeled off simply from his being exposed to a lengthy shower spray then anyone who ever takes a long bath would find their skin peeling off their body,” Baden stated.

The Florida prison system, with nearly 100,000 inmates, is the third largest in the country. In 2016 there were a reported 356 deaths in Florida prisons, with 13 of those happening at the Dade Correctional Institute alone.

A series of investigations by the *Herald* over the last three years have exposed the shocking level of abuses faced by Florida inmates.

Prisoners reported that “state prison guards used forms of torture, including dousing prisoners with buckets of chemicals, over-medicating them, forcing them to fight each other and starving them. A group of

officers at the prison that served inmates empty food trays, known as ‘air trays,’ was known as the ‘diet squad,’ and they often preyed on inmates who were too ill to coherently report what had happened.”

Mental health professionals contracted to work at Dade Correctional have complained of harassment by staff when they have attempted to address the conditions.

Harriet Krzykowski, a psychiatric technician who started working at the prison in 2010, told the *New Yorker* magazine that after repeatedly complaining to prison officials about the inmates in the TCU not being allowed access to the recreation yard she was frequently left alone with inmates, in violation of prison policy. Krzykowski believed this was an attempt to intimidate her into silence.



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