

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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**FAMILY DEMANDS ACCESS TO INVESTIGATION AFTER PRIVATE AUTOPSY REVEALS
POLICE SHOT ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST
OVER THIRTEEN TIMES
PRESS CONFERENCE FEBRUARY 6, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.**

[Atlanta, GA]—Results of a private autopsy reveal that several different officers shot environmental activists Manuel Esteban Paez Teran at least 13 times. Law enforcement continues to evade simple questions about the killing.

Manuel Esteban Paez Teran was an environmental activist protesting the destruction of a forest in a historically Black neighborhood to build a privately owned and operated police training center known as Cop City.

As tensions between the community and police increased, so too did the aggressive tactics police used to confront activists. This event marks the first time any environmental activist in the United States has been killed by the government.

“Manny was a kind person who helped anyone who needed it. He was a pacifist. They say he shot a police officer. I do not believe it.” said his mother, Belkis Teran. “I do not understand why they will not even privately explain to us what happened to our child.”

The GBI’s early account of the shooting is that Manny was camping in the forest when surrounded by police officers during an operation to clear the forest. The GBI has claimed that Manny shot an officer, and that the bullet matches a gun possessed by Manny. But even if that is true, there are still many unanswered questions.

“The GBI has selectively released information about Manny’s death,” said civil rights attorney Jeff Filipovits. “They claim Manny failed to follow orders. What orders? The GBI has not talked about the fact that Manny faced a firing squad, when those shots were fired, or who fired them.”

While the GBI has publicly stated there is no body camera footage of the shooting, it has not stated whether there is any audio or other video from other sources, such as aerial drones or helicopters that were in use at the time of the incident.

The family has contacted the GBI and specifically requested that it release whatever audio and video exists of the incident or any other information that would help shed light on what happened. “Any evidence, even if it is only an audio recording, will help the family piece together what happened on the morning of January 18th. This information is critical, and it is being withheld,” said Brian Spears, a civil rights attorney with nearly five decades of experience litigating police shootings.

While the family looks for answers, Teran’s death escalates concerns related to the construction of a police training center and the government’s willingness to deem activists as terrorists. The power used against these activists will soon be used against other protesters.

“Protests by non-locals are inherently terrorism,” Second-in-command Atlanta Police Department Assistant Chief Carven Tyus was recently quoted as saying of the protesters. The City of Atlanta has also admitted to using Georgia’s hands-free driving law as a pretext to arrest at least one person for filming officers at Cop City. “Police who behave legally have no reason to fear being filmed and should welcome it. Law enforcement has a vested interest in this training center that demands scrupulous transparency and impartiality. Unfortunately, we are getting the exact opposite.” said Gerry Weber of the Southern Center for Human Rights.

There is little support for Cop City among Atlanta citizens. “Cop City is something that no one in the community asked for, and survey after survey shows that the majority of Atlanta residents are opposed. The mayor continues to run roughshod over the desires of the community,” said Kamau Franklin from Community Movement Builders, one of the organizations fighting against Cop City.

The family will hold a press conference on Monday, February 6, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. outside the Historic DeKalb Courthouse located at 101 East Court Square in Decatur, GA.

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About Spears & Filipovits, LLC

Spears & Filipovits LLC specializes in federal civil rights litigation. Attorneys Brian Spears and Jeff Filipovits routinely handle litigation concerning police misconduct, jail and prison conditions, and excessive force. The firm routinely partners with other attorneys who recognize the specific expertise needed to litigate these civil rights cases. Spears & Filipovits is committed to bringing the injustices of our criminal justice system to light, and litigating cases throughout the State of Georgia to ensure that justice is available to all.

About Community Movement Builders

Community Movement Builders is (CMB) is a Black member-based collective of community residents and activists serving Black working-class and poor Black communities. CMB emerged out of a need to respond to encroaching gentrification, displacement and over-policing. CMB organizes to bring power to Black communities by challenging existing institutions and creating new ones that our people control.

About Southern Center for Human Rights

The Southern Center for Human Rights is working for equality, dignity, and justice for people impacted by the criminal legal system in the Deep South. SCHR fights for a world free from mass incarceration, the death penalty, the criminalization of poverty, and racial injustice.