

KC 44-997

DETAILS:

The following investigation is the result of a preliminary investigation.

I. PREDICATION

This investigation was predicated upon receipt of a request from Assistant Attorney General JERRIS LEONARD of the Civil Rights Division, U. S. Department of Justice, who requested a preliminary investigation be conducted concerning the death of HARRY NICHOLAS RICE based upon the facts set forth in a letter from Mrs. ESTHER CHRISTIANSON RICE dated August 4, 1970.

Esther ~~C. Rice~~ complainant

The letter of Mrs. RICE is as follows:

*Calif Kansas
Mrs. Harry Dollar ~~Rice~~*

August 4, 1970

Hon. Richard M. Nixon
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Mr. President:

My son, Harry Nicholas Rice, was shot at the University of Kansas the night of July 20th, and the news was everywhere in a few hours. I plead with you, Mr. President, for the thousands of parents who have responded to me and expressed great fear for their children returning to American campuses this fall.

We taught our sons respect for our laws and for the police in their work of carrying out those laws. We even excused the mistakes of law enforcement agencies at Chicago and Kent University, but now we are one of those mistakes, and we see the other face of campus confrontation.

When we first heard the news, we as both alumni of K.U. and especially myself, whose family was once a vital part of Lawrence, Kansas, could not believe that the police of our beloved college town could have mistakenly shot our beautiful son. Sensing the overwhelming animosity of the students toward the police, we gave support to the possibility of a sniper's bullet, to try to stop any further bloodshed.

As we have now traced our son through that fatal day, we are sure of his employment as a surgical orderly at Baptist Memorial Hospital in Kansas City. He took his girl-friend, a Lawrence resident, back to Lawrence for a date, because of a parking ticket (for parking in a yellow zone) which would have required him to appear in court in person at 8 a.m. the next morning. He went to the police station and tried to pay the ticket so that he would not miss work the following morning. Then he went to the Rock Chalk Cafe and played pinball. However, the police ordered the Rock Chalk to close early. Nick then drove around to find a friend, to whom he'd promised a ride back to Kansas City. He spotted his friend standing in front of the Gaslight, a college hangout, parked his car, and got out. Nick was crossing Grand Avenue when he was shot in the back of the neck, the bullet lacerating his brain, and he fell instantly.

At no time, either on the night he was shot or at any other time, did our son participate in any disorder, or harass or obstruct the police in any way. But the police denied him any medical attention, neither would they permit persons nearby to aid him; instead, the police released more tear gas cannisters next to his face. When the area was finally cleared, Nick was dead on arrival at Lawrence Memorial Hospital.

I was in California attending my niece's wedding and as I passed San Clemente on my way home I prayed that my son was still alive, and I prayed that you'd find some effective way to protect the right of every individual not to be murdered, whether he be a teenager emerging into manhood or any other American.

Our Nicholas was named for his uncle, the late Gen. R. U. Nicholas, a comrade of Ike's, and a close friend of our neighbors, the Arthur Eisenhowers of Kansas City.

A grieved, concerned mother

5

Esther B. Rice
ESTHER CHRISTIANSON RICE