

Sheppard Mullin Assists Maryland Family In Reopening 39-Year-Old Death Investigation

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Sheppard Mullin attorneys helped a grieving family reopen the investigation into a loved one's suspicious death in 1986.

On July 31, 1986, the body of Keith Warren, a young black man, was found hanging from a tree in Silver Spring, Maryland. After conducting a 21-minute investigation, the police ruled Warren's death a suicide, even though evidence showed his feet would have been able to touch the ground even with the rope around his neck. There was no medical exam, and police did not order an autopsy.

Warren's mother later had his body exhumed and paid for a toxicology examination and a pathology report. The findings were not consistent with the police department's conclusion of suicide. For years, Warren's mother and sister have sought to have his Medical Examiner's Certificate of Death corrected to reflect that the cause and manner of death cannot be determined on the available evidence, and to reopen the investigation into his death.

Working pro bono for Warren's sister (Sherri Warren), Sheppard Mullin partner Steve Hollman and associates Damani Sims, Meredith Lerner and Philip Thompson, succeeded in convincing the Montgomery County Police Department to reopen the investigation into Warren's death. The new investigation followed a determination by the Maryland Office of the Chief Medical Examiner that the Medical Examiner's Certificate of Death must be corrected to reflect that the cause and manner of death are undetermined.

"This was an effort to show that all lives matter and that all families suffering the grievous loss of a loved one deserve to be treated with dignity and respect," said Hollman. "We are reminded of the powerful words of poet Gwendolyn Brooks, who observed: 'We are each other's business. We are each other's harvest. We are each other's magnitude and bond.'"

Attorneys

Steven P. Hollman

Meredith Lerner

Damani C. Sims

Philip Thompson

Practice Areas

Litigation