



# Seattle Human Rights Commission

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February 1, 2024

The Seattle Human Rights Commission expresses solidarity with Black community member Roger Wright as he pursues a comprehensive investigation into whether his civil rights were violated during a physical encounter with Seattle Police Department officers in 2004.

On the evening of October 9, 2004, Mr. Wright recounts that, while standing outside of the Mt. Baker QFC, Seattle Police Department (SPD) officers swiftly and unexpectedly approached him. They proceeded to force him to the ground and handcuff him without providing a reason or reading him his Miranda Rights. While restrained on the ground, it is alleged that SPD officers punched, knelt on, and choked Mr. Wright into unconsciousness.

When Mr. Wright regained consciousness, he was on the I-90 on-ramp naked and disoriented. SPD officers arrived at Mr. Wright's location where he was tasered before being transported to Harborview Medical Center. Medics were informed by police officers that Mr. Wright was under the influence of phencyclidine (PCP), prompting them to provide care without his consent, including the administration of the antipsychotic drug Haldol and valium. A private investigation completed in 2012 revealed that despite medical reports stating SPD's involvement, neither SPD nor the Washington State Patrol have any records pertaining to any incidents involving Mr. Wright that evening. During Mr. Wright's 9-hour stay at Harborview Medical Center, he was initially unable to share his status with family members due to being incapacitated from medication he was given. Upon examination of his medical records, it appears there may be discrepancies between family first-hand accounts of the hospital stay and chart notes.

The extent of force applied, coupled with the absence of records, in contrast to information received from Harborview Medical Center, raises doubts about whether SPD handled this incident appropriately. Mr. Wright asserts that his rights have been violated and calls for a

thorough and complete investigation to ensure accountability for any actions taken by SPD officers.

Mr. Wright has pursued various paths for justice available but has been denied resolution at each opportunity. This includes formal processes such as retaining legal counsel, contacting the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and the Department of Justice (DOJ), and initiating an investigation with the Seattle Office of Police Accountability (OPA). Upon Mr. Wright's initial contact with the FBI and DOJ, his request for an investigation resulted in advice to seek legal representation, which he retained. Unfortunately, his attorney's endeavors only led to a request for police records. Mr. Wright notes that when he sought additional assistance from the FBI, he was turned away. The investigation completed by the OPA was inconclusive. Mr. Wright has engaged with City of Seattle leadership and sought support from Seattle's Community Police Commission. He has also reached out to various media outlets to share his story. Despite these endeavors, Mr. Wright has not received clear confirmation regarding the fairness of the treatment he experienced during the incident and assurance that his civil rights were not infringed upon. It is evident that the only way to seek justice is with the assistance of community support.

The Seattle Human Rights Commission supports Mr. Wright in taking steps to elevate the investigation into his 2004 encounter with Seattle Police Department officers to the United States Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division. To uphold police accountability, addressing any concerns related to potential civil rights violations is crucial and must be thoroughly investigated.

Sincerely,

The Seattle Human Rights Commission