

## **JOINT STATEMENT REGARDING THE FANTA BILITY CASE**

**From: U.D.T.J. & Delco Resists**

A major announcement was made today in regards to the police misconduct that resulted in the death of Fanta Bility, a beautiful eight year old girl, and three other innocent people.

The grand jury concluded on January 18, 2022 and has recommended charges against the officers. Former Sharon Hill Police Officers **Devon Smith, Sean Dolan, and Brian Devaney** have turned themselves in this morning. They have been charged with involuntary manslaughter, voluntary manslaughter and ten counts of reckless endangerment for all three officers. Ten counts because ten witnesses said their lives were in danger. Preliminary hearings are set for Jan 27th. The officers are out on a \$500,000 unsecured bail and have already been released.

This case is complex, and a great deal of misinformation and delay has brought us further away from justice for Fanta than we'd want to be at this moment. Fanta Bility was an 8-year girl who attended Academy Park High School's football game against Pennsbury with her family on the evening of August 27, 2021. Her older sister was cheerleading that night and the family wanted to support her. Off of school grounds, an argument between 18-year old Hasein Strand (now 19) and 16-year old Angelo "AJ" Ford, escalated into gunfire on Kenny Avenue and Coates Street in Sharon Hill, approximately one block away from Academy Park's football field.

Three Sharon Hill police officers, Devon Smith, Sean Dolan, and Brian Devaney, fired over 25 shots at a distance greater than 130 feet targeting a moving car on Kenny Avenue. One of the officers emptied their clip and reloaded. The officers claimed that this was a drive-by shooting, however the two 19-year old women riding in the vehicle were not armed. The vehicle was struck over 15 times and the young women suffered minor injuries from the shattered glass. The officers' reaction time was not immediate; a total of 12 seconds went by before the officers started firing with no identified target. Due to this negligent and reckless behavior, the officers struck and wounded four people, including Fanta Bility and her older sister. Fanta, in shock after being struck in the back, walked towards her mother and collapsed in her arms where she tragically died at the scene. Delaware County District Attorney Jack Stollsteimer stated on September 2, 2021 that it is with near certainty that it was the Sharon Hill officers' bullets that led to Fanta's death and the wounding of three others. There is no incident report on what took place that night. Witnesses discovered one of the officers walking around afterwards picking up shells from the bullets that were fired.

The Bility family filed a federal lawsuit against Sharon Hill borough and the officers on October 26, 2021. The federal suit accused the officers of using excessive force and negligent infliction of emotional distress. The Bility family is suing the borough council and police chief for failing to provide adequate training. An administrative investigation into the Sharon Hill Police Department is being conducted by Philadelphia District Attorney Kelley Hodge. Hasein Strand and Angelo Ford were charged with first degree murder on November 10, 2021 after the Delaware County District Attorney's office published a press release that afternoon. The

charges were “validated” through the ideal of transferred intent. Both young men were taken into custody and denied bail. Finally, a grand jury began on November 18, 2021 to determine if the officers’ use of force was validated while the two teens were denied one.

In order to rebuild any trust between the District Attorney and the community we ask the District Attorney to make accommodations to provide transparency and information to the community. We recognize the officers will be terminated from their positions and charged with the death of Fanta Bility. We expect and will fight for the officers to be charged the maximum allowable sentence by law. We demand immediate confirmation that all details of this incident have been submitted to the Pennsylvania Police Misconduct Database, with confirmation of the date of submission.

The families of Strand and Ford are relieved to have the first degree murder charges withdrawn in exchange for more appropriate charges. However, it is important to point out in this case that demanding plea deals based on the threat of trumped up charges is unjust and an abuse of power and a betrayal of his campaign promises as a reformer candidate.

We demand a detailed summary of the events which took place on August 27, 2021, including all video footage, an itemized list of exhibits shown to the grand jury members, and records of Sharon Hill Police Department’s Use of Force guidelines. We also demand all legal arguments presented in the grand jury be shared with the public.

The hard and dedicated social justice work of the community has prevailed today, yet the long march for justice for the Bility family has only just begun. We ask everyone to continue to show up as we enter this next stage. U.D.T.J. and Delco Resists work closely with the Bility, Ford, and Strand families and as a result ask that any media outlets stay up to date on accurate information through our social media accounts and via email. Official statements about upcoming events and the demands regarding the family’s wishes will be posted on U.D.T.J. and Delco Resists social media accounts.

Follow the accounts below to stay up to date on official announcements:

**UDTJ:**

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/UDTJ2020/>

Instagram: @UDTJorganization

Twitter: @UDTJ7

Website: [udtj.org](http://udtj.org)

**Delco Resists:**

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/delcoresists>

Instagram: @DelcoResists

Twitter: @DelcoResists

U.D.T.J. and Delco Resists can be reached for comment through our email [udtjorganization@gmail.com](mailto:udtjorganization@gmail.com) or [delcoresists@gmail.com](mailto:delcoresists@gmail.com).