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Mother of Phila. man killed by police files wrongful-death suit

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The **mother of a man** shot to death **by police** last February at the end **of** a stolen-car chase in North Philadelphia filed a **wrongful-death** lawsuit Thursday against six city **police** officers.

The Common Pleas Court lawsuit **by** Carolyn Moses, **mother of** Jamil Moses, was announced at the Center City law offices **of** Paul J. Hetznecker.

Hetznecker called for an independent probe **of** the Feb. 8, 2011, encounter in which Moses, 24, was shot to death after **police** boxed in the car in which he was a passenger at 23d Street and Susquehanna Avenue.

Hetznecker said the shooting appeared to be part **of** a "pattern **of police** shootings over the last few years."

"Our society invests a tremendous amount **of** power in the **Police** Department to enforce the law, and rightfully so," Hetznecker said. "But that power must coincide with an unwavering respect for the civil rights **of** citizens. This particular case is an extreme use **of** excessive force, unwarranted under any scenario."

Christine O'Brien, a Philadelphia **Police** Department public affairs officer, said officials could not comment on pending litigation.

Named as defendants were narcotics Officers John McCarron and Mark Oliveras and 35th District Officers Joseph Burke, George Fox, Craig Coulter, and Brandon Bryant.

At the time **of** the shooting, **police** officials described it as justified after a high-speed chase through North Philadelphia that ended only when the stolen car rammed **police** cars blocking its way.

Police said that the car's two occupants had long criminal histories and refused to get out **of** the car and that one appeared to be reaching under his seat. Officers around the car opened fire, killing Moses, who was in the front passenger seat, and critically wounding driver Frederick Bell.

Hetznecker said his investigation raised doubts about the circumstances leading to the shooting.

He said vehicle damage made it more likely that the **police** cars struck the stolen car, a Chevrolet Impala sedan, than that the car rammed the cruisers.

"This was not a high-speed chase, this was a slow-speed chase," added J. Whyatt Mondesire, president **of** the local NAACP chapter, who joined Hetznecker and Carolyn Moses to announce the **suit**.

No gun was found in the stolen car or on the two men, Hetznecker said.

Both men had criminal records. Bell, 38, served several short prison terms for convictions on theft and escape charges and a 3 1/2- to seven-year term for gun possession.

Defense attorneys Gregory J. Pagano and Robert T. Lynch said Bell was in custody awaiting trial on charges involving the theft **of** the Impala and the confrontation with **police**.

Moses had recently completed a four- to eight-year term for a robbery conviction.

Carolyn Moses described her son as a "good kid - he had a good heart." She said his main objective was trying to provide for two young sons and a third on the way, who was born six months after her son died.

Hetznecker, however, said the criminal histories **of** Bell and Moses were irrelevant to whether **police** used excessive force.

"I have tremendous concern when the **police** try to justify their actions after the fact **by** claiming that the length **of** his **police** record somehow devalues the life **of** Jamil Moses," Hetznecker said. "I think that's a pretty outrageous position to take. This was a car stop in which **police** exercised excessive force."

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