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Family fights to uncover truth behind jail death

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On Feb. 19, the family of Marlyn Barnes [filed a petition](#) in the Circuit Court for the city of Baltimore requesting the release of photographs and additional information from his autopsy. Barnes, an African American man, [died under suspicious circumstances](#) in the custody of the Harford County Detention Center on April 10, 2019.

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) of the state of Maryland conducted an autopsy on April 11, 2019. However, the basic autopsy report was not released for another two months. The OCME has refused to release any information other than the basic report, which contains limited information.

Since August 2019, the Prisoners' Solidarity Committee of the Baltimore Peoples' Power Assembly has worked with the Barnes family to not only obtain the truth surrounding the circumstances of Marlyn's death, but also to bring to light the racism at the core of the criminal justice system. Several protests have been held outside the jail and the Harford County Sheriff's Office.

The struggle to obtain information about Marlyn's death has been a constant uphill battle. From Day One, the sheriff's office has refused to meet with the family or their attorney.

Furthermore, the sheriff moved slowly in releasing the basic autopsy report and the surveillance video from the cell block on the day of Marlyn's death, despite being required to release this information under Maryland's public information act.

Bureaucratic processes like those that the Barnes family has fought for months are designed to alienate working-class people and cover up the actions of the capitalist government and police agencies. What's more, navigating any legal process — no matter how minor — is incredibly expensive.

It's in the interests of the entire working class to fight against the racist criminal justice system and the war being waged on oppressed communities. Exposing cases like that of Marlyn Barnes is a crucial component of this struggle.

