

Black Man killed in a Chokehold by NYPD Officer

Outrage nationwide at newest New York Police scandal over banned procedure

By Herb Boyd
Special to NNPA

NEW YORK – Rev. Al Sharpton was in the middle of his speech recounting how Eric Garner, 43, had been killed in a chokehold by NYPD officer when Garner’s wife collapsed by his side on the stage of the National Action Network in Harlem on Saturday morning.

“They will try to scandalize the deceased,” Sharpton said of the NYPD and what he anticipated they would say. “The issue is not about an unarmed man selling cigarettes...It’s about a man who was subjected to a chokehold and is no longer with us.”

At that point, Esaw Garner collapsed and had to be held up by Sharpton and Rev. Herbert Daughtry, another prominent activist. After she was led from the stage and to a backroom, Sharpton continued his speech. “You can never predict how someone will react to grief,” he said.

All of Garner’s relatives

were in pain and weeping as they left the stage, including his mother, Gwen Carr, his sister Elisha Flagg, and his daughter, Emerald Garner.

Sharpton promised the family that the National Action Network would pay for the funeral next week of a man the family knew as “Big E” or more affectionately the “Bear” by his wife.

None of these appellations were effective in stopping the officers who sought to detain him in front of a hardware store in Staten Island last Thursday. It didn’t matter to the officers who surrounded him that he was the father of six children and was known as the “Gentle Giant.” Or, the fact that he repeatedly told them: “I can’t breathe.”

Once Garner, who was asthmatic, was no longer moving the cops took a step back and one of them stooped over Garner as if to see if he was still alive. He wasn’t.

The entire video can be seen on YouTube courtesy of liveleak.

At a press conference Fri-



Edaw Garner, the wife of NYPD fatal choking victim, collapses in the arms of Rev. Al Sharpton (right) and Rev. Herbert Daughtry (left) at NAN headquarters in New York.

day afternoon, Mayor Bill de Blasio, who postponed his vacation departure to Italy, expressed his condolences. After asking that people not jump to conclusions, he said, “We have a responsibility to keep every New Yorker

safe, and that includes when individuals are in custody of the NYPD. That is a responsibility that Police Commissioner [William] Bratton and I take very seriously. We are harnessing all resources available to the city to ensure a full and

said that the corner where the incident occurred had been the source of numerous complaints from storeowners. “Mr. Garner went into cardiac arrest while in the ambulance on the way to the hospital,” Bratton said, “and he died

reminiscent of the death of Anthony Baez in 1994. After a football hit a police car, Baez, who also suffered from asthma, was confronted and placed in a chokehold that took his life. Two years before the incident with Baez, chokeholds had been

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thorough investigation of the circumstances of this tragic incident. The NYPD’s Internal Affairs Bureau is working closely with the Office of the Richmond County District Attorney, which is leading this investigation,” the mayor added.

Bratton began his remarks by citing the arrest record of Garner and explaining that the police were there to apprehend Garner for the sale of illegal cigarettes. He

upon arrival.” During the question and answer session Bratton said that two of the officers involved in the incident have been placed on “desk duty” while the investigation continues, and that the “final determination” of the circumstances will come from the District Attorney’s office.

Watching Garner, who weighed more than 300 pounds struggle to free himself from the chokehold was

outlawed by the NYPD. His mother was among those in attendance at the NAN rally on Saturday.

“The video raises serious questions and it is important that we review whether departmental procedures were followed,” said Public Advocate Letitia James. “There must be a swift investigation of this horrific incident.”

New York City’s Patrolmen’s Benevolent Association President Patrick J. Lynch said in a statement, “Not wanting to be arrested does not grant an individual the right to resist arrest nor does it free the officers of the obligation to make the arrest,” he said. “In these cases, justice for all involved demands a complete and thorough investigation of all the facts before any conclusions are drawn.”

Later Saturday afternoon, Sharpton led a rally in Staten Island where he was joined by members of the Garner family as they marched to the spot where the encounter occurred. A number of candles and flowers were placed at the spot.

Garner’s funeral is to be held at 7 p.m. Wednesday at Bethel Baptist Church, on Bergen Street, in Brooklyn.

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