

Written by Kathy  
Monday, 02 May 2022 22:03

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Pictured are outgoing Cuyahoga County Sheriff Paul Viland and Shondo Moffitt, who collapsed and died Mon, April 11, 2022 as an inmate in the Cuyahoga County jail in Cleveland, Ohio [Clevelandurbannews.com](http://Clevelandurbannews.com) and [Kathywraycolemanonlinenewsblog.com](http://Kathywraycolemanonlinenewsblog.com)

By Kathy Wray Coleman,

associate publisher, editor-in-chief, investigative reporter-  
CLEVELAND, Ohio-

Following the death three weeks ago of another Black inmate in the troubled Cuyahoga County Jail in Cleveland where more than 12 inmates have died since 2018, coupled with a 2018 U.S. Marshals report that deemed the gross mistreatment of the majority Black inmates inhumane and unconstitutional, the county sheriff has resigned.

Sheriff Christopher Paul Viland, who was confirmed as sheriff in March of 2021 by County Council following a recommendation from County Executive Armond Budish, was relieved of his duties as county sheriff last week. The current warden, Michelle Henry, the jail's first female warden, however, will remain on the job, at least for now.

Both Viland and Henry are White.

A former police inspector general for Cleveland's Department of Public Safety and former Solon police officer, Viland was surprised at the shakeup, sources said, with Budish' office issuing a statement saying Viland, a law enforcement veteran, would stay on with the sheriff's department through the transition process as to his replacement. The county appoints its sheriff

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and other top officials such as the clerk of courts and county treasurer via a voter-adopted county governance structure comprised of an 11- member elected county council and an elected county executive. The change took effect in 2011 per an amendment to the county charter.

While it is unclear exactly what Viland will be doing until his official departure date, it is without question that Budish has either demoted him or taken away his power as sheriff.

The shakeup comes following the death last month of yet another inmate.

According to a county spokesperson, Shondo Moffitt , who was Black, collapsed at the jail at around 12:30 p.m. on Mon, April 11. He had been in the facility since Feb 15 for failure to appear for a Feb 25 hearing. He was taken to MetroHealth Medical Center where he was later declared dead.

The attorney for the 39-year-old man had filed a motion with a judge requesting that his client be released to continue his medical treatment. While the dead inmate was Black, both the sheriff and the county jail warden are White. The county is roughly 29 percent Black and a disproportionate number of the inmates are Black, mainly Black men.

A cause of death has not yet been determined by the county examiner following an autopsy.

Moffitt had two open felony cases in Cuyahoga County, one from a year ago for illegal possession of a firearm where he skipped his sentencing in that trial, and another, a felony theft case.

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In early January the family of a man who authorities say was beaten to death by his cellmate in 2020 received \$1.1 million to settle a negligence and wrongful death lawsuit against the county, and others. The man, Shone Trawick, a 48-year-old father of six, was serving a six months sentence for assault

Twenty-eight-year-old Devauntae Rayshon Daye, who was a Black transgender woman, is also among the fallen, and died in the jail in August of 2020 She was found unresponsive in her jail cell, authorities said, and was later pronounced dead. She was facing charges of felonious assault and aggravated robbery for allegedly robbing a man and hitting him with a brick.

This latest county jail inmate death comes as county officials embark upon plans to build a 1904-inmate capacity jail that has an inmate expansion unit to house more Black people, sources said, a multi million dollar project funded primarily by taxpayers. Cuyahoga County is the second largest of 88 counties statewide, and it is a Democratic stronghold.

The damning report released in November of 2018 by U.S. Marshals on county jail conditions generated local and national news, a dreadful look at how inmates are mistreated such as

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withholding food for punishment, jailing juveniles with adults, rat and roach infested jail facilities, and a paramilitary jail corrections officers unit dubbed "The Men in Black" who intimidate and harass inmates. The report also found profound mistreatment of female inmates, and that pregnant women were being jailed on floor mats and denied adequate healthcare.

Several lawsuits remain pending regarding the county's now infamous jail and County Executive Budish, who is not seeking reelection this year and whose offices in downtown Cleveland have been raided twice since the series of jail deaths. There have been indictments and convictions of at least nine jail guards, the former jail director, and former jail warden Eric Ivey, who is Black. .

Ivey took a misdemeanor plea deal with no jail time before Common Pleas Judge Nancy Fuerst with an agreement that he act as a snitch. In the midst of it all, then sheriff Cliff Pinkney, the county's first Black sheriff whom Budish recommended, resigned in may of 2019.

Hired in 2015 after Budish took office for a first term, Pinkney was succeeded by Gregory Croucher , who resigned in April of 2021 amid controversy, and Croucher, who is White, was succeeded by Viland last year, Viland hardly lasting a year himself when Budish, last week , ousted him from his sheriff duties.

Though he became sheriff just last year, news of Viland's fate, or removal as sheriff, is not surprising, sources said, particularly since county big wigs are looking for a scapegoat. The FBI and other authorities have been swarming the jail since 2018 after inmates began popping up dead. The Cleveland jail merged with the county jail per a regionalism plan adopted by county and city officials in 2017, which created nothing but more problems.

Activists say the jail remains a problem and that they are also concerned with an array of other issues, including excessive bail, malicious prosecutions, racism, grand jury tampering, indictment fixing, denial of indigent counsel and speedy trial rights to Black defendants, and excessive sentences. Data also show that White inmates were getting favorable treatment and that Black inmates were more harshly disciplined.

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Cleveland community activists picketed in front of the Cuyahoga County Justice Center in 2018 over judicial and prosecutorial malfeasance, police misconduct, and the overcrowding of the county jail, a continuation of activist rallies that began in 2016. Hastened by the coronavirus outbreak, activists had been picketing regularly at the Justice Center in downtown Cleveland over jail conditions, in front of Budish' gated home in affluent Beachwood, where they called for his resignation, and at county administrative headquarters before county council meetings. By Kathy Wray Coleman, associate publisher, editor. Coleman is a seasoned Black Cleveland journalist who trained at the Call and Post Newspaper for 17 years and an experienced investigative and political reporter. She is the most read independent journalist in Ohio per Alexa.com

[Clevelandurbannews.com](http://Clevelandurbannews.com) and [Kathywraycolemanonlinenewsblog.com](http://Kathywraycolemanonlinenewsblog.com) , the most read Black digital newspaper and Black blog in Ohio and in the Midwest. Tel: (216) 659-0473. Email: [editor@clevelandurbannews.com](mailto:editor@clevelandurbannews.com). We interviewed former president Barack Obama one-on-one when he was campaigning for president. As to the Obama interview

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