

Justice Department asked to investigate Chad Youth Enhancement Center

By [A Guest Commentator](#) | January 29, 2008 | 



[Nashville TN] A black human rights organization in Nashville has asked the U.S. Department of Justice to conduct a criminal investigation and initiate civil litigation against a Middle Tennessee juvenile prison where two teens have been choked to death since 2005.

The organization, Power to the People, in a complaint to the special litigation section of the DOJ, charges that children detained at the Chad Youth Enhancement Center are subjected to “horrid” conditions and “cruel mistreatment.” Located in Ashland City, the juvenile prison houses about 90 troubled youth between the ages of 7 and 17, a large number of whom are black. Universal Health Care of King-of-Prussia, PA, owns and operates the Chad facility and Hermitage Hall in Nashville for 100 mentally disabled youth. Both facilities are licensed by the state of Tennessee, but youth from the state have not been sent to either of the juvenile prisons since the deaths at Chad.

The Chad Youth Enhancement Center and Hermitage Hall have been the subjects of recent exposes written by Nashville Scene reporter Elizabeth Ulrich in articles published Nov. 8 and Dec.13 of last year.

According to Ulrich, a counselor at Hermitage Hall used excessive force against a boy in 2006. Staff pulled the counselor off the boy before the child was injured. The counselor was later fired, but he was not prosecuted for battery, nor was Hermitage Hall punished or fined by state regulators.

In its complaint against Chad, Power to the People maintains that Linda Harris, a 14-year-old black girl from New York, was brutally beaten and choked to death in 2005 by counselors within a week of her arrival at the facility. A similar case occurred in 2007, according to Power to the People, in the fatal choking of Omega Leach III, a 16-year-old boy from Philadelphia, who died after he was attacked by counselors within a month of his arrival at Chad.

Among the allegations listed in Power to the People’s complaint against the Chad Youth Enhancement Center are:

- Excessive use of force by staff constituting “cruel and unusual punishment.”
- Cover-up or refusal by state officials to take the necessary action against Chad officials.

- Forced drugging and behavior modification of children by counselors.
- Excessive use of force with the controversial “Handle With Care” choke-hold restraint method, which has caused other deaths in addition to the ones cited in the complaint.
- Creating a climate of fear and intimidation to rule over the youth.
- Unlawful use of choking and other violence as a punitive device.

Power to the People has asked the Justice Department to:

1. suspend or end all federal funding to the Tennessee Departments of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities and Children’s Services, which license Chad and Hermitage Hall;
2. sue Universal Health Care for “operating unsafe, abusive and criminal operations” at both facilities in violation of the U.S. Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act, and
3. initiate criminal prosecutions for the deaths of the two children.

These complaints against mistreatment of juveniles at detention facilities were discussed at a community forum on the mass criminalization of black youth sponsored by Power to the People on Jan. 19 in Nashville.

Note: The Nashville Scene articles about Hermitage Hall and the Chad Youth Enhancement Center may be found on the Internet at:

- * http://www.nashvillescene.com/Stories/News/2007/12/13/Bad_Medicine/
- * www.nashvillescene.com/Stories/Cover_Story/2007/11/08/Handle_With_Care/

Power to the People! can be contacted at P.O. Box 60251, Nashville, TN 37206 or by e-mailing powertonashvillepeople@gmail.com

Editor’s Note: During a phone conversation, Handle With Care stated that they do not demonstrate choke-holds except to show how to respond to them. They also emphatically state there is no such thing as a “Handle With Care choke-hold restraint method”

This article was redistributed by Terry McMoore of the Urban Resource Center.

[Following Second Death, Parents Remove Children from Chad Youth Enhancement Center](#)

By [Terry McMoore](#) | June 10, 2007 |  



“I find it very strange that two healthy teens suddenly drop dead upon being restrained for unruliness by staff members at this facility. Something does not sound right about these deaths and we intend to do a full investigation to not only get to the bottom of the truth but to make sure that the current youths housed at this facility are not being subjected to physical or life threatening abuse at the hands of staff members.” Comments from Urban Resource Center Director Terry McMoore to the media following the death of 17 year old Omega Leach.

Nashville’s NewsChannel 5 Reported the Following:

A third agency is expected to join state and local agencies investigating a treatment center for troubled youth.

At least two children have died while in the care of the Chad Youth Enhancement Center, with the latest happening this past weekend.

Two more families now admit that they pulled their youngsters out, fearing for their safety.

The mothers said that their children have problems and that they welcome help in disciplining them.

But they claim the center operates more like a prison.

“I took her out,” said parent Norma Davis.

Davis pulled her daughter from the center.

“That’s it, we’re signing him out,” said another parent Edith Ruland.

Their accusation is that the center’s staff is abusive.

“All of a sudden, I just remember going down to the ground. And I guess when I raised my head up she slammed it back down, and my mouth was pouring blood,” said Davis’ daughter, Atlanta Redman, who once stayed at the center.

According to Davis, the staff calls the maneuver a “safety hold” to restrain an out-of-control child.

Davis calls it criminal... – Visit NewsChannel5 to [read the rest of this article, and for Photos and Video](#)

