

# DOJ Investigates Harris County DA's Office In Jail Hanging of Black Man

*A Texas department of criminal justice inmate who had evidence of his innocence was found dead in his cell in Harris County before a hearing could be held.*

HOUSTON, TEXAS, UNITED STATES, September 21, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In a [criminal complaint filed](#) with the civil rights division of US Department of Justice, [Lamar Burks](#), a Texas prisoner serving a 70 year sentence for murder, alleges an attempt on his life was made upon his arrival at the Harris County Jail for an evidentiary hearing on new evidence proving his innocence. The complaint addressed to the US Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division, Eric Dreiband, alleges Harris County Assistant District Attorneys Joshua Reiss and Andrew J Smith and former DEA agent Jack Schumacher did meet and knowingly and intentionally conspire to murder Burks whom they knew was in route from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to the Harris County Jail. The Complaint further states the attempt on Burks' life is not an isolated incident.

In 2014 Texas Department of Criminal Justice inmate Antonio Williams, who also had favorable evidence of innocence, arrived from TDCJ to the Harris County Jail for his hearing. Before that hearing could be held, Williams was found dead in a segregated jail cell. Assistant District Attorney Joshua Reiss, lead prosecutor in the Burks case, was also assigned to the Williams case. <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Two-witnesses-recant-in-death-penalty-case-5904803.php>  
<https://www.houstonchronicle.com/houston/article/Death-row-inmate-found-dead-in-Harris-County-jail-6090271.php>

Shortly after the filing of the complaint, Assistant District Attorney Andrew J Smith was fired by DA Kim Ogg. The Burks case attracted the attention of the NAACP and civil rights attorney Ben Crump after former DEA agent Jack Schumacher's partner Chad Scott was convicted by a federal jury on perjury and corruption charges. <https://www.click2houston.com/news/2019/11/08/activists-call-for-release-of-lamar-burks-who-was-convicted-of-1997-murder/>

Schumacher himself also has a history of racial profiling and was investigated by congress in the death of 9 civilians and has been professionally disciplined 19 times. Witnesses in the Burks case have signed sworn statements stating the two former agents used threats and coercion to make them implicate Burks in the murder.

The US Attorney for the Eastern District of Louisiana has requested the complaint be investigated by two ranking DOJ officials, FBI acting special agent in charge Anthony T. Riedlinger and special agent in charge Robert A Bourbon of the Justice Department's office of inspector general. Legal analysts have cited a Texas law enacted in 2011 that disqualify the Harris County DA's office from any involvement in the Burks case. That law, Texas Code of Criminal Procedures Articles 2.08(b), was never advanced by Burks' attorney, Michael J Wynne, who recently withdrew from the case. Wynne, who met with federal prosecutors and FBI agents, while representing Burks, never notified the court of the federal investigation, a sanctionable offense under Texas Rules of Professional Conduct.

Burks, who has been transferred to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice out of safety concerns while his case moves through the court issued the following statement: "There's a proverb, 'a dog returns to his vomit.' When faced with a case he couldn't win, Joshua Reiss went back to his old ways. But the Lord is with me."

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