

Racism Task Force Warns That Coercive Psychiatric Practices Cause Harm and Death

Task Force Against Racism, co-founded by CCHR, speaks out about \$8.5M payout in Black man's restraint death and Chandler Jones' forced hospitalization

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, October 4, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The family of a man who died while restrained for about 11 minutes at a Virginia state psychiatric hospital recently reached an \$8.5 million wrongful death settlement following the determination that his death was a homicide due to asphyxiation. In March 2023, surveillance video captured how Irvo Otieno, a 28-year-old Black man who had immigrated to the U.S. from Kenya as a child, was treated, sparking outrage. Across the U.S., there have been calls for mental health reforms, according to the Associated Press.[1] The [Task Force Against Racism and Modern-Day Eugenics](#), based in Los Angeles and co-founded by [Citizens Commission on Human Rights \(CCHR\) International](#) in 2020, applauded this settlement.



The Task Force Against Racism and Modern Eugenics met at CCHR International on September 30, addressing eugenic ideologies, systemic racism, and pursuing justice and compensation for harm and deaths due to psychiatric facility restraint use.

The Task Force also highlighted similar coercive psychiatric incidents, such as the recent involuntary hospitalization and forced drugging of Las Vegas Raiders player Chandler Jones, who has been outspoken about the alleged abuse and human rights violation.[2]

The group convened at the headquarters of CCHR International in Los Angeles on September 30th to discuss the pressing need to combat eugenic ideologies and systemic racism while tirelessly advocating for justice and compensation in cases of harm and death resulting from restraint use in psychiatric facilities.

Both CCHR and the Task Force want a ban on coercive psychiatric practices. Rev. Fred Shaw, co-founder and spokesperson for the Task Force pointed out that the announcement by Chandler Jones about his forced "treatment" further exemplifies the shocking level of coercive practices in

the mental health system. Jones recounted how he was taken against his will to a psychiatric facility by Las Vegas Fire Department officials because of a “court hold” issued by police, allegedly over tweets he’d posted. Once in an ambulance, he said he was “injected” with an undisclosed substance even though he didn't give consent.[3]

The Task Force has taken up similar abuses and restraint deaths of African Americans in psychiatric hospitals or police use of psychotropic chemical restraints. In several cases, the coroner ruled the deaths as homicide; responsible staff were prosecuted; facilities were closed; families were compensated; and regulations were passed restricting restraint use.

In 2022, it produced a “[Resolution in Support of Ending Coercive Psychiatric Practices](#) in which African Americans are at Risk and to Replace with a Human Rights-Based System.” The group encourages concerned individuals to download and forward it to mental healthcare policymakers.

The facility where Jones was forcibly admitted is owned by one of the largest for-profit behavioral hospital companies in the U.S. which has been plagued by allegations of abuse, including a recent \$485 million jury award against it in relation to an 8-year-old who was sexually abused while in its treatment foster care system.[4]

Rev. Shaw pointed to a 2022 study published in *Psychiatric Services* that found 28% of 4,393 patients with an initial admission to a psychiatric facility between 2012 and 2018, were involuntarily admitted, and 7% had court commitment petitions filed for them. Compared with White patients, Black patients were more likely to be admitted against their will.[5] Once incarcerated, African Americans are also over-represented in restraint-related deaths, accounting for 22% of studied deaths while comprising only 13% of the U.S. population, Equip for Equality reported.[6]

The Task Force has been in the foreground writing complaints to state legislators and government officials about restraint deaths. This includes the restraint and drug death of Elijah McClain, a 23-year-old Black man under police and paramedic restraint in Colorado in 2019. The psychotropic drug, Ketamine, forcibly injected by paramedics, led to his death, according to the coroner. The Task Force demanded a ban on ketamine use and restraint use. In July 2021, Colorado Governor Jared Polis signed a law restricting ketamine’s use.[7]

The death on May 1, 2020, of 16-year-old Cornelius Frederick, an African American foster care teen, caused national outrage. After throwing a sandwich on the floor at a for-profit psychiatric facility in Michigan, seven staff held him on the floor for more than 10 minutes. He gasped that he could not breathe, and was rushed to another hospital, where he died two days later.[8] The Task Force joined other groups in calling for the facility’s closure and accountability for the restraint—both of which occurred.

Then followed the restraint death of Ja’Ceon Terry, a 7-year-old foster child at a residential

behavioral facility in Louisville, Kentucky in July 2022.[9] Louisville Public Media detailed a state investigation which found Ja'Ceon was restrained for no more than saying he'd throw a plastic water bottle at someone and for using a swear word. Two staff put him in a physical restraint for five to six minutes, leading to respiratory failure due to suffocation. State officials revoked the facility's license to operate its psychiatric treatment facilities.[10]

CCHR International, a 54-year mental health industry watchdog, which formed the Task Force with Rev. Shaw, acknowledged the group's endeavors to raise awareness about psychiatric racism and restraint assaults and to create an accountable mental health system.

[1] Sarah Rankin, "Family of man who died while being admitted to psychiatric hospital agrees to \$8.5M settlement," Associated Press, 20 Sept. 2023, <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/family-man-died-admitted-psychiatric-hospital-agrees-85m-103356761>

[2] "Raiders' Chandler Jones says he was hospitalized against will," ABC News, 26 Sept. 2023, <https://abcnews.go.com/Sports/raiders-chandler-jones-hospitalized/story?id=103495799>

[3] "Raiders' Chandler Jones says he was hospitalized against will," ABC News, 26 Sept. 2023, <https://abcnews.go.com/Sports/raiders-chandler-jones-hospitalized/story?id=103495799>

[4] Colleen Heild and Olivier Uytterbrouck, "Foster child sexual assault results in \$485 million jury award," Albuquerque Journal, 11 July 2023, https://www.abqjournal.com/news/foster-child-sexual-assault-results-in-485-million-jury-award/article_bfdf6e86-1f70-11ee-b4e3-c7c608def4fe.html

[5] Timothy Shea, et al., "Racial and Ethnic Inequities in Inpatient Psychiatric Civil Commitment," Psychiatric Services, 12 Aug. 2022, <https://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.ps.202100342>

[6] "National Review of Restraint Related Deaths of Children and Adults with Disabilities: The Lethal Consequences of Restraint," Equip for Equality, 2011, <https://www.equipforequality.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/National-Review-of-Restraint-Related-Deaths-of-Adults-and-Children-with-Disabilities-The-Lethal-Consequences-of-Restraint.pdf>

[7] "National Review of Restraint Related Deaths of Children and Adults with Disabilities: The Lethal Consequences of Restraint," Equip for Equality, 2011, <https://www.equipforequality.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/National-Review-of-Restraint-Related-Deaths-of-Adults-and-Children-with-Disabilities-The-Lethal-Consequences-of-Restraint.pdf>

[8] <https://www.cchr.int.org/2021/09/03/cchr-welcomes-state-actions-that-ban-or-restrict->

[behavioral-restraint-use/](#); Hannah Rappleye "Michigan to ban restraints in youth facilities after Cornelius Frederick's death," NBC News, 11 Apr. 2021,
<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/michigan-ban-restraints-youth-facilities-after-cornelius-frederick-s-death-n1262756>

[9] https://www.wdrb.com/news/settlement-reached-in-death-of-boy-housed-at-louisville-foster-care-facility/article_4b598bc0-0637-11ee-9642-afd1e336fdf0.html

[10] Jasmine Demers, "Fatal failures: What happened in the final hours of Ja'Ceon Terry's life," Louisville Public Media, 19 July 2023,
<https://www.lpm.org/investigate/2023-07-19/fatal-failures-what-happened-in-the-final-hours-of-jaceon-terrys-life>; Jasmine Demers, "Louisville psychiatric facility settles with estate of child who died there after alleged abuse," Kentucky Lantern, 14 June 2023,
<https://kentuckylantern.com/briefs/louisville-psychiatric-facility-settles-with-estate-of-child-who-died-there-after-alleged-abuse/>

Amber Rauscher
Citizens Commission on Human Rights
+1 323-467-4242
[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

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