



## **NBJC Shapes Local and National Dialogue Around Marco McMillian Murder**

On February 27, 2013 the body of Marco McMillian, a Black mayoral candidate in Clarksdale, Mississippi, who was also gay, was found on the Mississippi River levee. Local authorities have ruled his case a homicide, but there have been conflicting reports and speculation around the motive. Some say the victim and the suspect were romantically involved while others are pleading the “gay panic” defense, insinuating that McMillian made unwanted advances to the murder suspect, Lawrence Reed.

On May 9, 2013, the National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC) and McMillian/Unger family convened a national press conference to address the autopsy results of the late McMillian. NBJC played a critical role in shaping the local and national dialogue around the family and civil rights community’s call for a federal investigation by the Department of Justice.

### **Family of Slain Candidate Seeks Federal Inquiry**

New York Times | By Campbell Robertson | Published on May 8, 2013

The family, who along with [Coahoma County coroner Scotty] Meredith question whether [the suspect] [Lawrence] Reed acted alone, is planning a news conference on Thursday in Clarksdale with Sharon J. Lettman-Hicks, the executive director of the National Black Justice Coalition, a black and gay rights organization. They will be joined by Daryl D. Parks, from the Florida-based law firm Parks & Crump, who began working with the family over the weekend.

Ms. Lettman-Hicks said in an interview that she was pressing the Department of Justice for assistance both because of frustration with the local investigation but also because, unlike federal law, Mississippi’s hate crime statute does not cover sexual orientation.

Source: [NYTimes.com](http://NYTimes.com)

### **Family of Murdered Clarksdale Politician Wants FBI to Investigate**

ABC 24 | By Shelley Orman | Published on May 8, 2013

"This mother has gotten not one phone call from the sheriff updating her on the investigation," says lawyer Daryl Parks. Patricia Unger hired the civil rights attorney to try and get answers. "How can the sheriff have an investigation if you don't come talk to his family about what Marco was doing, where was he going?" Parks asks.

Unger wrote the Coahoma County Sheriff a letter last week asking for information on her son's death. She's gotten no response. Deputies arrested Lawrence Reed in March after he confessed to killing McMillian. Reed says he strangled him.

"We don't believe this one person did it alone," Parks tells abc24.com. McMillian's family thinks there's more to the story. "The autopsy report brings up a lot of questions that are unanswered."

"We will not allow it to be a piss poor investigation that disrespects a family," says Sharon Lettman-Hicks, Executive Director of the National Black Justice Coalition. McMillian was openly gay. His family believes his sexual orientation or his campaign for Clarksdale mayor could have led to his murder.

Source: [ABC24.com](http://ABC24.com)

**National Black Justice Coalition**

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## **Marco McMillian's Family Demands Answers in Mayor Candidate's Death**

Associated Press | By Holbrook Mohr | Published on May 9, 2013

The case drew national attention after his campaign said he was the first viable, openly gay candidate for office in Mississippi. McMillian's sexuality wasn't a campaign issue, but because the 33-year-old was gay and black, some speculated his death might have been a hate crime. The suspect, who is in custody, also is black.

McMillian's parents are planning a news conference Thursday with the National Black Justice Coalition and the law firm of Parks & Crump. The firm also represented Trayvon Martin's family. Martin was the Florida teenager whose 2012 death at the hands of a neighborhood watch volunteer sparked protests and outrage.

Sources: [Newsday](#); [Sun Herald](#); [THV 11](#); [WMC-TV](#); [Corvallis Gazette-Times](#); [Daily Journal Online](#); [Magic Valley](#); [AZ Daily Sun](#); [The Times and Democrat](#); [Bismarck Tribune](#); [Albany Democrat Herald](#); [Muscatine Journal](#); [Journal Star](#); [NECN](#); [Philly.com](#); [Daily Journal](#);

## **Family Demands Answers in Death of Gay Miss. Mayoral Candidate**

Associated Press | By Holbrook Mohr | Published on May 10, 2013

[Daryl] Parks is no stranger to high-profile cases. His firm also represented the family of Trayvon Martin, the teenager whose February 2012 death at the hands of a neighborhood watch volunteer in Sanford, Fla., sparked protests and outrage.

Sharon Lettman-Hicks, executive director and CEO of the National Black Justice Coalition, said her organization hopes to bring just as much attention to the case in Clarksdale.

"I'm not stopping until the Department of Justice is here," she said.

Sources: [LGBTQNation](#); [San Francisco Chronicle](#); [Huffington Post](#); [PostBulletin.com](#); [Deseret News](#); [The Clarion Ledger](#); [Greenwich Time](#)

## **Family of Murdered MS Politician Wants Hate Crime Investigation**

WREG Memphis | By Mike Suriani | Published on May 9, 2013

In February, McMillian's death gained national attention after it was learned the 33-year old Clarksdale mayoral candidate was openly gay. Sharon Lettman-Hicks is Executive Director of the National Black Justice Coalition, a national black and gay rights organization. She says that information has clouded the tragedy. "The mere fact that the community has been torn apart just because of that issue," Lettman-Hicks said. "My question is, who was Marco to you five minutes before you found out that he was gay? Who was he to you?"

Source: [WREG.com](#)

## **McMillian Family Press Conference Makes Negative Insinuations about CCSD Investigation**

The Clarksdale Press Register | By Jesse Wright | Published on May 9, 2013

Sharon Lettman-Hicks, the executive director of a Washington, D.C.-based civil rights group for black LGBT people, called the investigation "piss poor." Like Parks, Lettman-Hicks criticized the local sheriff's office for not returning calls to the family, and she said that through her organization, the National Black

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Justice Coalition, she works with the Department of Justice and “at least they return some calls.” She and Parks both argued that because McMillian was gay and black, that a hate crime might have taken place. Mississippi’s hate crime legislation doesn’t cover crimes directed against homosexuals, but federal law does, so Parks and Lettman-Hicks said federal law enforcement could have an interest and jurisdiction in this case.

Source: [PressRegister.com](http://PressRegister.com)

## **Family of Murdered Mayoral Candidate Wants Federal Investigation**

Associated Press | Published on May 9, 2013

McMillian’s parents are planning a news conference yesterday in Clarksdale with the National Black Justice Coalition and a lawyer from the firm of Parks & Crump, which also represented the family of Trayvon Martin. Martin was the teenager whose February 2012 death at the hands of a neighborhood watch volunteer in Sanford, Fla., sparked protests and outrage.

“Just like they had to make people conscious in Sanford, Fla., and the rest of the country, we’re hoping to bring that same level of attention to this homicide, this murder,” coalition executive director and CEO Sharon Lettman-Hicks said in a telephone interview Wednesday.

Sources: [Mississippi Business Journal](http://Mississippi Business Journal); [The Mississippi Press](http://The Mississippi Press)

## **Slain Candidate's Family Demands Answers**

WMC-TV | By Michael Clark | Published on May 9, 2013

Marco McMillian's family stood outside of his home Thursday demanding answers. His mother wanted to know answers about her son's murder through the same civil rights law firm representing Trayvon Martin's family.

The McMillian family was critical of the sheriff's departments handling of the case. The department had no other comment besides that they were going to present the case before an upcoming grand jury. The National Black Justice Coalition said it was in contact with the Department of Justice.

Source: [WMC-TV](http://WMC-TV)

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