



WILLIE L. HINES, JR.



COMMON COUNCIL PRESIDENT
ALDERMAN, 15TH DISTRICT

June 2, 2005

Open Letter From the President

Dear Milwaukee Citizens:

On Friday, May 27, 2005 an inquest jury unanimously determined that Police officer Alfonzo Glover was justified in the shooting death of William Javier Prado. Officer Glover reportedly fired 19 rounds. Eight of those rounds, including the fatal shots, hit Mr. Prado in the back, when he presumably was retreating from the situation and not posing an immediate threat to the officer.

The result of this inquest is the latest episode in a long history of justifiable homicide(s) by Milwaukee Police officers against citizens. According to a review conducted by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, in the past 20 years, no Milwaukee County inquest juries have recommended charges against officers in fatal shootings. Similarly, District Attorney E. Michael McCann has not charged officers in any of those cases, either. Even if the officers harbor no criminal intent, it is hard to fathom the absence of some sort of negligence on their part. This is especially true in cases where the victim was unarmed as was the case in the shooting deaths of Justin Fields, Edward Pundsack, and Samuel Rodriguez.

This lack of charges is due in part to the outdated inquest process currently in place that continues to drive a wedge between the Police department and the community. During an inquest, only the district attorney's office asks questions and requests subpoenas from the court. Members of the victim's family submit questions that may or may not be asked. Also, there is no cross-examination of the officer.

A system needs to be put in place that holds police officers accountable for their actions irrespective of the intent. Given the inquest system that is currently in place, there will always be a shadow of doubt associated with police officers' use of deadly force.