

NORTH CAROLINA
STATE HIGHWAY AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMISSION
PRISON DEPARTMENT
RALEIGH, N. C.

WILLIAM F. BAILEY
DIRECTOR OF PRISONS

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August 25, 1954

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P
Y

Mr. I. D. Hinton, Supt.
Women's Prison
Raleigh, N. C.

Re: Eleanor Rush
Colored Female

Dear Mr. Hinton:

AS per your request I am stating below what our records show concerning above subject while she was at Caledonia Prison Farm:

Eleanor was transferred from Women's Prison with several other women on September 22, 1953, and was received at Caledonia the same day. She was sent to the field to work with the regular women's squad, and did very well until October 7th when she was brought in by the foreman for sorry work and using abusive language toward other prisoners. She was put in solitary confinement and demoted to B Grade. She was taken out of solitary four days later and sent back to work. On October 15th she was brought in again by the foreman for cursing another prisoner and refusing to obey orders of the foreman. She was put back in solitary confinement and demoted to C grade. On November 1st she got into an argument with other prisoners on the camp yard; when approached by Matron, Mrs. O. G. Tant, and ordered into the cell block, she secured a soft drink bottle and advanced on Mrs. Tant. The bottle was taken from her and she was locked in the hospital inside the cell block. The Camp Superintendent came in late that afternoon, took her from the hospital, and set her on a small stool in the corner. As soon as the superintendent left the cell block, she left the stool and tried to slip up behind another Matron, Mrs. Grace C. Mooney. She was then taken from the cell block and again placed in solitary confinement. During this stay she became violent at times cursing and threatening the superintendent and other employees. On one occasion she secured a match from some source and set fire to her mattress. She would certainly have been suffocated by the smoke had not the steward gone to check on her soon after the fire started. When she was taken from that cell and ordered to go into another one she stubbornly refused, and the superintendent and the steward had to use force to put her into another cell. At least one of the Matrons, Mrs. Tant, informed me that she would quit before she would stay in the cell block with this girl because she considered her very dangerous.

In the meantime I had talked with Mr. Blaine M. Madison about this girl and told him that I thought she should be transferred back to Raleigh and examined by a psychiatrist. Our Camp Physician, Dr. F. W. White, agreed that this should be done also. Our records indicate that she was taken from solitary confinement on November 7th and she was transferred back to Women's Prison November 9th for examination by Dr. Owens.

cc: Mr. W. F. Bailey

Yours very truly
W. F. Bailey

This file was reviewed in response
to the Civil Rights Cold Case
Records Collection Act of 2018.

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Mar 30 2026

Drs. Thompson, Hamilton, Neal, Hunt, Dameron

309 HILLSBORO STREET

Raleigh, North Carolina

August 24, 1954

ORTHOPAEDIC SURGERY
DR. HUGH A. THOMPSON
DR. WALTER S. HUNT, JR.
DR. THOMAS B. DAMERON, JR.

GENERAL SURGERY
DR. ALFRED T. HAMILTON
DR. J. WALTER NEAL

Mr. William F. Bailey, Director
N. C. State Prison System
840 W. Morgan Street
Raleigh, North Carolina

Re: Eleanor Rush - 18

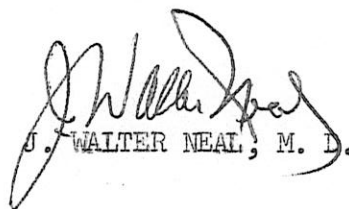
Dear Mr. Bailey:

I was called shortly after midnight on the morning of August 21st, to come to the Women's Prison to see the above-named young negro woman, who was found dead in her solitary confinement cell a short time previously. On my arrival I found her lying face down on the concrete floor, with her head against the brick wall and her feet on the mattress which was on the floor.

Careful examination revealed no external evidence of trauma. There was a very slight bloody froth oozing from the corner of her mouth. From my examination I was unable to determine the cause of death and advised Mr. Hinton to call the coroner, and I remained there until the coroner arrived. I advised the coroner that I was unable to determine the cause of death from my examination and so advised an autopsy.

If I can be of further assistance in this case, please let me know. With kindest personal regards, I am

Sincerely yours,


J. WALTER NEAL, M. D.

JWN:bd

Aug. 20, 1954

On Friday Aug. the 20th after the Matron on isolation went off duty at 5:00 P.M. Eleanor Rush a colored girl that was on confinement began to talk ^{very} loud, use profane language and singing. She was asked several times by me to be quiet, but she continued the disturbance.

Mr. L.D. Winter Supt. of women's Prison was called app. at 9:30 P.M. but wasn't home at this time. word was left for him to come over to the ward as soon as he returned. About 10:00 P.M. Mr. Winter and 4 guards, Mr. Horn, Mr. Jones, Mr. Holmes and Mr. Harnday, came over. Leather hand cuffs and belt were obtained. Mr. Winter went down and talked to Eleanor. She denied having caused a disturbance, but soon after he left the hall Eleanor began the foul language and persistent disturbance again. Mr. Winter remained in the office at the end of the hall and listened for several minutes, then he and the four guards entered Eleanor's

Cell, she began using profane language, and was very uncooperative so two thickness of buck toweling was used as a muffle. The toweling was rolled and one guard who was standing behind her slipped it ^{into} her mouth when she opened it. ^{Halmer} Before the toweling could be tied into a knot at the back of her head it slipped from her mouth and it was necessary to put it in the second time. This was done in very much the ^{same} manner as described above, while Mr. Halmer was tying the knot, the other guards were checking the hand cuffs to be sure that she could get her hands in front of her. Just as this process was taking place, the Nurse who was to relieve me, Mrs. H. O. Vernon came to the cell. She checked the hand cuffs, belt and toweling and I then went off duty.

Mrs. Hazel Hudson, R.N.

Mr. W. J. Bailey
Director of Prison State Highway & P.W.C.
Raleigh, N. C.

Dear Sir:

I am writing you regarding the death which happened at Women's Prison Friday night Aug. 20th 1954. I had just gotten back to the Prison from Central Prison from returning an escaped Prisoner Ernest Harrell. It was around 10:30. When I drove up in front of the gate & started across the street home I heard two of the girls on isolation cursing and using vulgar language, while I was standing, listening nurse which was on duty in hospital, Mrs. Hazel Anderson, sent after me to come over to isolation. When I got there it was about 11:00. The girls were still using vulgar language and talking to each other and hollering. I went to the rooms which they were in and talked to them a few minutes. They said they would be quiet. I walked back up to the office of the hospital. Mr. Paul Jones, Mr. Geo. Holmes, Mr. Thomas Hornaday and Mrs. Hazel Anderson were in the office. We sit there a few minutes in the office and the girls, Eleanor Rush, Mable Wright, started that

"vulgar language, boisterous talk and I decided to put a restraining belt on them, which I had borrowed a few days ago from Mr. Edwards at State Hospital in Raleigh. We went down to their rooms. Mr. Jones & Mr. Hornaday held her arms while Mr. Ashley Home and myself put the belts on them and I asked them if they could be quiet and behave themselves. They started up again to using their vulgar language and we got a buck towel, which is used in the hospital and we folded it and put it in their mouth and tied behind so she could not hallow so loud. I asked the nurse to examine them and see that they were all right. Before we finished Eleanor Gush had gotten her out of her mouth and started her vulgar talk again. About that time Mrs. Alo Vinson, who is a trained nurse came in the hospital to release Mrs. Anderson, who was supposed to go off duty. We folded Eleanor's towel again and put it in her mouth. When we put it in her mouth the second time I asked Mrs. Vinson to examine it, and see if it was all right. This she did and said it was all right. This was about 11:30. We walked out the cell, when we left she was standing on her mattress. After the door was locked

When I walked up the hall she kicked
the door two or three times. I came
home, that was about 12:00 and started
to undress. Mrs. Vinson, the nurse, called
me and asked me to come back over to
isolation. I went back to the hospital
when I got there, Mrs. Vinson, Mr. Home,
Mr. Hornaday and Mr. Jones had the
door open, when I walked in, Eleanor
Pulsho was lying on her stomach with
her head twisted against the wall and
the towel was out of her mouth. I had
the restraining belt taken off. Mrs. Vinson
held ammonia to her nose it didn't seem
to do any good she then discovered that
she was dead. I called Dr. Charles
Flowers but was unable to reach him
as he was out of town so I called Dr.
Dixon from Central Prison and he came
over, and I also called Dr. Neal & he came
out. The body had not been removed
when Dr. Neal got here. I called Mr. Bailey
but he was out of town so I called
Mr. Robert Allen and he came out. Dr.
Neal viewed the body and pronounced her
dead. I then called coroner W. W. Bennett
of Wake Co. He also viewed the body
and ordered it to be removed to Reif
Hospital, ^{by undertaker Lightening} and have the autopsy prepared.
Next morning I viewed Eleanor Pulsho's
mother at Albemarle, N. C. That evening
the coroner from Albemarle called and said

11 He would come for the body. I told
him it was at Rex Hospital and
as soon as the doctors finished with
the autopsy he could carry the ^{body} back
to Albemarle.

W. H. Finkler

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to Whomever it may concern

Last Friday night August 20th Mr Jones called me by telephone and asked me to come to Womans Prison.

I entered the gate at approx 10.30 P.M. and waited till Mr Hinton, returned from the Prison office -

I heard some Rocket in isolation swearing cursing Mr Hinton went in asked the girls to be quiet - they got worse started kicking and banging on doors. Mr Hinton then got the restraining belts Mr Hornaday and Mr Jones took the girl by the arms and Mr Hinton secured the belt around the girls waist

then the girls started kicking and swearing - then Mr Hinton got a towel and I tied the towel around the girls mouth - I remember hearing Mr Hinton ask the Nurse if the girl was alright - Mr Hinton then locked the door and Mr Hornaday and I went to supper -

I think this was about 11.30 P.M. I heard Mr Jones say the girl was laying on the floor - he went after the Nurse and Mr Hornaday myself and Mr Jones went with the Nurse into the cell the girl was laying face down with her feet on the mattress

I noticed the towel had slipped
off the girls mouth,

Mr Horn then removed the restraining
belt from the girls waist.

this is a true statement as I saw it

Respectfully G.H. Helmer

I

So when it may concern
as to what happened August 20, 1954
about 11 P.M. the nurse came to
the gate and ask for Mrs. Hinton
and said the Girls on Isolation
were raving and kicking the door.
Mrs. Hinton came and went in
Isolation and talked to them
a few minutes but it did not
do any good. Mrs. Hinton decided
to put the restraining belt on Her.
Mrs. Hornaday and myself held
the Girl by the arms while
Mrs. Hinton put the belt on
and restrained Her arms to
Her side. She kept cursing and
using vulgar talk and kicking
the door. We then went in
side and Mrs. Hinton had Mrs. Holmes
to put a towel over Her mouth.
Mrs. Hinton ask the nurse
Mrs. Vinson if the Girl was
alright. She checked Her and
said She was ok. We all came
out and went to supper and
Mrs. Hinton went home.
about 11.30 P.M. about 11.55 P.M.
I came out and made my routine
check. I checked by the window
found the Girl laying face down
eyes were the room with the head
battered against the wall.

and neck. lowered the towel of way
down around her neck. I then
ran to the dining room and
told the nurse. she came over
checked the Girl and said we
better call Mr. Hinton and the
Doctor. Mr. Hinton came over
Mr. Hinton and Mr. Ashley Home
removed the belt but did not
move the body the doctor came
over and pronounced her dead.
we then went out Mr. Hayward
Mr. Ashley Home Mr. Holmes
and myself.

Paul Jones

To whom ever it may concern as to what happened on Friday night August 20. I had just returned from Central Prison around 10:30 P.M. when the nurse came to the gate and said the girls were raising a racket on isolation and asked Mr Hinton to come up here a few minutes. Mr Hinton asked me to come on and as go to isolation. So it was about 11:11 P.M. when we got around to isolation. Mr Hinton went in and talked to the girl a few minutes and then came out, about the time he got out they started cursing halloing and going on to making a racket so the other girls couldn't sleep. Mr Hinton decided to put the restraining belt on, so Mr Jones and myself held her while Mr Hinton and Mr Horne put the belt on strapping her hands to her side while Mr Jones and myself held her by her arms. After we had the belt on we came out of the cell, the girl kept right on cursing and halloing, so Mr Hinton decided to put a towel across her mouth. Mr Jones and myself held her while Mr Horne put the towel around her mouth and then Mr Holmes tied the towel. Then Mr Hinton asked the Nurses if the towel was alright and they said it was. So we all came out and left the girl standing in her room. It was around 11:30 then. So Mr Holmes and I decided to go by the dining room and eat a little supper before we went home.

When we came out of the dining room we met Mr Jones. He had been checking around and had stepped by the door and peeped in the door to see how the girl was getting along and saw her lying on the floor face down with her hands beside her. The towel was off her mouth, so we all walked back up there. The nurse Mrs Vinson called Mr Hinton back over there. After the nurse checked her she called the doctor. We took the belt off of her. Then Mr Jones, Mr Hobbs and myself all went out side

Mr Thomas Harnall

To whom it may concern -

I was working on duty at the front gate as usual at the Women's Prison, Raleigh N.C. on the night of August 20th 1959.

The girls (2 colored) on isolation were raising hell so to speak - using the most vile language known also beating on the doors and windows, the noise was terrible - I could hear it very plainly at the gate - I left the gate and walked around back of the isolation building - The noise and language was terrible as mentioned above - I returned to my duty at the gate - a few minutes later Mrs Anderson (nurse) asked Mr. Paul Jones to get in touch with Mr. Hinton and he did - Mr Hinton came over and talked with the two colored girls and tried to get them to be quiet, one of the girls talked very ugly to Mr. Hinton, using curse words as usual - I then returned to the gate - a few minutes later I went back to isolation and assisted Mr Hinton in putting a restraining belt on the Rush girl - The belt was put on loose around the waist and arms - The arms were placed just a little forward from the sides - I then returned to the gate - The noise continued - using vile language and beating on the door -

Later I returned to isolation and a small towel was placed over

the Rush girl's mouth by one of the guards. The girl was breathing good and could talk when I left isolation. I went back to the gate to relieve Mr Hinton and stayed at the gate for a while. Mrs Vinson, Mr Jones, Mr Hermsday and Mr Holmes went to supper and I remained at the gate. Later I saw Mr Jones check around isolation and then go to the dining room. Few minutes later I saw Mrs Vinson, Mr Jones, Mr Hermsday and Mr Holmes going to isolation. Minutes later Mr Jones came to the gate and told me that he thought the girl was dead. I left the gate and went to isolation and looked at the girl. Mrs Vinson and the other guards were there. This was around 11:45 PM.

The girl was dressed in a white gown. The restraining belt was still on her, the small towel was not on her mouth but had dropped near the top of her chest. Her feet were on the mattress lying on left side, her head was lying against the wall about four inches off the floor and the right side of her face touching her right shoulder.

I returned to the gate. Mr Hinton came over and we went to isolation and I assisted him in taking off the restraining belt. I then returned to the

gate. a few minutes later the doctor from
Central Prison came. later doctor Neil came.
after Dr Neil came, the coroner came a
few minutes later. Then the undertaker -

Ashley Harris