



The Trust & Transparency Project

A Multi-State Accountability Campaign for Black Hanging Death Oversight

This campaign framework is offered freely to civil rights organizations, community-based organizations, advocacy groups, faith institutions, legal organizations, and aligned partners who may choose to adopt, adapt, localize, or use it in whole or in part. Use of this framework creates no obligation to Community First, Civic Codex, or SocialJustice.AI, and organizations are encouraged to modify the language, demands, targets, and tactics to fit their communities, legal context, organizational posture, and strategic judgment.

Where useful, attribution may read: "Adapted from the Trust & Transparency Project framework developed by Community First through the Civic Codex / SocialJustice.AI."



Kevin Myles | Principal Designer
The Civic Codex; Strategy & Movement Systems

Dear Colleagues,

Since the death of George Floyd, there have been repeated reports of African American hanging deaths across the country. The accompanying list includes 30 cases from 2020 through 2026, with the available public information regarding where the person was found, why the case was included in the broader review, and how authorities reportedly classified or described the death. In many of these cases, authorities ruled or publicly described the death as suicide or found no evidence of foul play. In several, families or communities continued to raise questions. The point of including the list is not to declare that every case represents the same thing. The point is that the pattern itself creates a serious public trust question.

This blueprint is not being offered as a finished conclusion about any individual death, and it is not asking any organization to step into the role of investigator, prosecutor, medical examiner, or factfinder. The purpose is narrower, but I believe stronger: to ask whether public institutions have created the kind of trust infrastructure that Black families and communities should be able to rely on when a Black person is found hanging under circumstances that generate public concern.

The proposed campaign, **The Trust & Transparency Project**, is built around that question. It asks states to provide clear, auditable answers in two separate lanes: non-custody hanging deaths and in-custody hanging deaths. The campaign intentionally keeps those lanes separate, because the legal, institutional, and oversight issues are different. It also avoids launching with a numeric claim as the core argument, because the strongest demand is not that the public accept a single interpretation of these deaths. The strongest demand is that states show whether families and communities have a real pathway to information, independent review, and continuing accountability after the first news cycle ends.

At its core, this campaign asks for three things: a family access to information path with written accountability when information is denied; a defined and usable independent review pathway; and a public continuity mechanism so that cases don't simply disappear after an initial determination or public statement.

The demand is disciplined, serious, and winnable. It does not require organizations to overclaim. It does not require families to expose themselves publicly. It does not require the public to resolve the question of suicide versus homicide in any individual case. It simply insists that when Black families and communities are confronted with these deaths, government should not be able to respond with opacity, confusion, silence, or disappearance. Trust isn't built on reassurance alone. If states already have these systems, they should be able to show them. If those systems work, they should be able to prove that through aggregate, lane-separated evidence without exposing private case details.

I believe this is an issue civil rights organizations are uniquely positioned to lead.

I am presenting this to you to determine whether your organization has interest in adopting, adapting, co-leading, or helping shape this campaign. The blueprint is offered as a starting point. It can be refined, localized, narrowed, expanded, or incorporated into existing civil rights, criminal justice, public safety, or government accountability work. My intent is to put a usable campaign structure in the hands of organizations that may be positioned to move it further.

Thank you for reviewing the attached materials. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss whether this campaign aligns with your current work and whether there is a path for moving it forward together.

Respectfully/KM

The Trust & Transparency Project Blueprint

A Multi-State Accountability Campaign for Black Hanging Death Oversight

Executive Summary

What this brief is

This brief introduces a plan for a multistate public accountability initiative focused on a governance question:

Do states provide auditable trust infrastructure when Black hanging deaths generate serious public concern-especially when Black families and communities experience a recurring "trust vacuum" and accountability fades after the first news cycle?

We are not asking the public to accept conclusions about any single death. We are demanding that public institutions meet a standard of **legible, measurable accountability**.

What this brief is not

- This is **not** a campaign claiming that any specific death was homicide.
- This is **not** a public adjudication of "suicide vs. homicide."
- This is **not** an attempt to direct investigators or medical examiners.
- This is **not** a brief that launches with a numeric count claim.

The core problem (in plain language)

Across jurisdictions, incidents recur, public concern spikes, and then accountability often fades. Families and the public frequently cannot tell:

- where to go for information,
- whether an independent review is available,
- or how the public can know the matter did not simply disappear.

This produces a predictable **trust vacuum**-and the trust vacuum itself is a public safety and governance failure.

Two lanes of Inquiry

We address two distinct lanes and will never mix them in counts, claims, or demands:

- **Lane A: Non-custody hanging deaths** (outside detention settings).
- **Lane B: In-custody hanging deaths** (jail/holding/prison/detention).

The three outcomes we should call on states to provide

States can choose methods, but must provide auditable outcomes:

- 1) **Family Access Pathway** + written accountability for denials
- 2) **Independent Review Pathway** (defined and usable)
- 3) **Continuity Mechanism ("No Disappearance")** after initial determinations

What we will hold institutions to

States must be able to:

- **Show it:** make pathways/standards/continuity mechanisms publicly legible in plain language, lane separated; and
- **Prove it works:** provide lane separated, aggregate evidence that people can actually use these pathways (without requiring disclosure of sensitive case details).

Primary targets and operating posture

- **Primary initial targets:** State Attorneys General offices (as institutions).
- **Secondary targets:** Legislative oversight (if needed to mandate reporting and durability).
- **Posture:** Highpressure, nonviolent public accountability-focused on **offices/committees**, not individual line staff.

What success looks like

A state "win" occurs only when it provides all three outcomes, **separately for Lane A and Lane B**, in a way that is usable and publicly legible.

1. The Public Trust Problem

1.1 Recurrence + neglect: the "spike then disappearance" pattern

In many communities, Black hanging deaths can trigger intense public concern-especially given the United States' history of racialized violence and the longstanding credibility gaps Black families have faced when seeking institutional accountability. Yet too often, the public experience is a familiar arc:

- 1) an incident becomes visible,
- 2) officials make early statements or determinations,
- 3) public attention spikes,
- 4) and then the matter becomes difficult to track-without a clear, durable accountability pathway.

This "spike then disappearance" pattern is not merely a media problem. It is a governance problem: **public institutions should be able to demonstrate how accountability continues after the initial news cycle.**

1.2 The trust vacuum: why the public cannot verify accountability

A trust vacuum forms when families and the public cannot reliably access answers to basic questions such as:

- **Where do families go** to request information or challenge denials?
- **What independent review exists**, and how is it triggered?
- **What continuity mechanism exists** so the public can see the matter did not vanish?
- **What standards exist** for transparency and reviewability, and are they publicly legible?

When the answers are unclear, the vacuum fills with rumor, polarization, and distrust-regardless of what the "true" facts of any individual case may be.

1.3 Why this is a public safety and governance issue

Trust is not a sentiment. It is a product of systems that are:

- **usable** (families can navigate them),
- **legible** (the public can understand them),
- **reviewable** (independent oversight exists), and
- **continuous** (accountability does not vanish).

This initiative is built to demand those system properties-without requiring the public to adjudicate any specific death.

2. Scope and Lane Separation

2.1 Two lanes, handled separately

This project addresses **two institutionally different problem types**:

Lane A: Non-custody hanging/ligature deaths

Deaths described as hanging/ligature deaths occurring outside detention settings (public spaces, structures, residences, or other noncustody contexts).

Lane B: In-custody hanging/ligature deaths

Deaths described as hanging/ligature deaths occurring in custody settings (jail, holding cell, prison, detention).

2.2 Nonnegotiable rule: never mix lanes

We will not combine lanes in:

- counts,
- claims,
- examples,
- or demands.

Lane separation is essential for integrity and clarity. It prevents misleading comparisons and ensures that each lane's accountability requirements are evaluated on their own terms.

3. The Three Outcomes We Should Demand that States Provide

This initiative demands **auditable outcomes**, not a specific investigative method. States can choose how to implement, but must provide results that families and the public can verify.

Outcome 1: Family Access to Information Pathway

States must provide a **clear, usable pathway** for nextofkin and authorized representatives to request core case materials, and must provide **written accountability for denials**.

At minimum, "written accountability for denials" means:

- a written decision (grant/partial/deny), and
- a written explanation of what is withheld and why (under state law).

This outcome is designed to reduce the trust vacuum without requiring release of sensitive information to the general public.

Outcome 2: Independent Review Pathway

States must provide an independent review pathway that is:

- **defined** (not rhetorical),
- **usable** (people can access it), and
- **laneseparated** (Lane A and Lane B handled distinctly).

Lane B (custody):

States should have a default posture that independent review is available/expected for in-custody hanging/ligature deaths.

Lane A (noncustody):

States must define eligibility criteria for independent review when credible dispute and public concern exist.

This outcome does not require the public to decide what happened in any individual death. It requires the state to ensure reviewability when trust is at stake.

Outcome 3: Providing a Public Continuity Mechanism

States must provide a continuity mechanism so that accountability does not vanish after initial determinations or early public statements. A continuity mechanism is any public, auditable structure that allows the public to see that:

- a pathway exists,
- it is being used,
- and accountability persists beyond the first news cycle.

States can choose the format (public dashboard, periodic public memo, annual report, etc.). The requirement is continuity and legibility-not a particular tool.

4. "Show It" and "Prove It Works"

4.1 "Show it": make trust infrastructure publicly legible

If a state claims it already has processes, it should be able to **show**:

- where the family access pathway is,
- how independent review works,
- what continuity mechanism exists,
- and how Lane A and Lane B are handled separately.

"Show it" means **plain language, public accessibility, and lane separation**.

4.2 "Prove it works": provide aggregate, lane-separated evidence of usability

This initiative does not require disclosure of sensitive case details to prove usability. States can protect privacy while still proving systems work by publishing **aggregate, lane separated measures** demonstrating that:

- families can request information and receive written decisions,
- independent review pathways are real and used,
- continuity mechanisms are producing outputs.

If a state cannot or will not publish aggregate usability evidence, the trust vacuum remains-and the accountability demand is unresolved.

5. Integrity Commitments: What We Are Not Claiming

To protect families, prevent misinformation, and keep the campaign focused on winnable governance outcomes:

- We are **not** asserting homicide or "lynching" as a general conclusion.
- We are **not** asking the public to adjudicate suicide vs. homicide.
- We are **not** directing investigations or substituting for professionals.
- We are **not** launching with a numeric count claim.
- We will not be baited into singlecase debate in public.

Our claim is narrower and stronger:

States must provide auditable trust infrastructure: family access, independent review, and continuity-lane separated.

6. Why Equity Matters Here

Trust and transparency are governance requirements for everyone. But in the United States, the costs of obfuscation and denial are not evenly distributed. Black families and communities have well-founded reasons-historical and present-to demand that institutions meet a higher standard of legitimacy and reviewability. This initiative treats auditable trust infrastructure as:

- a **public trust requirement**, and
- a **civil rights necessity**,

without requiring the public to accept unproven intent claims.

7. How This Initiative Can Operate and Win (Public Execution Summary)

7.1 Posture

- High-pressure, nonviolent public accountability
- Office level accountability (offices/committees, not individual line staff)
- Lane separation at every stage
- No public single case adjudication

7.2 Sequence (in plain terms)

- 1) We request auditable answers from statewide accountability offices regarding whether the three outcomes exist for Lane A and Lane B.
- 2) If officials claim processes exist, we ask them to show them publicly and prove usability in aggregate terms.
- 3) If offices refuse auditable answers, we escalate publicly on refusal to provide trust infrastructure.
- 4) If needed, we pursue legislative oversight to mandate durable reporting and continuity.

7.3 Participation (families-first, without forced exposure)

Participation does not require public visibility. Families and community members can engage in ways that match their safety and consent boundaries.

Appendix A: Black Hanging cases since the Death of George Floyd

See Next Page

Table of Black Hanging Deaths and official rulings since the murder of George Floyd – March 2020

#	Person	Date found	Location	Why included in the broad 30-case list	Authorities' ruling / official position
1	Malcolm Harsch	May 31, 2020	Victorville, California	Black man found hanging from a tree near a homeless encampment.	San Bernardino County authorities reported apparent suicide / no foul play after surveillance review.
2	Dominique Alexander	June 9, 2020	Fort Tryon Park, New York City	Black man found hanging from a tree in a Manhattan park.	NYC medical examiner ruled suicide by hanging .
3	Robert Fuller	June 10, 2020	Palmdale, California	Black man found hanging from a tree near Palmdale City Hall.	Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department / investigators ruled suicide .
4	Unnamed 17-year-old Black boy	June 16, 2020	Spring / Harris County, Texas	Black teenager found hanging from a tree outside Ehrhardt Elementary School.	Harris County Sheriff's Office reported apparent suicide / no signs of foul play
5	Amanuel Kildea	June 28, 2020	Lewis Morris Park, New Jersey	Young Black man found hanging from a tree off a hiking trail.	Morris County Prosecutor / medical examiner concluded suicide and no criminality .
6	Marcus Carr	Late June 2020	Las Vegas, Nevada	Black man found hanging from a fence behind a Walmart.	Coroner and family confirmation reported as suicide .
7	Allen Mikell	August 13, 2020	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Black man found hanging in Capitolo Park / Playground.	Public reporting described the death as ruled suicide ; family members told PhillyMag they did not believe there was foul play.
8	DeAndre Rogers	September 21, 2020	Grand Junction, Colorado	Black man found hanging in a carport.	Police / coroner were reported as ruling suicide , while family disputed and said the investigation was incomplete.
9	Nevan Baker	October 5, 2020	Orlando, Florida	Black man found hanging from a tree in George Barker Park.	Medical examiner ruled suicide by hanging .
10	Willie Brown Jr.	October 19, 2020; died October 26, 2020	Sacramento, California	Black man found hanging from a basketball rim / hoop in a park.	Sacramento County Sheriff's Department publicly described it as attempted suicide / no foul play ; later reports said family questioned the account.
11	Omari Bryant	December 5, 2020	Homerville, Georgia	Black teenager found hanging outside a motel.	Law enforcement / GBI reported suicide and no evidence of foul play .
12	Stephen Styles	February 20, 2021	Winston / Douglas County, Georgia	Black man found hanging from a tree.	Douglas County Sheriff's Office said the death was suicide and representatives

					did not believe foul play was involved.
13	Mikayla Miller	April 18, 2021	Hopkinton, Massachusetts	Black LGBTQ teenager found hanging / suspended from a tree near a trail.	Massachusetts medical examiner ruled suicide , cause asphyxia by hanging .
14	Catherine Virginia Lee	November 3, 2021	Annapolis, Maryland	Black woman found hanging from a tree.	Maryland Office of Chief Medical Examiner ruled suicide by asphyxiation ; police described it as not criminal.
15	Donté Perez Jones	June 17, 2022	Blue Bell / Whitpain Township, Pennsylvania	Black Army veteran found hanging from monkey bars / playground equipment during Juneteenth weekend.	Whitpain police publicly treated it as an apparent suicide ; later reporting described police as maintaining suicide.
16	Yolna “Yo-Yo” Lubrin	September 28, 2023	Orlando, Florida	Black woman found hanging from a tree at a Parramore property.	Orlando Police Department said evidence pointed to suicide ; early reporting said the medical examiner’s cause remained under investigation.
17	Trevonte Jamal Shubert-Helton	February 21, 2024	Towns County / High Shoals Falls area, Georgia	Black man found hanging from a tree along a North Georgia trail / forest area.	Georgia Bureau of Investigation said facts showed he died by suicide ; preliminary ME findings supported that.
18	Randy Dudley	April 30, 2024	San Francisco, California	Black queer man found hanging by rope from a tree near Bernal Heights.	San Francisco medical examiner / authorities issued a preliminary suicide ruling; later reporting said the ME ruled suicide .
19	Javion Magee	September 11, 2024	Henderson / Vance County, North Carolina	Black truck driver found with a rope around his neck near / against a tree; family and public reports raised lynching concerns.	North Carolina medical examiner ruled suicide ; authorities said no foul play.
20	Dennoriss Richardson	September 28, 2024	Colbert County, Alabama	Black man found hanging from a beam in an abandoned house after suing local police.	State autopsy / local authorities reported suicide ; private autopsy was reported as not finding definitive evidence of suicide, and family disputed the ruling.
21	Jayvon Givan	September 2024	Albuquerque / Corrales area, New Mexico	Black man found hanging by a metal chain from a commercial structure / wall pillar.	Albuquerque police and the Office of the Medical Investigator classified it as suicide / no foul play ; an independent review was later requested.
22	Mario Kaiser Jr.	April 29, 2025	Charlotte, North Carolina	Black business owner found with a noose around his neck near his apartment.	CMPD initial incident report and North Carolina ME death certificate classified

					suicide ; no autopsy was performed.
23	Michael Lynch	May 1, 2025	Lubbock, Texas	Reported as a Black man found hanging near a school playground / campus.	Local police described the scene as an apparent suicide ; later Black press reporting said authorities told family it was suicide.
24	Saniyah Cheatham	July 5, 2025	Bronx, New York	Black 18-year-old died by hanging in an NYPD holding cell; included only under the broad "suspicious hanging" standard.	New York City medical examiner ruled suicide by hanging .
25	Earl D. Smith / unnamed 58-year-old Black man	June 11, 2025	Albany, New York	Black man found hanging from a tree near Green and Westerlo Streets.	Albany police and medical examiner ruled suicide / no criminal activity .
26	Demartravion "Trey" Reed	September 15, 2025	Delta State University, Cleveland, Mississippi	Black student found hanging from a tree on campus.	Cleveland police / Mississippi medical examiner reported findings consistent with suicide by hanging .
27	Torrance "Tory" Medley	November 13, 2025	Brookfield, Wisconsin	Black man found hanging from a tree at Brookfield Hills Golf Course.	Brookfield police declared suicide / no indication of foul play .
28	Kyle Bassinga	February 18, 2026	Marietta / Cobb County, Georgia	Young Black man found hanging from a tree at Fair Oaks Park.	Cobb County officials reported suicide / no indicators of foul play .
29	Juliana Nzita	May 8, 2026	Charlotte, North Carolina	Black teenage girl reported found hanging from a tree on church property.	Reporting says police classified the death as suicide .
30	To'Nea / Tonea Nicole Miller	June 18, 2026	Miami-Dade County, Florida	Black woman found dead near Gwen Cherry Park; some reports / social claims described a tree-hanging scene, though stronger local reporting was less firm on that detail.	Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office reported apparent suicide / no evidence of foul play ; family members publicly disagreed.



Appendix B – Additional case reported, bringing the total now to 31

<i>Date Found</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Circumstances</i>	<i>Official Finding</i>
<i>June 30, 2026</i>	<i>Jerard Jackson</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>Near Rothbury, Oceana County, Michigan (wooded area near Electric Forest Music Festival)</i>	<i>Black man found hanging from a tree following a Music Festival after he'd made a report to police about an incident he'd witnessed at the festival.</i>	<i>Michigan State Police stated the death appeared to be a suicide and reported finding no evidence of foul play. Final medical examiner findings were pending at the time of reporting.</i>

Summary: *Jerard Jackson, a 28-year-old Black man from Illinois, disappeared after attending the Electric Forest Music Festival in Rothbury, Michigan. After contacting Michigan State Police regarding an alleged incident earlier that morning, he left the festival and was later reported missing. On June 30, 2026, he was found hanging from a tree in a wooded area near his rental vehicle. Michigan State Police stated that the death appeared to be a suicide and that investigators had found no evidence of foul play, while noting that the investigation remained open pending the medical examiner's final findings. Jackson's family has publicly rejected the apparent-suicide conclusion and has called for a more thorough investigation.*