

NAACP Boulder County demands resignation of Redfearn, Herold

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The NAACP of Boulder County has formally called for Boulder Deputy Police Chief Stephen Redfearn and Police Chief Maris Herold to resign in light of Redfearn's "involvement and testimony on the death of Elijah McClain," according to a statement.

"Chief Herold hired ... Redfearn, being aware of his previous tenure with the Aurora Police Department, his resignation from that department coinciding with the investigation of Elijah McClain's death, and while conveniently leaving that information out of any public online presence or bio of Redfearn," the statement read. "Instead, Redfearn has been lauded as the Boulder Police Department's liaison to the LGBTQ community and placed as second in command."

Redfearn, who came to the Boulder police in September 2021 after more than two decades with the Aurora police, testified last week in the trial of two Aurora police officers charged in McClain's death in August 2019. CPR News reported that Redfearn was a captain on duty on the night of McClain's encounter with the officers, and after receiving a call about the incident, he treated it as a "critical incident" and updated the dispatch code from "suspicious person" to "assault on an officer."

According to CPR, Redfearn admitted making those changes based on information from officers and without conducting his own investigation of the incident, looking at body camera footage or interviewing those who had been on-scene. He said he changed the code in this way because one officer said McClain had tried to grab a gun and there was no dispatch code category for attempting to disarm an officer.

"In his position and with his extensive experience as an officer, it is incredulous that Night Duty Police Captain Redfearn would not, at a minimum, have engaged in a cursory assessment of the scene of the incident prior to adjusting the call log," the NAACP statement read. "It reeks of a cover-up in which Redfearn apparently found it unnecessary and irrelevant to question or investigate the report by the officers, thereby creating a pathway for the supposed justification ('assault on a police officer') of the brutal murder of Elijah McClain."

The statement went on to assert that Redfearn has "no business overseeing investigations in Boulder" and is "clearly aligned with protecting police officers from accountability."

Reached for comment, NAACP Boulder County President Annett James said, "I think that Deputy Chief Redfearn's actions are exactly why the community doesn't trust police. This is exactly why — this is the history of the discord between community and police."

NAACP Boulder County Criminal Justice Chair Darren O'Connor said the organization's statement had been sent to city officials last week and he found it "frustrating" to have received no response yet.

In a statement on behalf of Redfearn, Herold and other city officials, City Manager Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde wrote that the NAACP Boulder County's statement "misrepresents the facts of what occurred."

Rivera-Vandermyde noted that there have been no allegations of misconduct against Redfearn in relation to the investigation of McClain's death, that his dispatch code change had "no bearing on the investigation or outcome" and that it was standard protocol for him to change the code to reflect information from on-scene sergeants.

Further, she wrote that the city has never attempted to hide that Redfearn previously worked in Aurora, that he retired from the Aurora Police Department in good standing and that he was hired from a national search by an independent recruiter.

"The allegations shared with us from NAACP Boulder County are inaccurate and could damage the relationships that Chief Maris Herold and Deputy Chief Stephen Redfearn have worked hard to build in this community," Rivera-Vandermyde wrote. "The city has complete confidence in Chief Herold and Deputy Chief Redfearn, and I hope that reiterating the facts of the case will help clear up this misrepresentation."

An Aurora PD spokesperson confirmed that Redfearn worked for the agency from November 1999 to September 2021 and had been a division chief at the time he left. However, the spokesperson said the agency could not comment further on Redfearn's involvement in the McClain case due to the ongoing trial.