

Sugar Town Film About The “Houdini Suicide” Of Victor White III Screens At NABJ Convention



Rev. Victor White and Tony Brown

Victor White III was 22-years old in 2014 when he died of a gunshot wound in the back of a police car while handcuffed. The New Iberia, Louisiana police officers who took White into custody said that he committed suicide with a gun that was hidden in his backside while sitting in the back of a police car. *Sugar Town* is a documentary that examines the circumstances of White's death, the conduct of the police force, their Sheriff Louis Ackal and his family's fight for justice. The film screened Saturday at the National Association of Black Journalists' convention taking place in Detroit.Â

Shan Nicholson directed the two-hour documentary that features

home videos of Victor White III, interviews with his family, friends, radio host Tony Brown, civil rights attorney Carol Powell Lexing, journalist Dwayne Fatheree and more. The title comes from the area's sugar crop industry. White's last day alive is retraced with video footage and anecdotes from his loved ones. The timeline follows White from his initial interaction with the police at a convenience store to being detained and then later his mysterious death that had no video footage from a fully equipped car. Police found him in possession of cocaine and marijuana but did not find a weapon after searching him two times. In the film, White's father shares how evasive hospital staff, the police, and coroner were when he tried to seek answers regarding his son's death. The coroner's report is finally delivered to him six months after the passing of White III when the documentation is usually available within 48 hours.

At the center of the story is Sheriff Ackal who has had a litany of legal problems connected to his officers' use of deadly force and his alleged consent for their actions. Ackal is eventually indicted for conspiracy and civil rights violations after a federal investigation. The senior White chronicles how necessity made him become an activist to hold those responsible for his son's death accountable. He also created a hashtag with the name of the famous magician Harry Houdini to criticize the police's version of events. The issues with New Iberia's police department are rooted in America's relentless racial divide proven by controversial comments made by Ackal. The abuse allegations were disproportionately experienced by the city's African-American residents.

During the question and answer period after the screening White explained how his son was supposed to be his legacy but now he is his son's legacy. Radio host Tony Brown talked about the difficulty that comes with telling these kinds of stories but how important it is to seek the truth.

Sugar Town will air Monday, August 6th on the [Investigation Discovery Network](#) at 8 PM ET.Â

