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September 18, 2015

The Honorable Nikki R. Haley
Office of the Governor
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Re: Stephen Smith Murder Investigation

Dear Governor Haley:

My family is in desperate need of your help and time is critical. My son, Stephen Nicholas Smith, was murdered on July 8 in Hampton County. Stephen's father (my ex-husband) and I were first told he was shot to death after running out of gas in the early hours of the morning and exiting his vehicle. Later that day, we were told it was a hit and run. Finally, the autopsy determined he was beaten to death. He was beaten so severely that the entire side of his face was rebuilt with putty for his funeral. There have been no named suspects.

It has been apparent from the first week of this investigation that the authorities are covering up critical evidence. The first call my family received was from the authorities notifying us of his death. The second was from Solicitor Randolph Murdaugh. He claimed he had heard of the case and was interested in working pro bono as a liaison between the family and the investigators. Stephen's father accepted the offer, although he was unsure why Mr. Murdaugh wanted to help us. Interestingly, after just a few interactions, Mr. Murdaugh stopped returning our calls.

Within days, Stephen's twin sister Stephanie was approached multiple times by peers telling her that Mr. Murdaugh's nephews were responsible for Stephen's death. As a family, it was suspicious to us since Mr. Murdaugh had taken such an immediate interest in the case and then became unreachable so quickly.

These suspicions reached new heights about two weeks ago when Stephen's older brother, Chris, was approached at work by a young man he did not know. This person told Chris that he was present when Stephen was murdered and that he witnessed everything first hand. He said that Solicitor Murdaugh's nephew, Buster Murdaugh (who graduated with Stephen) beat Stephen to death with a baseball bat. He claimed it was because Stephen was gay. He said they were out smashing mailboxes when they came upon Stephen walking home and Buster seized the

opportunity. This information was given to investigators but nothing has come of it. The young man told Chris that Buster threatened to kill him if he ever spoke up.

The Murdaugh's are probably the most prominent family in Hampton County. Stephen had on more than one occasion mentioned to friends and his twin sister that he was involved romantically with someone from a prominent family in the county who was hiding his sexuality. He said that it would shock people to know this person was gay. We suspect this could be the young man Stephen was referring to, though he never named him.

Cops have told us they would not have access to Stephen's text messages for approximately a year. They claimed it was because of Apple security features. We found out the phone has never been sent to Apple. Often they claim it is uncertain which department has the phone. We fear they are deleting critical information from the phone. It has already been over two months and we have no knowledge of who Stephen interacted with by phone or text that day. Also since the murder, Buster has gotten rid of his old vehicle, which is critical because according to the witness, they were traveling in Buster's old vehicle the night of the murder. It's also critical because Stephen was found 3 miles from his vehicle on the morning of his murder. There was no blood splatter on the scene despite his brutal beating which makes it clear he was transported to that site. We believe there is DNA in the old vehicle.

We fear this investigation is being derailed to protect the Murdaughs. I was approached last week by another gentleman claiming to know about a case decades ago that was swept under a rug to protect a different member of the Murdaugh family.

Since Stephen was placed on the highway, it became a Highway Patrol investigation; however, this has not helped our case at all. This case is mysteriously bounced from investigator to investigator without reasons or notification. It gets to a certain point then the investigators bow out, perhaps not wanting to take on Mr. Murdaugh.

We need your help. We need some accountability for these investigators. We need someone to access Stephen's phone. Mr. Murdaugh is widely known and it seems this is playing to his advantage. We need someone who doesn't care about his family name to take this case seriously. Stephen's death matters. Please help us before the evidence is all gone. I can be reached at (803) 671-4156 or (803) 571-9915.

I thank you for your time and your help.

Sincerely,


Sandy Smith