Russell family feels this shooting must be justified by the FBI

By JAMES W. WADE III

Staff Reporter

The family of Timothy Russell, one of two people shot dead by Cleveland police following a high-speed chase Thursday, is speaking out about the incident for the first time. "Our family is deeply grieving the loss of Tim," said sister Michelle Russell, reading from a prepared

statement. "Tim was a man of faith. He was not a violent man and he didn't own a gun."

Timothy Russell and Malissa Williams were chased by police Thursday night in an incident that ended in East Cleveland with both dead. The family want to have many questions answered about that night.

"We know that Tim was being chased, but we don't know any details. He was unarmed and executed by police. Tim didn't deserve to be killed," Michelle said. "One hundred thirty seven rounds can't be justified. This must be fully investigated by federal authorities."

When the family heard of the tragic news, they were devastated.

"We want to see Chief McGrath follow through with getting civil rights and the FBI involved," Paul Cristallo, the family's attorney said. "It will benefit the family and police to get an outside, federal investigation in conjunction with local authorities." The Russells also want an apology from Cleveland's police union, saying the union calling officers in this incident "heroes" is "wrong."

"We don't know if race played a part in this at all. Again, all the more reason why the FBI should be doing an investigation. When you have people executed in this fashion, you need outside

sources to come in," explained Cristallo. He's pushing for that saying East Cleveland is "underfunded and has a history of problems and troubles."

The family has not filed any civil action at this point and has not made a judgement about it being a race problem. "We're encouraged that the chief has indicated willingness to bring a federal agency in to determine what happened," said Cristallo. "We will accept the truth provided there's evidence to support it."

"My brother wasn't a bad person. He had such a big heart," Michelle said. When asked about her brother's criminal background, she said, "everyone has a past."

While Cleveland police maintain they heard a "loud noise" possibly a gunshot outside the Justice Center on Thursday, the Russell family said maybe it was a car noise they heard instead. Timothy was given a car from his brother four days before the incident happened. The family said it had a bad muffler but was unsure of any other problems, if any.

The Russell family hasn't given up on police and said they still trust them.

"Maybe this was out of anger, I don't know," said Michelle. "You need your justice department at any given time. Just because someone did something wrong, doesn't make them all bad.

"Funeral services for Timothy will be held Saturday from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at The Sanctuary of Praise, 8788 Hadden Rd. in Twinsburg. The service begins at 11 a.m. and is open to the public.

Timothy was a 1988 graduate of Twinsburg High School and was interested in getting into ministry, but had other skills and pursued them.

Watch video from Russell's Press Conference here

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