

HIGH COURT HEARING ON WAYNE DOUGLAS INQUEST 17 JULY 1997

R v Southwark Coroner ex parte Douglas

Lawyers acting for the family of Wayne Douglas who died in police custody in December 1995 in Brixton Police Station will seek to quash the verdict of accidental death returned after a three week inquest in December 1996.

The jury found Wayne Douglas had died of 'left ventricular failure due to stress and exhaustion and positional asphyxia....following a chase and a series of restraints, in prone position, face down, as used in current police methods'.

The family's lawyers will argue that the Coroner made errors in his summing up to the jury on what they needed to find before they could consider an unlawful killing verdict reflecting gross negligence/manslaughter.

If the court finds in the Douglas family's favour there will have to be a new inquest at a later date.

Helen Shaw, Co-Director of INQUEST who have supported the family throughout said, 'The fact that Wayne Douglas' family have had to take this step further demonstrates the need for the Government to set up an commission of inquiry into the current procedures for investigating deaths in police custody. A system which so often leads to judicial review is in dire need of reform so that those involved in such deaths are properly held to account and families are not put through such long and tortuous legal procedures in order to establish the truth about their loved ones death.'