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Mother of Slain Man Sues Cleveland Mayor, Police Chief

By The Associated Press

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CLEVELAND — Questions about whether an Ohio mayor intervened on behalf of his grandson in the hours after a fatal shooting have prompted the victim's mother to file a wrongful death lawsuit against the mayor and the city's police chief.

Andrea Parra sued Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson and Cleveland Police Chief Calvin Williams earlier this month in state court. The lawsuit said the two suspects in the slaying of 30-year-old Antonio Parra this summer were members of a gang connected to Jackson's 22-year-old grandson, Frank Q. Jackson.

A county prosecutor has said Frank Q. Jackson is a suspect in the slaying.

According to the complaint, Antonio Parra called his mother Aug. 28 to say he had been hired at a popular Cleveland restaurant. Andrea Parra saw the job as an important step in her son getting his life in order after years of scrapes with the law.

Later that day, Antonio Parra was shot multiple times by two men wearing black hooded sweatshirts as he stood on a sidewalk. Andrea Parra's attorney, Peter Pattakos, said it appears Antonio Parra was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

"I know from the bottom of my heart that he wasn't caught up in any gang activity," Andrea Parra said in a statement.

The lawsuit, citing media reports, said the assailants drove off in a car registered to Frank Q. Jackson. Officers went to the mayor's home after the slaying where they questioned and arrested a juvenile. The mayor told officers his grandson would not answer questions and asked them to turn off their body cameras, the lawsuit said.

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An attorney for Frank Q. Jackson told detectives the next day that his client would not answer questions, the lawsuit said.

The car was found torched two days after the slaying. Frank Q. Jackson reportedly told officers he no longer owned the car, even though he had received a traffic ticket while driving it several weeks previously.

The lawsuit said there are no records showing the vehicle was sold.

Pattakos credited Cleveland.com and other media outlets for the reporting he used to form the basis of the lawsuit.

Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Michael O'Malley has said Cleveland police should turn the investigation over to an outside agency. O'Malley called Frank Q. Jackson a "prime suspect" in Parra's slaying.

"If you have that type of relationship where someone can question whether you are handling something in an impartial or unbiased manner, then the best thing to do is step aside," O'Malley told WKYC-TV.

A Cleveland spokeswoman said the city has no comment about the lawsuit.

The mayor said during a State of the City speech in October that he would not discuss his grandson, adding, "My family is my family ... and I do not apologize to anybody about my family."

The mayor also defended himself in a YouTube video.

"Neither I or anyone associated with me interfered in any investigation or determining any charges," he said. "You can choose to believe the media, or you can believe me. That is your choice."

Questions have been raised about previous criminal investigations involving Frank Q. Jackson. He was indicted in September on felonious assault and abduction charges and for fleeing from police and has pleaded not guilty.

Authorities accused him in June of assaulting an 18-year-old woman in his truck at a gas station and then repeatedly striking her with a metal truck hitch.

Despite eyewitness accounts and surveillance video of the beating, the Cleveland city prosecutor's office declined to file charges or refer the case to the county prosecutor, the lawsuit said. City prosecutors cited a lack of cooperation from the victim for not pursuing criminal charges.

The Cleveland Law Department claimed the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority police withheld evidence from city prosecutors, something CMHA police denied.

Frank Q. Jackson was taken into custody in the assault case after the mayor negotiated his surrender to the U.S. Marshal's Office. He was granted bond and was placed under house arrest with electronic GPS monitoring.

Jackson's attorney in the felonious assault case did not return messages seeking comment.