

# STATE OF CALIFORNIA EXECUTES JOYCE ANNETTE HENDERSON

WELFARE RECIPIENT  
VICTIM OF INABILITY  
TO PAY FOR PROPER MEDICAL CARE

a day, in order to utilize the machine and receive the proper amount of transfusions. Because she was a welfare recipient, Joyce's hospital expenses were taken care of by the state. In mid-September, she was told that her medical bills for the repeated, but vital trips to the hospital were costing the state too much and that she was now eligible to receive a kidney machine in her home.

Joyce received the machine shortly thereafter. However, two vital parts, the pressure monitor and the alarm system were missing. The pressure monitor is used to check the pressure on the machine. It regulates the rate at which the recycled and purified blood enters the body. If the blood is being pumped too fast or too slow, the pressure monitor sets off the alarm to alert whoever is attending the patient and the machine. If the blood is pumped too slow or too fast, the pressure monitor also automatically shuts off part of the machine.

The first time Joyce used the kidney machine was on September 21, 1971, in the presence of a "qualified nurse" who knew the parts were missing. However, everything went well the first day. Joyce also noticed that some parts were missing as she was familiar with the machine from her frequent use of it. However, she was unaware of their importance.

The parts were shipped to Joyce and they arrived on Saturday, September 26th. A technician was supposed to come out and connect the parts, but he never arrived. On that day, Joyce utilized the machine, according to schedule. A neighbor, Norma Thomas, came over to see her, because earlier, Joyce had complained of a headache. When Norma came into Joyce's room, Joyce was feeling worse. Mrs. Rose Branch, Joyce's mother, and Norma, helped Joyce to bed, with the tubing of the kidney machine still connected to a vein in her leg.

Norma and Mrs. Branch left the room momentarily. When they heard a loud noise, they rushed back into the room, to find Joyce on the floor, in the midst of a seizure. At this point, they called Doctor's Ambulance Service, who said they would come right away. They also called Mt. Zion Hospital and spoke to the nurse on duty in the Dialysis clinic, explaining that Joyce was having a seizure. Norma asked the nurse to instruct her how to cut off the machine and remove the tubing from Joyce's limb. She explained to the nurse that Joyce was shaking, biting her tongue, that blood was coming from her mouth and that her bowels were out of control.

The nurse casually responded that Joyce was just having a tantrum and



Malfunctioning kidney machine supplied to Joyce Henderson by the State.

to call her to the phone. Norma explained that Joyce was in no condition to talk, that she was in a complete daze. The nurse said "let me talk to her anyway." Norma put the phone to Joyce's ear, but Joyce could not respond.

Norma again asked the nurse to explain the procedure for removing the tubing of the machine from Joyce's limb. The nurse then replied that Joyce already had a book of instructions that detailed the procedure.

Norma went to look for the instructions. She returned to the phone, explaining that she could not find the book and again asked how to cut off the machine and remove the tubing.

"Joyce knows how to do it beautifully herself", replied the nurse. Norma re-emphasized that Joyce was having a seizure and was unable to do it herself. She tearfully begged the nurse to tell her how to disconnect

the machine. "I guess it is time for her to come off the machine", replied the nurse; "give her another half an hour to an hour more on the machine, then she'll be calmed down and she can do it herself".

By this time, the ambulance had finally come. Norma was still on the phone with the nurse who asked to speak to the ambulance attendants. After talking to the nurse, the ambulance attendants left, leaving Joyce behind, still connected to the malfunctioning machine.

After further delays and procrastination by the nurse, Norma called a doctor at Mt. Zion. After she explained Joyce's condition to him, he said that he would be there immediately and asked where she lived. When Norma told him Oakland, he immediately reneged, claiming that it was "too far" for him to come. He didn't



Technicians never came to connect vital parts to kidney machine.

even bother to tell her that nearby Herrick Hospital in Oakland also had such a machine and technicians.

Joyce then had a second seizure and Norma went to get a car so that they could take her to the hospital. The uncontrolled pressure of the machine caused Joyce's blood to pump even faster and it began to spurt out of her mouth, causing her eyes to bulge. Her mother then called the ambulance a second time.

By the time Norma was able to return with a car, Joyce was no longer breathing. Norma called the nurse once more and told her that Joyce did not seem to be breathing and that she needed immediate hospitalization. The nurse told her to check Joyce's pulse and measure her blood pressure. Norma told the nurse that there was none.

"I'll call you right back", the nurse said. However, she did not. By the time the ambulance arrived, it was too late; Joyce was already dead.

A few hours later, the nurse called back. When Joyce's mother told her that Joyce was already dead, the nurse said, "I'm so sorry. I knew it must have been an emergency from the sound of your voice".

Joyce's mother, Mrs. Branch, had never been taught how to work the machine, only how to clean it. The only way that Joyce knew anything about the machine was through her constant use of it and her observation of the doctors and nurses who were supposed to attend and care for her at the hospital. Other patients that utilize the machine who aren't on welfare receive regular visits and check-ups by doctors and nurses in their homes. Joyce did not "merit" the same treatment.

Had Joyce's kidney machine and all of its parts been functioning properly, she could have lived a normal life for a number of years. Instead, Joyce Annette Henderson's life was snatched away because of an oppressive society's neglect, unconcern for her health, welfare and her very existence.

The survival of Black people, of ten year old Sheila Henderson, Joyce's only daughter, now, more than ever, is the responsibility of the Black community. As victims of a vicious system, bent on the Genocide of our people, it is our responsibility to create, establish and maintain institutions which will insure our survival. There must be People's Free Clinics in every one of our communities. There must be People's Free Health Clinics to provide health care, medical facilities and procedures designed not to exploit or kill, but to give, to sustain life.

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE



Since being brought to this land, we, as Black people, have always had to suffer the most inhumane and wretched conditions imaginable. The most indecent housing, clothing, food and medical care have always gone hand-in-hand with our status as slaves, expendable commodities.

Our health, our living conditions, have not even been granted the slightest consideration, unless it was of value to the oppressor. Poor, "non-productive" (to the oppressor), Black people, those on welfare rolls, those crippled and maimed by the oppressive and inhuman living conditions in this country, receive the type of treatment exemplified in the case of Joyce Annette Henderson and countless numbers like her. Joyce Annette Henderson was a twenty-seven year old resident of Oak-

land, California. She had a long medical history of kidney disease.

Around the first of this year, Joyce had received a kidney transplant from her sister. Her body rejected the transplanted kidney and it was necessary that the kidney be removed in May of this year. Having no kidneys whatsoever, it was now necessary that Joyce use a kidney machine at Mt. Zion Hospital in San Francisco. The kidney machine is attached to a vein in any limb of the body. The machine functions as a kidney, purifying the blood and returning it to the body, through the tubes attached to the vein.

Joyce had to go to the Mt. Zion Hospital three times a week, six hours