

The news of Oaklin Springs Cemetery's refusal to grant burial rights for Allen Parish Sheriff Darrell Semien of Oberlin, LA, has prompted Southern University Law Center's Louis A. Berry Institute of Civil Rights & Justice to investigate other continuing practices of discrimination in Louisiana's rural parishes.

The recent discovery of the 70-year-old contract, which denied access to a burial for non-white individuals, represents the forgotten, but still-present, denial of humanity that still exists in the country. Therefore, the work to dismantle systemic racism must be effectuated across all spectrums, all zip codes, and all institutions.

We acknowledge the swift action taken by Oaklin Springs Cemetery Board President H. Creig Vizona to remove language that restricted burials to "whites only." We hope that others similarly situated heed the charge to ensure that racism and segregation is no longer an issue in cemeteries and other institutions across our country.

We, at the Southern University Law Center and Louis A. Berry Institute for Civil Rights & Justice offer our sincere condolences to the Semien Family. We thank you for the grace, bravery, and perseverance during this difficult time. Sheriff Semien was a beloved member of the community who lived to serve and served well. We will endeavor to engage in this effort on his behalf, and for the respect and dignity owed to all people in life and in death.

The Institute is committed to rooting out and dismantling systemic racism from not only our criminal justice system, but in every facet of life. This means assessing long held customs and norms that have eroded the public trust in justice, fairness, and equity.

This effort is open to Southern University Law Center's students and Southern University Baton Rouge students with a classification of Junior or Senior. Students interested in assisting with this project should possess the following interests/qualifications:

- Interest in the areas of Civil Rights, Social Justice, Criminal Justice Reform, or Policy Work
- Excellent communication skills
- Strong writing skills
- Ability to apply strong research techniques
- Good organizational skills

- The ability to work both independently and well with others

Students interested in supporting the project, please email the Institute's coordinator, Tiffany Rainey at trainey@sulc.edu.