

Seattle, Wash.: Video captures attack on teenage girl at police station

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Yet another video of an apparent assault by police on an unarmed and defenseless individual has been released. The video, viewed widely on YouTube, appears to show a suburban Seattle-area sheriff's deputy attacking a teenage girl while placing her in a jail holding cell.

The video was ordered released last Friday by the judge hearing the assault case against King County Sheriff's Deputy Deputy Paul Schene, 31, in response to a request by the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* under Washington's open records law.

The disturbing video shows what is reported to be Paul Schene attacking the girl after she appears to kick off one of her sneakers at him. The young girl has since been identified as 15-year-old Malika Calhoun. She had been arrested along with her friend in the city of SeaTac on November 29 on suspicion of auto theft after her friend's parents reported their vehicle missing from their Tukwila, Washington, home.

Arguing against release of the video, Schene's attorney Anne Bemner said, "We had strenuously argued that the videotape released to the media this morning not be released because it does not tell the whole story of the incident." She further stated, "It will inflame public opinion and will severely impact the deputy's right to a fair trial."

In the video, Deputy Schene appears to kick and punch the girl and then forcefully shove her into a corner. He then pulls her to the floor by her hair. After handcuffing the teenager, he proceeds to make two overhead strikes with his fist while kneeling on her back. The video then shows Schene bodily lifting Calhoun to her feet by her hair.

At last Thursday's hearing, the 6-foot 2-inch, 195-pound Schene pleaded not guilty to misdemeanor

assault. He faces charges of kicking Malika Calhoun in the abdomen, punching her in the head and pulling her hair in the sheriff's holding cell. Schene continues to receive his full pay while on administrative leave.

Schene, an eight-year veteran, is the third sheriff's deputy in Precinct 4 to face allegations of use of excessive force since 2006. Deputy Don Griffee was charged last December with misdemeanor assault in the alleged punching of a handcuffed male suspect. His case is being prosecuted by the state attorney general's office.

In 2006, Schene was involved in the shooting death of a man during a traffic stop. Pedro Jo, who was mentally ill, ran back to his car after a struggle with Schene. Claiming that Jo was reaching for something in the vehicle, Schene fired 11 times at Jo. This was the second shooting by Schene while on duty. Inquest jury rulings found both shootings justified.

The local media describes the city of Burien, where Schene patrols, as "an urban precinct with higher rates of violent crime and gang activity than other precincts." According to the 2000 census, Burien, with a population of nearly 32,000, has a median household income of \$41,577 and a per capita income of \$23,737. About 6.9 percent of families and 9.4 percent of the population were below the poverty level. (These numbers are sure to have increased as a consequence of the ongoing recession.)

In an interview on CBS's "Early Show," Malika Calhoun described the attack and the arrogant manner in which Schene addressed her. "He was being—just talking about us in rude ways, making rude comments about things, like, oh, you guys steal cars," she said, "and it wasn't—technically, we didn't steal the car. We were just borrowing my friend's mom's car without permission. We used it without permission."

Then she described what happened in the holding cell: "When he first came in, where I kicked the shoe off at him, and I was about to take my other one off, he said, you know, it's assaulting an officer. And that's when he charged in and started beating me.

"And I was yelling. I was like, this isn't—I'm not resisting. I'm not resisting. And he said, whether you're resisting or not, that was assault. Then he just kept doing it and kept going and going."

The release of the King County video followed the release of video showing the January 1 shooting death of 22-year-old Oscar Grant involving the Bay Area Rapid Transit Police in the San Francisco Bay Area (California). (See "California: Police shooting of unarmed man provokes outrage, fuels protests")

Officer Johannes Mehserle has been charged with murder in the shooting. He resigned his position and has pled not guilty. The slain man's family has filed a \$50 million wrongful death lawsuit against Mehserle and the transit agency.

Such incidents—graphically captured on video and widely distributed on the Internet—are an indication of the intensifying tensions in working class communities across the US under conditions of the deepening economic crisis. The brutal actions of the police officers involved underscore the state of class relations in America and the threat of escalating violence and brutality by the police and other state forces.



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