

North Carolina: Police officer charged following fatal shooting

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A young, African-American, former college football player was shot to death by a police officer in North Carolina after surviving an automobile accident early Saturday morning. The officer, who fired 12 shots, 10 of which struck the victim, has been charged with voluntary manslaughter.

Jonathan A. Ferrell was a 24-year-old graduate of Florida A&M University and played as a safety on the school's football team. He had recently moved to North Carolina to be with his fiancée.

After wrecking his car in the woods, Ferrell climbed out of the back window and left the scene on foot looking for help, knocking on the door of a nearby house in Charlotte at 2:30 a.m. The woman who answered the knock, expecting her husband coming home from work, quickly shut the door in fright and called the police to report what she perceived as a break-in.

When three officers arrived on the scene shortly thereafter, Ferrell allegedly ran toward the officers. After one of them unsuccessfully fired a Taser at the victim, Officer Randall Kerrick discharged his firearm at Ferrell, killing him. His crashed vehicle was found about half a mile away after the shooting. He was pronounced dead on the scene.

Initially, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department stated that Kerrick was justified in shooting Ferrell who “ran,” “charged,” and “advanced” on the officers. They also reported that Ferrell had been banging on the front door of the home “viciously.” Hours later, however, the police called the shooting “excessive” and conceded that “it was quite possible he was seeking assistance based on his accident.”

Police Chief Rodney Monroe also stated that Ferrell did not threaten the woman at the door. “Our investigation,” he told press over the weekend, “has

shown that Officer Kendrick did not have a lawful right to discharge his weapon during the encounter.” Aside from the Taser, the other two officers, who have been placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of the investigation, did not fire their weapons.

Kerrick, 27, was charged with voluntary manslaughter and was released on \$50,000 bail after voluntarily turning himself in on Saturday evening. Under North Carolina law, voluntary manslaughter is defined as killing without malice but using “excessive force.”

The fact that Kerrick is white has attracted the attention of local civil rights activists who are raising questions about the police response. Ignoring the fact that people of all races have been killed by police officers, Kojo Nantambu, president of the Charlotte chapter of the NAACP, stated regarding the killing that “any day in this country, an African-American man can be killed for no reason by the people who are supposed to be protecting him.”

The ACLU is calling for all video footage recorded at the scene to be made public. Last month, Charlotte police began testing body cameras to replace recording devices on squad car dashboards.

Christopher Chestnut, the attorney for the victim's family, has called the incident “unwarranted, irrational, and inhumane.” “Clearly this is someone who did not have the necessary intelligence, discernment or compassion to walk the streets of Charlotte with a handgun, let alone a badge,” Chestnut said. Kerrick was hired as an animal control officer in 2010 and promoted to police recruit in 2011.

Ferrell's mother told a press conference that she was praying for Kerrick. “I truly forgive him. I pray for him,” she stated. “I pray that he gets off the police force. You took a piece of my heart that I can never get

back.”



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