

No charges for police officers who killed unarmed immigrant in Pasco, Washington

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Wednesday, prosecutor Shawn Sant announced that the three officers who on February 10 gunned down Antonio Zambrano-Montes, a 35-year-old Mexican immigrant living in Pasco, Washington, would not face charges. Zambrano-Montes was shot 17 times, at least twice in the back, while he was unarmed and running away from the Pasco police.

The announcement brought accusations of Sant having “blood on his hands” and cries of “whitewash” and “no justice, no peace” from Zambrano-Montes’s family and members of the community present at the packed news conference.

Sant’s justification for absolving officers Ryan Flanagan, Adam Wright and Adrian Alaniz of any wrongdoing was that they acted “in good faith and without malice”. He supported this claim by maintaining that the officers felt threatened by Zambrano-Montes because he was reported to have been throwing rocks at passing cars, may have been “armed with a rock” and that the three officers were merely defending themselves.

This flies in the face of video evidence showing the three officers trailing, cornering and then shooting Zambrano-Montes execution style. Official autopsies showed that the victim was shot seven times in the chest, the abdomen, the chin, buttocks and forearm. An independent autopsy requested by the man’s family also showed that he was shot at least twice in the back.

Since the shooting, Ryan Flanagan has resigned from the Pasco police force, claiming the move to be unrelated to the shooting. Both Adam Wright and Adrian Alaniz remain on paid leave.

Immediately after the announcement, an attorney for Zambrano-Montes’s parents released a statement saying that they plan to file a federal civil rights lawsuit next week, in addition to the ongoing civil case against

the city of Pasco for \$4.76 million. An additional civil case has been filed against the city by Zambrano-Montes’s estranged wife for \$25 million.

The second civil case alleges that the Pasco Police Department practices racial discrimination and improper use-of-force training. So far, there have been four police killings in Pasco, a majority Latino city with a large immigrant population working as low-paid farm laborers.

In addition, the complaint puts forth that the manner in which Zambrano-Montes was killed is a result of the Pasco Police Department retaining “officers who had a proven history of violation of civil rights,” revealing that Ryan Flanagan had been in the target of a previous lawsuit alleging improper use-of-force in 2012. That case was settled for \$100,000.

Though the three officers are no longer facing charges, Franklin County coroner Dan Blasdel has called for an inquest into the shooting, stating in an interview with a local NBC affiliate that, “A jury needs to make the decision whether the shooting was justified or not.”

While an inquest, consisting of a jury of six people, would be able to force the prosecutors to explain the results of the investigation, it would not be able to indict the officers. That would still remain the province of the prosecutor’s office. In the end, an inquest would most likely be used to provide a veneer of legitimacy to the decision not to criminally charge the killer cops

This year alone, US police officers have killed more than 850 people, according to killedbypolice.net. Despite the fact that thousands of US residents have been killed by police officers in the past decade, only 54 officers have been charged for those killings, with only a handful convicted. The official protection of killer cops extends all the way to the White House, with

the Obama Justice Department supporting law enforcement every time a police use of force case has been argued before the Supreme Court.



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