

New video released in 2012 Chicago police killing of Philip Coleman

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After three years of delay, the Chicago Police Department (CPD) has released video from the night in December 2012 that Philip Coleman, 38, died after being detained in a Chicago jail.

The three-minute video shows six police officers waking Coleman up in his cell, then swarming and Tasing him despite his making no aggressive movements. The video ends with officers dragging Coleman's limp body down the hallway.

Coleman died a few hours later at Roseland Community Hospital, officially from an allergic reaction to sedatives he was given while undergoing treatment. The Coleman family's lawyer told reporters that the guards shot Coleman 13 times with a Taser and beat him with batons. The beating was so severe it "took three pages to list all the bruising and abrasions and swelling on his body."

Coleman, a University of Chicago graduate, suffered from mental illness and was arrested after he began acting erratically and his family called the police, hoping they would help get him to a mental hospital. Instead they took him to the fifth district police station, leading to his abuse and eventual death. Coleman's family has a pending civil suit against the city over his death.

The police response to Coleman's death was a routine cover-up. The guards claimed that they only Tasered Coleman after he attacked them, and refused to release the video evidence showing that this was a lie. Last year the CPD ended their internal investigation clearing the guards of any wrongdoing, and were supported by the Chicago Independent Police Review Authority (IPRA).

With the release of the video the IPRA has announced that the investigation will be reopened. Acting Chicago Police Superintendent John Escalante gave a pro forma

statement on Monday that the department would review their "policies and practices surrounding the response to mental health cases."

In his own hypocritical statement on Monday, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel said, "[S]omething is wrong here, either the actions of the officers who dragged Mr. Coleman, or the policies of the department." Emanuel's sudden discovery of wrongdoing in this three-year-old case is part of his efforts to escape political fallout from recent revelations of police murder which have sparked ongoing protests and demands for his resignation.

On November 24, the city acquiesced to a court order to release video of the police execution of 17-year-old Laquan McDonald. McDonald had been killed in October 2014 after being shot 16 times by Officer Jason Van Dyke while moving away from police officers, the majority of shots fired as he lay motionless on the ground. The autopsy showed that McDonald was shot twice in the back and nine bullet wounds had a downward trajectory.

For 13 months, Emanuel and other city officials fought to suppress the footage, going so far as to settle the civil lawsuit brought by McDonald's family for \$5 million on the condition that the footage not be made public. It was only through an independent lawsuit brought by a journalist after his Freedom of Information Act request was denied by the city that the footage was revealed, leading to charges being filed against Van Dyke.

Since the release of the McDonald video there have been regular protests against police brutality. Following a City Council meeting Wednesday, where Emanuel apologized for McDonald's killing, hundreds of protesters marched through downtown Chicago calling for his resignation.

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, one protester yelled, “This is not a black problem, this is a democracy problem. We don’t want your apology, we want your resignation!” At least two protesters were arrested.

The city’s decision to release additional videos, including that of Coleman’s treatment before his death, is part of efforts at damage control that do not address any of the underlying problems.

Last week, Emanuel abruptly fired the Chicago Police Superintendent, Garry McCarthy. Emanuel had appointed McCarthy in 2011 but now found it necessary to dismiss him because he had lost “public trust.”

Under these circumstances Emanuel is carefully weighing what evidence of police misconduct they can keep hidden and what should be volunteered to the public to mitigate the political impact.

The same day that video of guards dragging Coleman through the detention center was released, Cook County State Attorney Anita Alvarez held a press conference announcing that no charges would be brought against Officer George Hernandez in the killing of Ronald Johnson in October 2014. In the course of the conference she showed footage of the police shooting and killing Johnson as he ran away.

While cynically calling for unspecified reforms, Emmanuel is continuing efforts to cover up police violence. At the same time as the City Council meeting Wednesday, city attorneys were arguing before a federal court that footage of the fatal police shooting of 17-year-old Cedrick Chatman in January 2013 should be kept from public view.

Chatman was suspected of carjacking and ran when confronted by police officers. According to the IPRA, Officer Kevin Fry shot him after he “pointed a dark object back toward the officers as he continued to run.” The killing occurred in the middle of a sunny day and the “dark object” recovered from Chatman’s body was an iPhone box.



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