

Tulsa, Oklahoma police release videos of slaying of unarmed man

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The Tulsa Police Department (TPD) released helicopter and dashboard video on Monday showing the police killing of 40-year-old Terence Crutcher. Crutcher, unarmed and not a suspect in any crime, was surrendering peacefully when police officers simultaneously shot him with a stun gun and a pistol.

The videos show Crutcher with his hands in the air, walking slowly toward his car, as two officers follow him with their weapons drawn. Crutcher places his hands against his car's windows. Immediately after, at 19:44, a single gunshot is heard and Crutcher's head slumps. More officers run to the scene and Crutcher collapses.

Three police officers stand over Crutcher's body while two others search his car. After the search is over, all five police officers leave Crutcher in a pool of his own blood while they redirect traffic. Two and a half minutes pass before anyone begins to administer medical treatment—and only after they search his pockets.

When reporters asked the TPD why it took so long for police to give Crutcher any help, the TPD's public information officer, Jeanne MacKenzie, claimed that the delay occurred because the police officers didn't know what to do. "I don't know that we have protocol on how to render aid to people," she said.

Crutcher was leaving a college class when his car began experiencing mechanical trouble. He left his car in the middle of the road with the engine still running and approached a passerby for help. Two 911 calls were made around 19:30 reporting his abandoned vehicle. "He was like, come here, come here. I think it's going to blow up," one caller reported Crutcher saying.

The videos disprove the initial police claims that Crutcher had approached the officers, that he was not

cooperating, and that he was reaching into his car window when they shot him. "We saw that Terence was not being belligerent," said Damario Solomon-Simmons, an attorney representing Crutcher's family. "We did not see Terence reach into the car. We did not see Terence attacking the officers."

The TPD claims that no video was recorded from the dashboard of Betty Shelby, the 42-year-old white police officer who killed Crutcher, a black man. "Officers have discretion whether or not to turn their light bar on. The dashcam is attached to the light bar," explained MacKenzie. Shelby is a four-year veteran of the TPD and has been placed on paid administrative leave. The TPD has identified Tyler Turnbough as the officer who used the stun gun on Crutcher.

Brady Henderson, the legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Oklahoma, called the actions of the police officers "immoral, reprehensible, and outright criminal" and labelled the TPD's initial report "a bold-faced lie, as were TPD's statements about his transport and death at a local hospital."

Ryan Kiesel, the executive director of the ACLU of Oklahoma, said that Crutcher was murdered "in cold blood. Each of the officers present were complicit in the unconscionable, reprehensible, and disgusting killing of this unarmed, defenseless man, by allowing him to bleed to death on the street rather than attempting any immediate medical aid or attention."

The ACLU of Oklahoma is calling for criminal charges against the police officers involved. "If this killing is investigated competently and fairly," said Henderson, "I believe we will see murder or manslaughter charges against the shooter, and hopefully accessory charges against the officers who treated Terence Crutcher like a piece of meat rather than a human being." The Department of Justice has

initiated an investigation into Crutcher's murder.

Shelby maintains that she thought Crutcher was high on PCP because he was "mumbling incoherently," according to her attorney, Scott Wood. The TPD announced yesterday afternoon that the drug was found in Crutcher's vehicle. Police Sgt. Shane Tuell told the Associated Press that Shelby was certified in the use of stun guns.

The TPD and Tulsa officials have attempted to defuse the popular anger surrounding Crutcher's murder, promising transparency and asking for protests to remain peaceful. Tulsa Police Chief Chuck Jordan, speaking at a press conference on Monday, assured "people across the nation" that "we will achieve justice, period."

Tulsa Council Member Jack Henderson, recalling the eruption of social unrest in Milwaukee and Baltimore, equated police murder with the protests against it. "[W]e don't want to see what happens in other cities here in Tulsa, Oklahoma. We've already got two families' [the Crutchers and the Shelbys] lives who will be affected forever. We don't need some more lives to be changed this way."

Crutcher's twin sister, Tiffany, drew a connection between Terence's death and the scores of other police killings throughout the United States. "This is bigger than us right here," she said at a press conference yesterday morning.

She denounced the profiling by the TPD helicopter pilot who was flying over the scene of her brother's murder. "You all want to know who that big, 'bad dude' was? That big, 'bad dude' was a father. That big, 'bad dude' was a son. That big, 'bad dude' was enrolled at Tulsa Community College, just wanting to make us proud. That big, 'bad dude' loved God. That big, 'bad dude' was at church singing, with all of his flaws, every week." Crutcher's family said that singing was his passion and the subject of his studies at college.

Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, speaking on the Steve Harvey Morning Show, blamed the bloody wave of police violence on the "implicit bias" of "white people." She concluded by commending the "good, honourable, cool-headed police officers" serving across the country. Whites make up a plurality of the 1,146 people killed by American police last year.

Crutcher's murder comes just three months after the

TPD's last two killings, of Michael Ray Ramsey Jr. and Jerry Brimer on July 17 and July 18 respectively. According to KilledByPolice.net, Crutcher is the 825th person to be killed by police in the United States this year. At the time of this writing, another 13 people have been killed by police since Crutcher's death.



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