

## Notes on police violence

# Alabama police officer cleared in 2014 shooting of man holding wallet

Kevin Martinez  
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An Alabama police officer who shot at an unarmed man during a routine traffic stop in 2014 was recently cleared of any wrongdoing by the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals. The dashcam video of the shooting was released this month three years later and only after the officer was cleared of any wrongdoing.

The federal court upheld a decision by the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Alabama that the officer in question, Opelika Police Officer Phillip Hancock, acted “reasonably” in shooting Michael Davidson after he exited his car on the night of March 6, 2014. Both Davidson and Hancock are white.

The night of the shooting, Davidson had gotten into an accident with a truck on the interstate highway. Both vehicles pulled over to the side of the road to wait for police.

Officer Hancock then pulled up to the scene prompting Davidson to suddenly come out his car, which was difficult for him to do since his car was parked on an incline. The video shows Davidson with a black object in his hands, which later turned out to be his wallet. Hancock can be heard yelling, “Show me your hands.” Within a matter of seconds, Officer Hancock shoots Davidson twice, hitting him in the abdomen.

In the video, Davidson can be seen writhing in agony as a small pool of blood collects around him. As other officers gather to the scene, not one applies first aid. In a revealing moment, one of the officers has his hands on the hood of the police car and begins shaking his head in frustration.

Davidson survived the shooting but suffered a severed artery and “extensive internal bleeding.” He subsequently filed suit against the officer involved as

well as the Opelika Police Chief John McEachern and the City of Opelika for failure to properly train its officers.

In its decision to uphold the lower federal court ruling, the three-judge panel stated, “we conclude that a reasonable officer in Hancock’s position would have feared for his life. Accordingly, we affirm the district court’s grant of summary judgment based on qualified immunity in favor of Hancock on all claims.”

North Carolina police settle lawsuit for \$1 million in case of teen shot dead in his home

Mary Wilsey, the mother of 18-year-old Keith Vidal, shot dead in his own house by police in Charlotte, North Carolina in 2014, has settled a wrongful death lawsuit against Officer Bryon Vassey, Boiling Springs Lake, Southport and Brunswick County Sheriff John Ingram for \$1 million. The dismissal with prejudice prevents Wilsey from filing a second lawsuit over the killing of her son.

On January 5, 2014, Vidal’s parents called the police for help because their son was in the middle of a schizophrenic episode and they wanted him committed for mental health care.

Wilsey told investigators that within moments of entering their home Vassey shot and killed Vidal for holding a screwdriver. The shooting happened within inches of Vidal’s mother and stepfather and other police officers who were already on the scene.

After a two-week bench trial in May, Vassey was found by a judge to be not guilty of voluntary manslaughter. Vassey contended that he feared for his life and the lives of his fellow officers when he shot Vidal in the chest at close range.

Wilsey’s attorney, David Ventura, stated that the

defendants did not accept responsibility for the settlement but decided to settle the case during mediation in December for “whatever reason.”

As part of the settlement, Brunswick County Sheriff John Ingram agreed to make a worthless public statement offering support for state legislation that would require police officers to undergo further training for dealing with the mentally ill.

California police use fire hose on man to get him out of his car, then shoot him dead

Police in Orange, California fatally shot a man who had barricaded himself in his van following a routine traffic stop. Michael Anthony Perez, a 33-year-old father of six, was identified as the man shot and killed on Sunday night.

Lovina Perez, Michael’s sister, told KTLA, “He is not just another person shot by the police. He is a son, brother and father.”

According to police, Perez’s van was pulled over for a broken taillight and a warrant associated with the license plate number around 11:15 p.m. He pulled into a parking lot but allegedly refused to leave his vehicle.

Authorities said that Perez stayed in his car for about half an hour before he produced a lighter and a gas container. The Orange Fire Department arrived to flush out Perez from the van with a powerful stream of water while police can be seen in the video breaking the windows with a hatchet and a baton.

Police said that Perez got out of the car and was armed with a knife, prompting officers to shoot him once in the upper torso, killing him.

Officials did not say whether he lunged at officers or tried to harm them but were quick to point out that Perez had an “extensive criminal history,” as if to absolve themselves of any wrongdoing after the fact.

Whatever the exact circumstances, the video clearly demonstrates that the cops escalated the situation wildly out of control and needlessly killed Perez.

Rose Becerra, Perez’s aunt, told KTLA, “It’s a big loss because I’m going to really miss him,” adding, “He loved his kids. That’s what I want the world to know. I want the world to know that he was funny.”



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