

New York City police officer acquitted of murder charges in killing of Delrawn Small

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On Monday, Wayne Isaacs, a police officer with the New York City Police Department (NYPD), was acquitted by a jury of murder and manslaughter charges for the killing of Delrawn Small in Brooklyn on July 4, 2016. The decision was made although surveillance video footage showed Isaacs fire from his car as Small approached it. Isaacs also admitted he failed to identify himself as a police officer.

The incident took place in the early hours of July 4, 2016 in the East New York Section of Brooklyn. Isaacs allegedly cut off Small in his car, and when Small went to policeman's car to speak to him, Isaacs, who had just gotten off duty, fired three shots out the window from his revolver.

Surveillance camera video shows Small staggering from the gunshots and collapsing nearby. Isaacs can then clearly be seen leaving his car, walking up to Small, and getting back in his vehicle without rendering first aid to Small, who bled to death on the pavement. Zaquanna Albert, Small's girl friend, was in the car at the time, and two of her children sat in the back seat.

Isaacs stated in his initial report that Small had punched him, although no blow can be seen in the video. Small simply walks up to the car window and then almost immediately collapses from the force of the bullets.

The police officer's attorneys focused on Small's large size and alleged that Isaacs must have feared for his life.

Isaacs was the first police officer in New York State to be tried under Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo's 2015 executive order which empowered the attorney general to "investigate and prosecute officers for civilian deaths at their hands or in their custody."

Isaacs may still face an internal NYPD investigation. Nevertheless, the outcome has been no different from

the cases of scores of cops every year who are acquitted, never brought to trial, or, in the exceedingly rare instances of convictions, given lenient sentences for killing unarmed citizens.

Notably, in New York City these include police officers such as Richard Haste, whose manslaughter indictment was dismissed by a judge for the shooting of Ramarley Graham in Graham's apartment in the Bronx in 2012; Daniel Pantaleo, who was never indicted for his video-recorded strangling of Eric Garner in Staten Island in July 2014; and Peter Liang, who shot Akai Gurley in a Brooklyn housing project in November 2014 and was convicted of manslaughter, but never served a day in jail.

Haste resigned from the NYPD in 2017 after it was reported that a departmental review had found him at fault for Graham's death. Meanwhile Pantaleo remains on duty with the NYPD. He has not been the subject of internal NYPD charges, and the Obama administration Justice Department refused to bring federal civil rights charges against him.

One significant aspect of the death of Delrawn Small was that it received considerably less attention in the corporate media than the other recent cases, especially Graham and Garner.

The reason is not hard to discern: in the first two cases, the officer who committed the crime was white and the victim was black; in the case of Isaacs and Small, both were African-American. It is impossible to cover, let alone editorialize, on this killing from the standpoint of identity politics, which the *New York Times* and other media outlets do on a regular basis.

Small's family and others were less convinced that the essential feature of this killing was race, citing rather police impunity for crimes committed against working people.

At a rally held after the verdict, the family's lawyer, Roger Wareham, noted that there was a "culture of impunity in the New York Police Department. Deadly force was not justified. He was unarmed ... The issue is there's no justification for a police officer to shoot an unarmed civilian."

Gwen Carr, the mother of Eric Garner, also spoke at the rally. "Here we are again," she said. "This has got to stop. We are held accountable for our wrongdoings; they must be held accountable for theirs."



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