

Video shows police attacking former NFL player in Atlanta parking lot

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A video posted Thursday to Facebook and Instagram of police in an Atlanta, Georgia suburb attacking and choking former National Football League (NFL) player Desmond Marrow has sparked widespread outrage on social media.

Marrow, a 30-year-old African-American father of one, was signed by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers as an undrafted defensive back in 2012 and spent a year with the team. He also played for the Houston Texans and in the Canadian Football League.

In the video, two Henry County police officers can be seen dragging Marrow and slamming him against a pickup truck in a Target store parking lot in McDonough, a town located southeast of Atlanta. He repeatedly pleads with the officers, “I’m not even doin’ nothing. I’m not even fightin’ back. I’m not even fightin’ back.”

One of the cops, identified in a police report as Officer Donaldson, suddenly grabs Marrow’s right leg and pulls it up into the air, then body slams Marrow face-first into the asphalt. Marrow begins to cry in agony, saying, “Oh my god. I didn’t even do nothing. I didn’t even do nothing to y’all man!”

He repeats this several times, crying and screaming in agony before yelling, “You set me on my mofuckin’ head!” At that point, a third officer joins to hold Marrow down as one of the others, identified as D. Rose, forcefully presses his hand on Marrow’s neck.

As he chokes and struggles for breath, Marrow can be heard several times telling officers, “I can’t breathe,” in a scene reminiscent of the 2014 police murder of Eric Garner in New York City.

Marrow’s body then goes completely limp and he appears to fall unconscious. After a few seconds, Rose slowly removes his hand from Marrow’s neck. Apparently realizing what has happened, one of the officers nudges Marrow and asks worriedly, “You OK, man?”

Marrow remains limp with his eyes closed for the remainder of the video, as the officers command him to sit up and pull him off the ground.

In a lengthy Facebook post accompanying the video, Marrow wrote: “I only had my cell phone in my possession & they claimed to be scared for their lives. I had no type of weapon in my possession. I was arrested for having a gun that turned out to be my cell phone. During the arrest the police knocked my teeth out, slammed me on my head and choked me out until I was unconscious. In addition I suffered a shoulder strain and a concussion...”

Although the incident occurred on December 2 of last year, it garnered public attention only following Marrow’s social media posts on Thursday.

A redacted police report of the incident indicates that the encounter began as a “moving traffic dispute” after another driver threw coffee on Marrow’s car. It says that Marrow admitted to following the other driver to speak to him and that he regretted doing so. The report claims that a witness told the officer that Marrow threatened to shoot the other man during an altercation inside the Target store. Marrow told officers that he did not have a gun and denied that any fight occurred. No gun was found during a subsequent search of Marrow’s person.

The report also makes numerous assertions about the police assault that are directly contradicted by the minute-long video. Officer D. Rose claims in his report that Marrow refused to comply with police commands to spread his legs so they could search him, and when Officer Donaldson tried to spread his legs, Marrow kicked both of the officers and tried to push himself off of the car. Rose writes that this prompted the officers to try to “put Marrow on the ground.” As the video makes apparent, however, Marrow was never instructed to spread his legs after being slammed against the truck. At no point does he appear to resist the officers, much less

kick them, before his leg is lifted up and his face smashed into the pavement.

Rose goes on to write: “I told Marrow several times to stay on the ground and stop kicking. I was attempting to keep him from kicking Officer Donaldson or head-butting me as it appeared to me that he was attempting to do that... At that point my hand was on the front of his neck, still in an effort to hold him down to prevent him from head-butting me. Marrow shouted several times that he was not able to breathe, but he was shouting, he was clearly breathing.”

At no point in the video does Marrow try to kick the officers, nor does he ever appear to make any attempt to head-butt them. The claim that Marrow was “shouting” and could therefore breathe is likewise false. The most Marrow could manage was a guttural shriek as Rose strangled him until he lost consciousness. Rose describes this as “clos[ing] his eyes for a second or so as if he was passed out.”

Marrow was arrested for aggressive driving, reckless driving, obstruction of a law enforcement officer and making terroristic threats. The police report notes that Marrow again “closed his eyes” as if passed out while riding in the back seat of the police car.

After arriving at the county jail, he was taken to a nearby hospital. Marrow’s case is still pending in county court.

Since the video’s posting, social media has erupted with anger over the gratuitous brutality inflicted on Marrow and a legal defense fund has raised thousands of dollars on GoFundMe.

The police assault on Desmond Marrow is hardly unique in the United States, where police are notorious for their violence and contempt for democratic rights. According to killedbypolice.net, 407 people have been murdered at the hands of US police in 2018. While African-Americans are disproportionately represented among the victims, a majority are white.

What the overwhelming majority of victims have in common, however, is that they are members of the working class.



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