

North Carolina police officer assaults man at Waffle House

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Outrage is growing over the video of police brutality filmed last Saturday in Warsaw, North Carolina, a city of 3,000 one hour southeast of the state capital, Raleigh.

A short clip posted on YouTube shows an as yet unidentified white police officer grabbing 22-year-old Anthony Wall, who is African American, by the throat outside of a Waffle House, before shoving him into a wall and slamming him on the ground. Throughout the incident, despite being choked, Wall makes no aggressive moves to the officer. Instead he rasps “Get your hands off me!” and “Get your supervisor out here.”

Wall shared the video on Facebook a few days after the May 5 incident. That night he had taken his 16-year-old sister to the prom, afterwards they went to a Waffle House to eat where they got into an argument with an employee they say cursed at them. Whatever specific details emerge about that night, what is clear in the video is the callous disregard the police officer had for his victim’s safety.

Any time a police officer tries to restrain someone by the neck it carries a significant risk of injury or death. In 2014 Eric Garner, was infamously killed by a police officer using a chokehold, for allegedly selling loose cigarettes. The charges filed against Wall similarly demonstrate that no one but the police officer escalated the encounter into a life-and-death situation.

After being arrested, Wall was charged with disorderly conduct in public, a misdemeanor, relating to his argument in the Waffle House, and then also charged with resisting, obstructing and delaying a police officer, for being arrested. He was released shortly thereafter.

As is standard whenever an incident of police brutality reaches a wide audience, the Warsaw Police

Department (WPD) and neighboring Onslow County District Attorney have announced an investigation including asking for “independent” investigators from the state to help. On the other hand, the local NAACP highlighted that Wall is black and called on the WPD to engage in racial sensitivity training.

All the statistics on police killings and brutality show two clear points: that police assault African and Native Americans in a greater proportion compared to other ethnicities, and that police brutalize large numbers of poor people of every race. Far deeper than the racism of individual police or departments are the class issues.

As if to demonstrate this, the Mayor of Warsaw, AJ Connors, who is African American, issued a video statement defending the officers’ actions. Connors, a pastor at Friendship Missionary Baptist, said “This officer did what he had to.” He told people upset by the violence, “We are asking you to eliminate the prejudging; allow the system that is in place to operate and do what it needs to do.” In words oozing with complacency, Connors stated “We have a judicial system that works.”

The way that judicial system works is by withholding information from the public so that district attorneys can manipulate grand juries to prevent charges from ever being brought against officers. Then in the rare cases where officers are brought to trial, the courts are rigged to prevent convictions. The judicial system works so well, that between 2005 and 2017, where police killed nearly 1,200 each year, only 80 police officers were ever charged with murder or manslaughter and of those 80 only 28 were convicted.



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