

No charges for Sacramento police officers who murdered Stephon Clark

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On Saturday, District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert announced that she would not charge the two police officers who shot and killed Stephon Clark nearly one year ago in Sacramento, California.

Officers Terrence Mercadal and Jared Robinet murdered Clark, an unarmed 22-year-old African-American, on March 18, 2018. Pursuing Clark as a target in a vandalism case, the officers approached him with guns drawn in his grandmother's driveway, chasing him into the backyard before they quickly fired 20 bullets. Autopsies later revealed that seven to eight bullets hit him in the back as he was turned away from the officers, with only his cell phone in hand.

Since then, the city has carried out an investigation into the shooting, which concluded on March 2 with the announcement that no charges would be filed against officers Mercadal and Robinet. Contrary to the video evidence, District Attorney Schubert said in her announcement: "Was a crime committed? There's no question that a human being died ... But when we look at the facts and the law, and we follow our ethical responsibilities, the answer to that question is no."

She defended the officers, explaining that both of them "believed that he was pointing a gun at them," and further, that the video footage showed Clark "advancing" on the officers before they fired shots. These personal beliefs and interpretations, she said, connect to the legal justification for officers to use deadly force if they "honestly and reasonably" believe they are in danger.

As further defense for the officers, Schubert sought to criminalize Stephon Clark. She publicly released the findings of the review, including a reported incident of domestic violence against Clark's fiancée, text messages between the couple, and traces of drugs found in the autopsy.

Clark's friends and family have been outspoken about the attempts to defame his character while denouncing the refusal of the DA's office to indict the cops. "We're outraged," said his mother, SeQuette Clark. "She [the district attorney] wants to go on a smear campaign on his character and his actions ... That is not a permit to kill him."

Salena Manni, Clark's fiancée and now the single mother of their two young children, expressed sorrow and anger. Responding to the release of personal information, she said, "Today was not about what happened on March 16, was not about what happened on March 17. It's about when the officers murdered my fiancé. Murdered Stephon Clark. That's what this is about."

She sobbed, "My boys Aiden and Cairo have to grow up without their father and I have to continue on as a single parent."

Stephon's older brother, Stevante Clark, said at a press conference Sunday, "We should be looking at these officers. Were there drugs in their system? Let's look at their phone records. Let's see what they search on the internet. It's unfair the way the district attorney assassinated my brother's character. The defamation. The slander. Unacceptable."

Stevante Clark was vocal in the protests that occurred in the weeks after Stephon's murder, speaking out against the city government and poor social conditions. Hundreds of workers and young people participated in occupations of the city hall and marches through the city that drew national attention.

Protests against the DA's decision are expected to take place throughout the week. On Sunday, several dozen people demonstrated at the Arden Fair Mall in Sacramento, which management closed down for fear of the demonstration growing too large. The protesters

were mostly students aged 18 to 23, affiliated with a group called Voice of the Youth. They held signs that read: “Silence now, what next?” “No justice, no peace!” and “Clark was fatally shot 8 times on March 18. How is the officer innocent?”



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