

Lightfoot administration blocked release of video showing Chicago police crushing woman's leg with SUV

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A month after it was revealed Chicago Democratic mayor Lori Lightfoot sought to suppress footage of the February 2019 illegal night-time police raid on the home of social worker Anjanette Young, new revelations confirm the mayor and her administration fought to suppress the release of yet another video of police brutality. Released last week, the body-cam footage of Chicago police running over and crushing the leg of 32-year-old Martina Standley in November 2019 was suppressed for a year by the Lightfoot administration.

Lightfoot, who is currently overseeing the homicidal reopening of Chicago Public Schools as COVID-19 continues to rip through the city, carries the bloody mantle of previous Chicago mayors who also oversaw the cover-up of police murders and brutal police crackdowns on peaceful protests. The Chicago Police Department (CPD), with a presence in working class neighborhoods akin to a military occupation, finds its greatest defenders in the Democratic Party and Lightfoot.

Activist William Calloway released police body camera footage of the Standley incident last Tuesday. Calloway filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for the footage's release on November 19, 2019 and the video was released over a year later.

The footage consists of videos from body cameras worn by police officer Brian K. Greene, Jr. and his partner, Maceo C. Taylor. It shows them ramming Standley in their police SUV and crushing her leg on the night of November 14, 2019 in Chicago's South Shore neighborhood.

In the footage, Greene Jr., after running over Standley, is seen getting out of the vehicle, approaching

her on the ground and is heard saying, "Girl, ain't nobody hit you like that." Upon realizing she was bleeding from her head and was pinned under the vehicle, he says, "Oh, s—. F—."

Standley was unconscious on the street with the SUV on her leg until paramedics arrived some 8 minutes later.

In the police report of the incident, Greene Jr. accused Standley of hitting the police SUV's window and moving its spotlight before hitting her. The report claims that "his intention was to reverse out of the way ... for a potential mental health transport," instead the SUV "inched forward instead, and she disappeared."

According to Andrew M. Stroth, the attorney for Standley's family, over a year after being run over Standley is still suffering from severe head and leg injuries.

Mayor Lightfoot initially stated the city did not attempt to block the release of the video. However, the court records and documents of Calloway's legal team obtained by *Block Club* Chicago paints another picture. The city, working in tandem with the police department, actively fought to suppress the video for over a year.

After Calloway requested bodycam footage of the incident on November 19, 2019, the city refused to respond to the request per the five-business-day deadline required by law.

Calloway then filed a complaint with the court on December 10, 2019. Just over a month later, on January 17, 2020, police denied Calloway's request for the footage.

Working via a loophole, the Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA), a police oversight agency

which has done next to nothing to curb police violations in Chicago, proclaimed the Standley incident not a “police action” because officers were not pursuing a suspect or called to a crime scene and therefore were not required by the city to release the bodycam footage within 60 days.

Last August, a Cook County judge ruled the city must release the footage. The CPD responded by contending releasing the footage would interfere with COPA’s investigation of the incident.

Rejecting the CPD’s argument, on August 21 Circuit Court Judge Alison Conlon ordered the footage to be handed over to Calloway within 14 days.

Judge Colon argued, “If CPD’s position is accepted as true, all police records would be exempt for all ongoing investigations, which is contrary to the plain language of” the FOIA.

The CPD released the footage, but 11 days after the judge’s deadline on September 15. The footage, however, was censored, effectively blocking out the most damning parts, particularly Standley’s leg being crushed under the police SUV.

“Due to privacy concerns,” a city spokesperson said, the city could not release the footage without blurring it.

In downplaying the incident by blurring out the most critical parts, the city sought to rely on a loophole by invoking the public records law which allows information to be withheld from FOIA requests if releasing information will be a “clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.” By invoking the law, Standley would have to consent for the uncensored footage to be released.

Yet when Standley allowed the uncensored footage to be made public, the city refused to release it. Activist Calloway pressed for weeks to obtain the uncensored footage.

According to emails between Calloway and his lawyer, CPD alleged the delay was due in part to having to re-blur certain parts, like pedestrians, of the requested uncensored footage.

Calloway’s lawyer emailed him on November 19, 2020 stating the CPD did not “want to budge and reprocess all of the videos.” Calloway subsequently agreed to the reprocessing.

On November 25, some three months later after the judge’s order, the city released the uncensored footage

from Greene Jr. and Taylor’s body cameras. Calloway released this footage last week, but it is not clear why he waited to release footage over a month after receiving it.

When asked why the city suppressed the release of the videos—even after the court ordered it to do so—Lightfoot denied any wrongdoing, responding with pseudo-legal jargon. “Again, we’re just digging into the facts; this is a case that just came to light, for my purposes, recently,” Lightfoot said. “But I don’t believe that that’s an accurate characterization. I think [CPD] and the Law Department have both put out information about that, and I believe that their statements are different than the premise of [the] question.”

That the mayor of the city of Chicago is claiming she did not see the video of the Standley incident, let alone was not aware of it, reeks of a political cover-up. Just last month, the mayor lied about not being aware of the illegal Young raid in February 2019, and then actively worked to prevent public knowledge of it.

Lightfoot and her fellow Democrats are aware that such footage reveals the true nature of the police force. Chicago is a city of massive social inequality. The Democratic Party, ruling Chicago for decades, has overseen endless cuts to education, transit infrastructure, hospitals and jobs. They rely on the police to maintain the growing chasm between Chicago’s wealthy elite and working class. A social crisis, made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, is mounting and Democrats are aware that the rapid release of incriminating videos of police violence can lead to a social upheaval like that seen after the murder of George Floyd last year.



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