

Osceola County, Florida sheriff's deputy brutally assaults high school student

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An eleven-second video posted to Twitter showing a sheriff's deputy picking up and slamming a young African American student to the ground went viral this week, sparking widespread outrage. The violent assault perpetrated by the school resource officer took place at Liberty High School in Osceola County, Florida. As of this writing the video of the brutal assault on 16-year-old Taylor Bracey has been viewed more than 1.4 million times.

The video begins with the resource officer on his knees but with the Bracey's arms behind her back. Thereupon the officer immediately pulls the student backward over his knee as he stands up and slams her to the ground. An audible thud can be heard from Bracey's head hitting the concrete. There she laid motionless as a cacophony of questions, expletives, and statements were shouted: "What the fuck is wrong with you," "You knocked her out," and "You can't do that." The officer, later identified as Deputy Ethan Fournier, proceeds to handcuff the student, and the video ends.

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) said an investigation into the assault of the teenager by Fournier will be conducted with the aid of videos taken by other students, a Florida sheriff said Wednesday. "We are collecting video, witness statements, and relevant information related to the incident," the officer said. The reason for the violent takedown, according to the sheriff, was "to stop the student from fighting another student." However, in a separate tweet on the incident, the poster commented, "This girl was already separated and under control by one of the faculty members when the officer came out of nowhere, picked her up and bodyslammed her headfirst on to the concrete."

Ben Crump, a lawyer who represents the families of

those brutalized or killed by police, tweeted the video, writing, "This was NOT a 'minimal amount of force necessary' as dictated by the Dept's use of force policy! We must demand justice!"

Osceola County Sheriff Marcos Lopez justified the attack, stating, "the student was not complying with lawful commands. She went after another student." Lopez said his office was turning over the investigation to state investigators "to be sure no one can say that we are looking out for our own." Fournier, a 10-year veteran of the sheriff's office, has been put on paid administrative leave pending the outcome of the investigation.

When questioned if the officer had any issues prior to the high school incident, Lopez, without elaborating, responded that Fournier "does not have any previous record of misconduct, other than minor property damage." When pressed, he waved off the questioner.

While it is not clear from the short video what led up to the incident, Lopez said the disruption occurred at a school function where "the student was not complying with lawful commands" and "went after" another student. Lopez said the situation escalated from there. The situation was violently escalated, however, by Fournier when he, without cause, slammed the student onto the concrete walkway.

Lopez said his office would be capable of handling the investigation, but he turned it over to the FDLE so no one can accuse him of "influence" over the case. "Certain situations and certain circumstances call for complete, clear transparency and utmost trust with our citizens," Lopez said. This "transparency" of Lopez's position was expressed when answering questions raised about the status of the student. "From my understanding, the juvenile was fine," Lopez said, adding that Bracey was medically attended to at the

scene and released to her mother.

The sheriff also made mention immediately afterwards that “the deputy is also fine. He sustained some injuries when he hit the ground.” Lopez follows up his concern for his deputy with a threat to anti-police violence protesters, “One thing I will also not tolerate is death threats to our law enforcement. He has received them and I’ll tell you, we have a very good intel unit, and if you’re going to start threatening my sheriffs, until *we* can do a thorough investigation, we’re going to come after you too.”

The fight against police violence requires the mass mobilization of the working class, as a united and independent social force against the capitalist system.

Workers and students must reject all efforts to divide workers against each other along racial and other identity lines. The police, acting as the repressive arm of the state, are the enforcers of bourgeois law and protectors of private property. As Leon Trotsky outlined in his work *Fascism: What it is and how to fight it*, “The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state, is a bourgeois cop, not a worker.” The police, as Lopez has outlined, will “come after you” if social opposition erupts. This was shown in nationwide crackdown on multi-racial protests in Democratic and Republican governed cities and states throughout 2020.



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