

Notes on police violence

Protests continue in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, following decision not to charge officers who killed Andrew Brown Jr.

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Residents marched in the streets of Elizabeth City, North Carolina, Tuesday night after Pasquotank County District Attorney Andrew Womble announced no charges would be filed against the deputy who shot and killed Andrew Brown Jr. in April. Soon after the announcement was made, reporters inside the building where the conference was held could hear protesters shouting from outside.

Brown, who was African American, was killed by deputies on April 21 while behind the wheel of his car. Pasquotank County Sheriff's Office deputies were attempting to serve a drug-related search warrant at the time.

For almost a month, protesters have demanded all body cam footage of Brown's shooting be publicly released and the resignation of Sheriff Tommy Wooten and DA Womble. Many residents have protested nearly every day since Brown's death and have said they will continue until justice is served.

On Tuesday, a multi-racial group of protesters gathered outside the Pasquotank Public Safety Building, where Womble held a news conference to announce his decision, before moving throughout the city to gather outside the residences of local public officials. Videos showed protesters chanting and blowing car horns outside the home of the former deputy police chief in Elizabeth City.

The Elizabeth City Police Department closed roads in preparation of significant protests. The department said it would redirect traffic "around citizens exercising their constitutional right to a peaceful protest." Protesters later marched through the city and blocked

intersections.

Demonstrators associated with Black Lives Matter have called for an "economic boycott" in Elizabeth City every Wednesday until the officers involved in Brown's death are charged. They urged protesters to not spend money in Pasquotank County in order to pressure Womble to call on a special prosecutor to take a second look at the investigation into Brown's death.

Although the Brown family's attorneys and Democratic Governor Roy Cooper called for a special prosecutor to take over the case, Womble stated his decision was made on an unbiased review of the State Bureau of Investigation's report on the shooting.

"I'm elected by the people of the 1st Judicial District to do exactly this job. A special prosecutor or outside counsel is not accountable to the people of this judicial district. I am," Womble said. "I want the community to completely understand that the right to protest is certainly important. The need for information is important. The transparency aspect, accountability of my office. But in these particular cases I am basing the decision on the facts, the evidence and the law. And nothing else."

When announcing his decision to not file charges, Womble said Brown ignored commands from law enforcement and claimed a deputy who had tried to open the driver's side door of Brown's vehicle wound up partly on the hood as Brown backed up. Womble said the deputy had to slam his hand on the car's hood to avoid being run over.

"The simple act of starting the car, in violation of an officer's command, makes the car a dangerous deadly

weapon that can be used at that point and officers can shoot,” Womble said. “Federal courts have held that ‘The Constitution simply does not require police to gamble with their lives in the face of serious threat of harm.’”

However, Womble’s account of what happened cannot be seen in the footage publicly available. Womble’s explanation has also been challenged by Brown’s family, who called his killing an “execution.” Brown family attorney Bakari Sellers said the footage did not show Brown using his vehicle as a weapon and that Womble did not adequately explain how Brown was shot in the back of his head.

Monroe, Louisiana

The Associated Press published footage Wednesday showing Louisiana state troopers stunning, punching and dragging an unarmed black man in 2019 as he apologized for leading them on a high-speed chase and explained he was scared. Police have fought against the video’s release for two years and have been accused of trying to cover up the incident.

Troopers initially told 49-year-old Ronald Greene’s family he died after crashing into a tree. Later, Louisiana State Police released a statement only stating that Greene struggled with troopers and died on his way to the hospital. State Police officials initially claimed the use of force was “awful but lawful” and did not open an investigation into the matter until 474 days after Greene’s death.

The video shows one officer wrestling Greene to the ground, putting him in a chokehold and punching him in the face while another can be heard calling him a “stupid motherfucker.” Greene can be heard yelling “I’m sorry” as another officer shocked him with a stun gun and threatened to hit him again if he did not put his hands behind his back.

At one point, another state trooper is seen dragging Greene facedown after his legs had been shackled and his hands cuffed behind him. Greene was left lying on the ground moaning for more than nine minutes as officers wiped blood from their arms and faces with sanitary wipes. One is heard saying, “I hope this guy

ain’t got fucking AIDS.”

After several minutes where Greene is not seen on camera, he appears again, unresponsive and bleeding from his head and face. He is then loaded onto an ambulance gurney, his arm cuffed to the bedrail. There are long spans of time in the 46-minute video where Greene is not visible. Additionally, the microphone on the body cam was cut off halfway through the video, making it difficult to ascertain how events unfolded during the arrest.

“They murdered him. It was set out, it was planned,” Greene’s mother, Mona Hardin, told AP Wednesday. “He didn’t have a chance. Ronnie didn’t have a chance. He wasn’t going to live to tell about it.”



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