

Man brings civil lawsuit against Louisiana State Police after brutal assault by officers

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26 August 2021

Newly released police body camera footage has revealed yet another grisly instance of police brutality in the United States. The video shows a Louisiana State Police (LSP) trooper strike an African American man in the head 18 times with a police issue flashlight while other officers held him down. The aluminum instrument is 8 inches long, with a pointed end used to smash car window glass.

The man, Aaron Larry Bowman, 46, had been pulled over for a routine traffic violation and had repeatedly screamed to his captors, “I’m not resisting!” Blows from the flashlight split Bowman’s head open, creating a wound that required six staples to close. The trooper broke his jaw and three of his ribs, as well as his wrist. The body camera footage was buried for over two years since the vicious beating in May 2019.

The assault on Bowman occurred less than three weeks after LSP troopers murdered Ronald Greene, who died in police custody after being punched, stunned, choked and forcibly dragged.

In both cases, the police top brass initially circled the wagons around the offending officers. State police waited 536 days before opening an investigation into the attack on Bowman—and even then, some weeks after Bowman filed a civil lawsuit. In the case of Greene, state police waited 474 days to investigate, while Democratic Governor John Bel Edwards and other Louisiana officials refused to publicly release any body camera video of the incident for more than two years.

It was only after both incidents became a part of a federal investigation into police brutality—and cover-ups potentially implicating some of the highest-ranking officials in the LSP were exposed—that the agency chose to take any action against the officers involved in the attacks.

The LSP trooper who administered the savage assault, Jacob Brown, who is white, revealed the fascistic mentality and sadism rampant within law enforcement when he defended his use of deadly force as the application of “pain compliance.” Brown, who resigned last March, had 23 use-of-force incidents on record since 2015 alone, 19 of which had targeted African Americans. He reportedly bragged about beating another motorist, claiming he is “gonna be sore.” And he declared, “It warms my heart knowing we could educate that young man.”

Brown now faces state charges of second-degree battery and malfeasance involved in his attack on Bowman, as well as additional state charges related to other violent arrests. It is unclear at this point whether the federal investigation will bring additional charges against him.

To add insult to injury, Bowman still faces a list of bogus charges stemming from the assault, including battery of a police officer and resisting an officer, as well as the initial charge of improper lane usage (a very minor infraction).

In the video, Bowman does not appear confrontational in any manner and clearly was complying with police officers. Instead, Brown’s body camera footage shows officers forcibly removing Bowman from his vehicle and throwing him to the ground. Brown then began his frenzied attack, hitting Bowman 18 times with his flashlight over a period of only 24 seconds.

During the attack, Brown shouted “give me your f***ing hands!” at the restrained Bowman, warning “I ain’t messing with you.” Bowman attempted several times to tell officers he was not resisting and that he was a dialysis patient. “I’m not fighting you, you’re fighting me,” he said, terrified. He then cried out for

help. “I’m bleeding!” he said. “They hit me in the head with a flashlight!”

Brown did not report his use of force and deliberately obscured the violent content of his body camera footage, labeling it merely as a “citizen encounter.” While Brown’s tampering with evidence is certainly criminal in its own right, there is no way that he could have acted alone in suppressing details of the incident.

In the case of Greene’s death just weeks before, state police commanders pressured their detectives not to arrest state trooper Chris Hollingsworth, who had turned off his body camera prior to the fatal arrest. Hollingsworth was later recorded boasting of Greene’s slaying, claiming he choked and beat the “ever living f*** out of him.” According to notes obtained by the Associated Press, commanders became “very heated” with the detectives, warning them that bringing charges would cause investigators to “have issues with patrol.”

The autopsy, conducted by Arkansas State Crime Lab pathologists Jennifer Forsyth and Frank J. Paretti for the Union Parish Coroner’s Office, aided in the cover-up. The report concluded that it “cannot be stated with certainty” whether Greene’s injuries, such as a fractured sternum and lacerated aorta, were attributable to a car crash—the cause of death initially alleged by the LSP—or a physical struggle with troopers. By failing to specify whether Greene’s death could be considered an accident or a homicide, the report allowed troopers’ claims initially to go unchallenged.

While the probe already has uncovered massive wrongdoing and conspiracy on the part of the LSP, this alone will do nothing to solve the underlying issues surrounding the epidemic of police murder in the US. The political establishment is equally complicit in this phenomenon, having overseen the mass inequality, social misery, and pandemic-related deaths caused by the capitalist system which the police defend.



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