

# Memphis police reveal 2 more cops suspended in Tyre Nichols killing

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On January 30, the Memphis Police Department (MPD) released a public statement revealing that in addition to the five black cops now terminated and facing second-degree murder and other charges in the killing of Tyre Nichols, two more Memphis police officers involved in the young man's death were "relieved of duty" on January 8, 2023.

Nichols, a 29-year-old Fed-Ex worker, photographer and father, was savagely beaten by at least five officers with the Memphis Police Department's SCORPION unit on January 7. He died in the hospital three days later.

Last Friday, the MPD released over an hour of edited video footage of the police assault on Nichols, which triggered protests in numerous US cities.

In its statement on Monday, the MPD revealed the name of only one of the police officers who has been placed on leave, Preston Hemphill, 26.

In the body camera footage released on Friday, Hemphill, who is white, is seen drawing his pistol and pointing it at Nichols while the young man is in his car. Hemphill pointed his gun despite the fact that Nichols was unarmed, had made no aggressive moves and had committed no crime.

The footage shows that as police tried to wrangle Nichols out of his car, Hemphill put away his gun, pulled out his taser and tried to use it on the terror-stricken young man.

Nichols managed to momentarily escape the custody of the police. As he ran away, Hemphill did not give chase. Instead, he tried to shoot Nichols with his taser but missed.

Hemphill's own body camera footage shows him putting away the device and telling his fellow cops at least twice, "I hope they stomp his ass."

It does not appear that Hemphill participated in the assault on Nichols after he was chased down and caught. However,

it is unclear if he was one of several police officers who did not render any aid to Nichols when he lay handcuffed, limp and bleeding against the side of a police cruiser for over 20 minutes.

In Monday's statement, the MPD said Hemphill and the other unnamed officer have been under investigation for their "actions and inactions" since January 8. As of this writing, however, neither of the two has been fired or charged with an offense.

Also on Monday, the Memphis Fire Department announced that three employees who were dispatched to the scene of Nichols' beating, including two emergency medical technicians (EMTs), had been fired for failing to properly assess Nichols' condition.

In its statement, the Memphis Fire Department said EMTs Robert Long, JaMicheal Sandridge and Lt. Michelle Whitaker "violated numerous MFD policies and protocols," and their "actions or inactions" at the scene "did not meet the expectations of the Memphis Fire Department."

The footage released Friday showed that despite arriving on the scene at approximately 8:41 p.m., by which time Nichols was already bleeding profusely, the technicians did not render medical aid.

The funeral for Nichols will be held in Memphis on Wednesday, February 1. On Tuesday, Benjamin Crump, the lawyer for the parents of Nichols, confirmed that Vice President Kamala Harris had spoken with Nichols' mother, RowVaughn Wells, on Tuesday. Crump also confirmed that Harris would attend the funeral service.

Harris is one of several prominent Democrats who will be attending the funeral. Last week, Crump confirmed that longtime Democratic Party operative and promoter of racial politics, Reverend Al Sharpton, will deliver the eulogy.

The Biden administration also announced that Tyre Nichols' parents will be in attendance when President Biden delivers his State of the Union Address at the US Capitol on Tuesday, February 7.

All of this is a deeply cynical, orchestrated attempt to uphold the claim that endless police violence and killings in America are the result of "systemic racism," when the facts of Tyre Nichols' murder—at the hands of black cops, members of a "community policing" unit established by the black police chief and funded and lauded by the Biden administration—undercut the racialist narrative and point to the more fundamental class issues that the ruling class seeks to cover up.

The Democratic Party and its wealthy upper-middle class allies have no problem exploiting the terrible grief of Nichols' parents toward this end.

These issues include the role of the police as part of the repressive apparatus of the state to defend the wealth and property of the capitalist class; the vast and ever-growing economic chasm between the top 1 percent and the vast majority of the population, the working class; and the endless neo-colonial wars carried out by US imperialism, now developing into a direct conflict with Russia, which require ever greater attacks on the working class and police repression at home.

Under conditions of a growing offensive of workers in the US and internationally, one faction of the ruling class employs racism to divide the working class, while another, centered around the Democratic Party, uses racial politics for the same purpose.

Following the release of the MPD statement on Monday announcing the two police suspensions and ongoing investigations, Benjamin Crump insinuated on Twitter that the delay in publicly announcing the investigation into Hemphill was a manifestation of racism.

"Why did it take so long for Memphis officials to reveal Ofc. Preston Hemphill's identity and that he was reportedly relieved of duty weeks ago but not yet terminated or charged?" Crump wrote, adding, "Why was the white officer involved in the brutal attack of #TyreNichols shielded and protected?"

Perhaps Crump should ask the black police chief of Memphis, whom he praised in a CNN interview on Tuesday for providing the "blueprint" for "swift justice."

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has explained, while African Americans, Native Americans and Hispanics are disproportionately killed by police compared to their

proportion of the population, every year a plurality of those killed by police are white men. What virtually all victims of police violence have in common is that they are working class or poor.

In its 2022 Police Violence Report, *MappingPoliceViolence.us* found that the 1,192 people killed by police in the US in 2022 added up to more deaths "than any other year in the past decade."

*MappingPoliceViolence.us* found that police were charged with a crime in only "9 of these cases. One percent of all killings by police."

While African Americans accounted for 26 percent of those killed by cops, 43 percent of all those killed identified as white. With few exceptions, police killings of white people are ignored by the mainstream press and the Democratic Party because they refute the racialist narrative of police violence.

In Wyoming, Ohio, this past Sunday, a father of two, 28-year-old Joe Frasure, a white man, was shot and killed by an unnamed and uncharged officer with the Wyoming Police Department.

According to family members, Frasure was at his deceased grandmother's apartment Sunday night to help his sister clear out the residence following her passing three weeks ago. Frasure's brother told a local news outlet that once the police arrived, they shot his brother three times in the head. Referring to the police, he said he was "tired of you guys killing people. Enough is enough."



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