

Leaked body camera footage reveals officer mocking young pedestrian killed by speeding Seattle police cruiser

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On Tuesday, body camera footage taken by Seattle Police Officer Daniel Auderer was released to the public as a result of an internal department investigation. Auderer, also vice president of the Seattle Police Officers Guild, inadvertently took the footage in response to a January 23 incident involving fellow officer Kevin Dave, who struck and killed 23-year-old Jaahnavi Kandula in the middle of a crosswalk in Seattle, Washington.

Dave had been responding to a drug overdose call when he barreled through the intersection at 74 miles (119 kilometers) per hour in a 25 mile per hour zone, killing Kandula, a graduate student in Information Sciences at Northeastern University in Seattle. In addition to her schoolwork, Kandula had also been working part time to help support her mother in Andhra Pradesh in India.

A statement from the family read, “Jaahnavi’s tragic and untimely death has left her family and community with a huge hole in their hearts that will never be repaired. In spite of earning less than \$200 per month, her mother educated Jaahnavi and encouraged her to travel to the United States hoping Jaahnavi would have a better future and better life abroad.”

Dave, 35, is a former US Marine hired by the Seattle Police Department as part of a mass hiring initiative in 2019. The officer, while having no significant disciplinary history with the SPD prior to the January incident, did have a previous Arizona driver’s license suspended in 2018 for unpaid traffic tickets and failure to appear in court. Dave’s driving record also includes a 2018 traffic ticket for running a red light in Washington state.

The leaked body camera footage in question shows Auderer in his patrol car speaking over the phone to a man later identified as guild president Mike Solan a day after the January accident. Auderer is heard assuring Solan the incident would not be the subject of a criminal

investigation and stated that driving 50 miles per hour through a 25 mile per hour intersection—not the actual 74 miles per hour—was “not reckless for a trained driver.”

Auderer then gave Solan his own interpretation of witness testimony regarding the incident. “I think she [Kandula] went up on the hood, hit the windshield, then when he [Dave] hit the brakes, flew off the car.” He then told Solan, “but she is dead” and then proceeded to laugh out loud. In a subsequent statement dripping with horrifying contempt for the working class student, Auderer tells Solan, “It’s a regular person. Yeah, just write a check. \$11,000.” Auderer then states, mistaking Kandula’s age, “She was 26 anyway. She had limited value.”

Seattle area right-wing radio host Jason Rantz later claimed to have received a written statement from Auderer provided to the city’s Office of Police Accountability. In it, Auderer claimed to be sarcastically mocking how the city and its attorneys would respond to the incident. “I laughed at the ridiculousness of how these incidents are litigated and the ridiculousness of how I watched these incidents play out as two parties bargain over a tragedy,” Auderer allegedly stated.

These justifications have failed to gain any significant credibility, however, as outrage over Auderer’s recorded remarks continues to grow not only within the Seattle area but across the country and internationally. The mass outpouring of anger, particularly on social media, has compelled Seattle area officials, primarily Democrats and pseudo-left Socialist Alternative/Democratic Socialists of America city council member Kshama Sawant, to conduct a massive damage control exercise.

On Wednesday, Seattle City Councilmember Tammy Morales requested that Seattle Police Chief Adrian Diaz take action against Officer Auderer for his comments. “As

the department and Seattle's Police Officers Guild ask for more funding for recruitment and hiring, it's becoming clear the top deterrent to attracting high-quality officers may be the culture of the department itself."

In the case of Sawant, who has also been a member of the Seattle City Council since 2014, a tweet was released Wednesday, in which she noted, "The so-called Office of Professional Accountability has singularly failed to hold Seattle Police accountable—cops overseeing cops will never work. We need independently elected community oversight with full powers over the police. But to win this, working people will need to organize independently of the Democratic Party."

However, such statements run counter to the actual practice of Sawant and Socialist Alternative. In actual fact, Sawant, who is being considered as a running mate for Cornel West's Green Party presidential campaign, has worked tirelessly behind the scenes to accommodate the Democrats and the corrupt trade union apparatus.

Socialist Alternative and Sawant, before its current effort to sow illusions in the bankrupt, pro-capitalist Green Party, heavily endorsed the 2016 and 2020 campaigns of Bernie Sanders, even after the latter quickly pivoted to endorsing Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden in 2016 and 2020 respectively.

In fact, Socialist Alternative has made direct appeals to the police unions such as the Seattle Police Officers Guild, of which Auderer is Vice President, in order to carry out futile reforms which will do nothing to address the epidemic of police killings. They wrote amid the George Floyd protests in 2020, in a shameless denial of the role of the police as instruments of capitalist rule, "We believe in the right of the police to form unions so that they have a way to resist being used by the ruling class against working people."

The Consulate General of India in San Francisco also issued a statement Wednesday, calling the incident "deeply troubling." It also contacted authorities in Seattle and Washington, D.C. calling for a "thorough investigation" of the incident and for action to be taken against those officers involved in Kandula's death.

Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell, a Democrat, was compelled, nearly 9 months after the actual accident, to send a letter to Kandula's family expressing his condolences. "I want to be clear," Harrell wrote, "that the comments made by one person do not reflect the feelings of our city or the communities that call it home."

In fact, Auderer has a long history, extending back at least 13 years with the SPD, of condoning the most

egregious incidents of police misconduct, if not directly participating in such incidents himself. He has been the subject of eighteen separate Office of Police Accountability investigations since 2014. Far from such actions leading to termination or even slightly hampering his career, Auderer continued to hold prominent posts within the SPD and the police union, leading to his appointment as vice president of the officers guild.

In 2010, Auderer was caught on camera with fellow officer Corey Williams promising to "skull f*ck" two Mexican immigrants stopped under false pretenses. Also that same year, Auderer was one of twelve officers who savagely beat Brian Torgerson, a mentally ill man, causing him permanent brain damage.

Other investigations included allegations that Auderer had sexually assaulted a female arrestee while in detention and had viciously beaten another female arrestee while she was in handcuffs. In 2017, Auderer also punched and choked a homeless man inside the emergency room of Harborview Hospital in Seattle.

Only a few weeks prior to the accident, *Divest SPD*, a community police oversight group, revealed that internal reports submitted by Auderer revealed immense hostility to local protests against the 2020 police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In a shift report submitted after he was assigned to monitor the one-year anniversary demonstration against Floyd's death, Auderer wrote that he had managed, "the weekly DSA, Antifa and various other groups that the city has allowed to grow and flourish by not using the authority of government to keep order and marginalize political violence."

Such comments are not only the views of Auderer as an individual, but express the immense hostility of the police departments around the country to the free speech rights of workers and youth. They are further emboldened by city, state and federal governments, whether led by Democrats or Republicans, who continue to funnel hundreds of millions of dollars of advanced tools and weaponry to them. Such tools will be ruthlessly employed against the working population as the capitalist crisis leads workers further into struggle. Workers and youth are viewed by police as military targets, or simply collateral damage, in Jaahnavi Kandula's case.



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