

South Carolina Police Officer Caught on Video Shooting Black Man

Activists planned to protest in South Carolina on Wednesday after a white police officer was caught on video fatally shooting a 50-year-old black man in the back as he ran away following a traffic stop.

The officer has been charged with murder and the FBI and U.S. Justice Department are investigating the shooting, the latest in a series of incidents that have raised questions about U.S. policing and race relations.

Civil rights leaders have called for calm, and many people praised the courage of the witness who filmed the killing and gave the video to the victim's family.

"This is what happens ... when people are willing to step up and do the right thing for the right reasons," State Representative Justin Bamber told reporters late on Tuesday.

Chris Stewart, an attorney for the victim's family, said the incident is bigger than race.

"It goes to power itself. This was a cop who felt like he could just get away with shooting someone that many times in the back," Stewart said. "It speaks to the value of human life."

The shooting took place on Saturday morning after 33-year-old officer Michael Slager, who joined the department in 2009, stopped Walter Scott for a broken brake light, police said.

The video shows a brief scuffle between the pair before Scott begins to run away. Slager is then seen taking aim with a handgun before shooting eight times at Scott's back. Scott

then slumps facedown onto the grass.

According to a police report, Slager told other officers Scott had taken his stun gun from him.

At no point in the video, which does not show the initial contact between the men, does Scott appear to be armed.

Slager is seen placing the victim in handcuffs as he lies on the ground, and then the officer walks back to a spot near where he opened fire.

The video then shows him appearing to pick something up, return to Scott, and then drop it next to him on the ground.

FAMILY PLANS LAWSUIT

Slager is being held without bond on a murder charge that could carry the death penalty, online court records show.

The victim's family plans to file a lawsuit against Slager, the department and the city alleging that his civil rights were violated, Stewart said.

Meanwhile, the person who filmed the video is speaking with investigators and will come forward publicly "at some point," the lawyer said.

The shooting took place in North Charleston, which is home to about 100,000 people, nearly half of whom are black, 2010 U.S. Census data shows.

By contrast, only about 18 percent of its police department's roughly 340 officers are black, the local Post and Courier newspaper reported last year.

Scott's brother, Anthony Scott, said his late sibling served two years in the U.S. Coast Guard, that he was a father of four, and that he loved the Dallas Cowboys.

According to the Post and Courier, Scott had a warrant out for

his arrest from family court at the time of his death.

His arrest history, mostly for contempt of court charges for failing to pay child support, included one accusation of a violation stemming from an assault and battery charge in 1987, the newspaper reported.

Slager, also formerly a member of the Coast Guard, had not previously been disciplined by the department, the Post and Courier said. He has two stepchildren and a pregnant wife.

The paper reported that in 2013 a man accused him of shooting him with a stun gun without cause, but that Slager was cleared of wrongdoing by an internal police investigation.

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