

Cop Who Murdered Walter Scott in South Carolina Shooting Had History of Brutality

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Michael Slager, the North Charleston, South Carolina police officer who murdered Walter Scott on April 4, had a history of police brutality.

In 2013 Slager used a Taser twice on North Charleston resident Mario Givens, who witnesses said was neither belligerent nor resisting arrest. Givens had filed a complaint about the incident, but Slager was quickly cleared of wrongdoing by an internal police investigation. The AP reported that police had not even bothered to speak to witnesses before exonerating Slager.

Slager was charged with murder Tuesday after the public release of a video showing him gunning down 50-year-old Scott as he was running away from him. Slager fired eight shots, with four hitting Scott in the back, and one in the ear.

On Thursday, police published a video from the dashboard camera mounted on Slager's patrol car, which showed no evidence that Scott posed any threat to Slager.

Slager, a 32-year-old former member of the Coast Guard, pulled Scott over, supposedly because the tail light on his car was out. After Slager took Scott's identification, Scott opened the door of his car and ran away, prompting Slager to chase and open fire on him.

Police officials and Slager's attorney initially claimed that Scott had taken the officer's Taser, supposedly making him fear for his life. This account was presented largely uncritically by local news sources until the bystander video of the shooting was released Tuesday, completely shattering the police narrative of the event.

The video shows Slager dropping an object, likely to be his Taser, by the side of the motionless Scott after he had been shot. Slager then proceeded to handcuff him face down on the ground, without providing any medical assistance. Scott was later pronounced dead at the scene.

The bystander, Feidin Santana, a 32-year-old barber born in the Dominican Republic, said he decided to turn over the video, shot on his cell phone, to the victim's family, the press and state officials, despite fearing for his own safety at the hands of the police.

"I ... thought about erasing the video," Santana said in an interview with MSNBC's Chris Hayes on Wednesday. "I felt that my life, with this information, might be in danger."

Despite being told by police to stay where he was, Santana fled with the footage, fearing

that officers would retaliate against him. "I hate to think of what would have happened had he stayed" at the scene, Todd Rutherford, Santana's lawyer, told the *Wall Street Journal*.

"At some point I thought about staying anonymous, and don't show my face, don't talk about it," Santana added. "But ... if I wouldn't show my face, everybody over there knows, including the police, who I am."

The fact that a man in possession of incontrovertible evidence of a police murder carried out in broad daylight should have feared for his life points to the increasingly police-state character of American society, and the terror that police inspire in poor and working class communities throughout the United States.

Rutherford told the *Wall Street Journal* that Santana "never saw [police] do any life-saving techniques at all, including CPR," following the shooting, contradicting official police reports.

Santana also insisted that Slager was in control of Scott during the entire encounter, even before he started filming. "They were down on the [ground] ... before I started recording ... I remember the police had control of the situation. He had control of Scott," Santana said.

He also contradicted Slager's claims that Scott tried to get his Taser, saying he "never grabbed the Taser of the police. He never got the Taser."

On Thursday, the AP published the account of Maleah Kiara Brown, whose son, Mario Givens, was brutalized by Slager in 2013. Brown said that the officer appeared "cocky" and looked like he "wanted to hurt" her son, who he shocked twice with a Taser, despite the fact that he was innocent, unarmed and not resisting arrest.

Slager came to the house of Givens after responding to a 911 call regarding his brother. As Brown described the incident to the AP,

"[Givens] asked the officer why he was at the house. He did it nicely. The police officer said he wanted him to step outside. Then he asked, 'Why, why do you want me to step outside?' Then the officer barged inside and grabbed him."

Brown repeatedly insisted that the officer was attempting to detain the wrong person, and said the officer used a Taser on Givens even though he was not resisting. "He was screaming, in pain ... He said, 'You tased me. You tased me. Why?' It was awful. Terrible. I asked the officer why he tased him and he told me to get back." This incident, like countless others, was whitewashed by a meaningless internal investigation.

Police violence has grown to epidemic proportions, fueled by the de facto legal immunity extended to officers who commit murders by the Obama administration and the entire political establishment. This month alone, 28 people have been killed by police officers in the US.

The fact that Slager has been charged in this case is simply the exception that proves the rule. Had the police not been caught in a lie by the release of the bystander video, there was every indication that Scott's murder would simply be swept under the rug like the thousands of other police shootings in recent years that have resulted in no criminal

charges, much less convictions, for the officers responsible.

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