

Marqueese Alston's Mother Says Release of Edited Police Video of Her Son's Shooting Death Only Raises New Questions

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Release of edited MPD video does not comply with DC's new law mandating police release Body-camera footage, say attorneys at Georgetown Law's Civil Rights Clinic

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Today, after two years of stalling, the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) publicly released a heavily edited segment of body-worn camera ("BWC") footage that only serves to continue their cover up the fatal shooting of Marqueese Alston and violates D.C. emergency police legislation.

So say Kenithia Alston, mother of Marqueese Alston, and her legal team at Georgetown Law's Civil Rights Clinic, who oppose the release of the edited footage, stating that "we asked for MPD to give us the unvarnished truth; instead it gave us a slick social media video."

"This is just another PR stunt," Ms. Alston said. "I've been asking for the full and raw footage for the past two-years so I could understand the truth about what happened to my son. Instead, I've been forced to see the moments of my son's death for a second time with many, many unanswered questions."

The presentation created by MPD reveals a one-and-a-half minutes worth of heavily edited BWC footage as well as some still images. The entirety of the presentation lasted just over four minutes and Ms. Alston's legal team indicates that critical details from the presentation are missing that can only be answered by viewing the complete and unedited BWC footage. Among the questions Ms. Alston's legal team are asking include:

Why did officers pursue Marqueese?

Was Marqueese in possession of a gun?

Why is there no audio from police officers?

Why doesn't the number of shots fired by police officers not corroborate the partial autopsy report provided?

What happened to Marqueese after he was shot?

What are the names and records of the officers who shot Marqueese?

Why won't MPD release the complete files of the investigation?

Zina Makar, a supervising attorney in the Georgetown Law Civil Rights Clinic said: "The curated presentation narrated by MPD changes nothing about Ms. Alston's lawsuit. It's become more apparent than ever that the only way MPD will give Ms. Alston the answers she has been seeking is if they are compelled by a court of law."

The Georgetown Law Civil Rights Clinic filed a **\$100M wrongful death suit** against the District of Columbia and the MPD on behalf of Alston on June 10, 2020. The suit seeks to gain access to the complete and unedited body-camera worn ("BWC") footage from police officers on the day of the shooting, something that has been denied to Ms. Alston for the past two years.

The lack of transparency in Ms. Alston's case is just one example of MPD's wider practice of secrecy that has been criticized by its residents and that which the D.C. Council sought to address through recent emergency legislation, her attorneys say. The **Policing and Justice Reform** emergency legislation follows a nationwide outcry for policing transparency and accountability. The legislation was drafted and unanimously passed by D.C. Council in early July and later signed into law on July 22 by Mayor Muriel Bowser. Among its provisions, the legislation requires that BWC footage involving fatal use of force be made public by August 15, 2020.

Pursuant to the legislation, victims and families were given an opportunity to view the footage privately prior to the public release at a D.C. government office. Ms. Alston had earlier stated optimistically: "I have renewed hope that I might finally know why my son was killed."

But now, Ms. Alston says she is disappointed with MPD's response to demands for reform.

The legislation also requires that families would have an opportunity to oppose the release of the footage and be made aware of the date that the footage would be publicly released. Ms. Alston says she and her family were never contacted by the Mayor's Office seeking consent to release the edited presentation, but instead only received a voicemail 90 minutes in advance, instructing her that the presentation would be released today.

"If MPD is correct in their claims that they were justified in killing my son, then it shouldn't have taken them over two years to show me a video that proves nothing," she said.

Her Georgetown Law legal team points out that typically, when body-camera footage is released it includes the moments of approach by police officers. The BWCs are continually recording while each officer remains on the scene until that officer departs. Although a particular incident may only last several minutes, the BWC footage is likely much lengthier and totals to several hours of footage, revealing key details, including but not limited to communications that convey the officer's contemporaneous perception of the situation as it develops.

Ms. Alston said: "I never wanted to litigate. As a mother, I only wanted the truth. But in order to get the truth, I must continue to advocate for Marqueese's rights."

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