

FAMILY OF UNARMED BLACK MAN SHOT DEAD BY PORTLAND POLICE SUES THE CITY AND THE OFFICER RESPONSIBLE

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PORTLAND, Ore. — The estate of Immanueal Clark-Johnson, an unarmed Black man killed by Portland Police, is suing the City and the officer who shot him over his death. Officer Christopher Sathoff shot Mr. Clark-Johnson, known to his family as Manny Clark, in the early hours of November 19, 2022, in southeast Portland. The lawsuit alleges unreasonable use of force by Officer Sathoff and a custom and practice on the part of Portland Police of delaying medical care to people they have shot. Even though the officers were looking for a car with four armed white men as suspects in a recent crime, they focused on Mr. Clark, an unarmed Black man, and shot him in the back, fatally wounding him.

A little after midnight on November 19, 2022, police received a report of an attempted armed robbery at SE Powell and 50th Avenue. The victim told the dispatcher that three or four white men were involved in the attempted robbery and had fled in a sedan heading west on Powell. This information and a description of the gunman as a white man in a black hoodie and ski mask were relayed to officers who were called out. When an officer reached the victim, the only additional detail he obtained was that there were four suspects in the car, and the gun may have been a black semi-automatic pistol. This limited information did not give officers sufficient probable cause to stop or arrest anyone on suspicion of involvement in the attempted robbery.

The police wrongly identified 30-year-old Mr. Clark's vehicle as possibly being the car they were seeking from the robbery. After Mr. Clark parked in a church parking lot, seemingly unaware that police were watching him, he got out of the car with his friends. The officers on the ground were informed by their air support that there were three people in Mr. Clark-Johnson's car which did not tally with the information they had from the victim.

Despite this, the officers decided on a "high-risk" or "felony" stop of the people in and around Mr. Clark's car, even though they did not have reason to believe the car or its occupants were involved in the crime. Police were seeking a non-descript car with four white men in it, but the car driven by Clark held two Black men, a white man, and a white woman.

When the officers approached, Mr. Clark and one of his passengers – both of whom are Black men – fled on foot. Manny Clark was not armed when Officer Sathoff opened fire with his AR-15, firing three times as Mr. Clark ran away and hitting him once, causing fatal injuries.

For almost half an hour, while Mr. Clark-Johnson lay severely wounded and begging for help, officers tried to get him to crawl toward him. Neighbors heard his cries and would have gotten him medical aid but were prevented by police. An ambulance was nearby within a minute of the shooting, but its personnel were not allowed to help Mr. Clark-Johnson for 25 minutes. The officers did not provide first aid or allow the ambulance to get to Mr. Clark while he lay bleeding and begging for help until 26 minutes after he was shot.

Manny Clark was taken to hospital where he died of his wounds on November 21, 2022.

Further investigation confirmed that the police had the wrong car and that neither Manny Clark nor any of his passengers were involved in the attempted robbery. The investigation also showed that Mr. Clark was unarmed. The lawsuit on behalf of his estate seeks damages for the loss of his life, the violation of his civil rights, and the cost of his medical care, burial services, and memorial services.

“Tragically, Manny Clark is far from the only person to be killed due to Portland Police shooting at innocent people with high-velocity rifles,” said Juan Chavez, attorney and Director of the Civil Rights Project of the Oregon Justice Resource Center, one of the law firms representing Manny Clark's estate. “The City of Portland fails to hold its officers accountable when they use deadly force against unarmed people without reasonable grounds to do so and when they fail to follow the Bureau’s own rules and training.”

“There are numerous examples of Portland Police officers causing lengthy delays to people they have shot receiving first aid,” said Ashlee Albies of Albies, Stark & Guerriero, another attorney representing Manny Clark’s estate. “Manny Clark would probably be alive today if medical personnel had been allowed access to him to help him and take him to hospital.”

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