

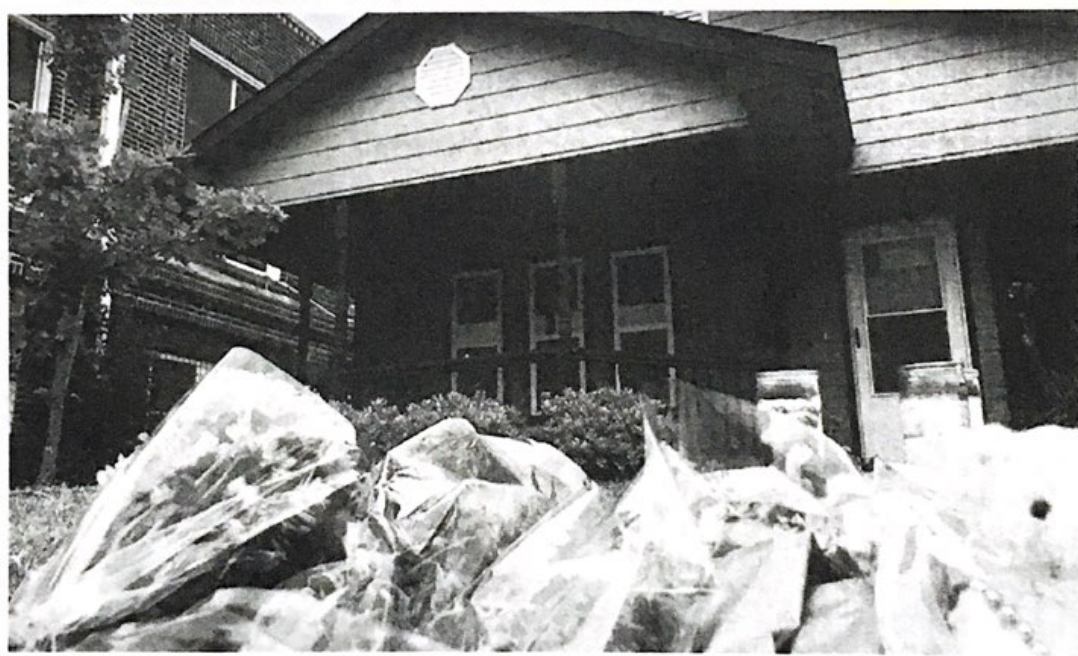
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US: White officer charged with murder in shooting of black woman

Texas police officer Aaron Dean shot and killed Atatiana Jefferson as she stood inside her home on Saturday morning.

14 Oct 2019

OK main



Bouquets of flowers and stuffed animals are piling up outside the Fort Worth home where a 28-year-old black woman was shot to death by a white police officer [Jake Bleiberg/AP Photo]

MORE ON BLACK LIVES MATTER

Police Violence
against black youth in Texas

A white police officer who shot and killed an African American woman in her Fort Worth, Texas, home in the presence of her eight-year-old nephew was charged with murder on Monday after resigning from the force.

The Fort Worth Police Department said its officers were responding to a call from a neighbour, who reported to a non-emergency line that Atatiana Jefferson's front door had been left open. The responding officer fired a shot through a window, killing 28-year-old Jefferson.

Interim Police Chief Ed Kraus said at a news conference on Monday that the officer, Aaron Dean, resigned. He said if Dean had not stepped down, he would have been fired, adding that the officer acted inappropriately.

The family had called for Dean's arrest.

In a statement released over the weekend, Fort Worth police said officers saw someone near a window inside the home and that one of them drew his duty weapon and fired after "perceiving a threat". The body camera video released by police shows two officers searching the home from the outside with flashlights before one shouts, "Put your hands up, show me your hands." One shot is then fired through a window.



Still from the body camera video released by the Fort Worth Police Department [Fort Worth Police Department/AP Photo]

In the video, the officer does not identify himself as police.

"Nobody looked at this video and said that there's any doubt that this officer acted inappropriately," Kraus said.

"I feel like we had some failures here," Fort Worth Police Officers Association President Manny Ramirez told reporters after the news conference. "It never should have happened."

Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price called for "justice and closure" for Jefferson's family.

Smart, nurturing woman

Earlier on Monday, family members described Jefferson as a smart, nurturing woman who recently moved in with her mother to help care for her in her declining health. A sister, Ashley Carr, said Jefferson embodied, honour, integrity, commitment and service.

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Questions intensify after white US officer kills black woman

"Any neighbourhood would be proud to have her as a neighbour and any city would be proud to have her as a citizen," Carr said.

A single bullet hole was visible in the window of the single-story, freshly painted purple home and floral tributes and stuffed animals piled up in the street outside Jefferson's home.

According to a demographics report released by the Fort Worth Police Department, nearly two-thirds of its 1,100 officers were white, as of June 30. Just over 20 percent were Hispanic or Latino and about 10 percent were black.

Relations with the public have been strained after other recent Fort Worth police shootings. In June, the department released body camera footage of officers fatally shooting a man who ignored repeated orders to drop his handgun. He was the fourth person Fort Worth police had fired upon in 10 days.

Ed Kraus took over as interim police chief in the city in May after the previous chief was fired.

The Fort Worth Police Officers Association issued a statement on Sunday calling for "a thorough and transparent investigation" into the shooting.

Fort Worth police said it released the bodycam footage soon after the shooting for transparency, but that any "camera footage inside the residence" could not be distributed due to state law.



A bullet hole could be seen in the back window outside the Fort Worth home where a 28-year-old black woman was shot to death by a white police officer [Jake Bleiberg/AP Photo]

The bodycam video included blurred still frames showing a gun inside a bedroom. It is unclear if the firearm was found near Jefferson, and police have not said that the officer who shot her thought she was holding a gun. The police statement released Saturday said only that officers who entered the residence after the shooting found a firearm, and Lieutenant Brandon O'Neil would not answer reporters' questions Sunday on why police released images of the gun.

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[US officer kills black woman inside her home after welfare call](#)

O'Neil said the officer would meet with investigators from the Fort Worth Police Department on Monday about the shooting. Police previously said the officer, a white man, joined the department in April 2018.

A large crowd gathered outside Jefferson's home Sunday night for a vigil after earlier demonstrations briefly stopped traffic on part of Interstate 35.

Jefferson was a 2014 graduate of Xavier University in New Orleans and earned a bachelor's degree in biology, the university said. Merritt told the Star-Telegram that Jefferson was working in pharmaceutical equipment sales and was considering going back to medical school.

Nearly 700 killed by police in 2019

Fort Worth is about 50km (30 miles) west of Dallas, where another high-profile police shooting occurred last year. In that case, white Dallas police officer Amber Guyger fatally shot her black neighbour Botham Jean inside his own apartment after Guyger said she mistook it for her own. Guyger, 31, was sentenced this month to 10 years in prison.

In Georgia, a former white police officer who fatally shot an unarmed, naked, black man was found not guilty of murder on Monday.

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US officer shoots dead black woman heard saying 'I'm pregnant'

Jurors did convict Robert "Chip" Olsen of aggravated assault, violation of oath of office and making a false statement. Olsen's face turned red and he squeezed his eyes shut tightly when the verdict was read. His wife, Kathy Olsen, began sobbing and had to be led from the court.

Olsen, now 57, was a DeKalb County police officer in March 2015 when he responded to a call of a naked man behaving erratically outside an Atlanta-area apartment complex. Shortly after arriving, he fatally shot 26-year-old Anthony Hill, an Air Force veteran who had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

According to the Washington Post's Fatal Force database, at least 689 people have been killed by police in the US so far in 2019. At least 992 people were killed by the police in 2018 and more than 980 people were killed by police the previous year.

According to watchdog group The Sentencing Project, African American men are six times more likely to be arrested than white men.

These disparities, particularly the killing of African Americans by police, has prompted the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, a popular civil rights campaign aimed at ending police violence and dismantling structural racism.

SOURCE: AL JAZEERA AND NEWS AGENCIES