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Video Shows Unarmed Texas Man with Pants Down Before Fatal Police Shooting

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/26/us/danny-ray-thomas-houston-police-shooting.html?auth=login-google>

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Police violence against
black youth in Texas



The dashboard camera in Deputy Cameron Brewer's car captured his encounter with Danny Ray Thomas, who was unarmed and whose pants were around his ankles. Credit...Harris County Sheriff's Office

By Matthew Haag

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Last Thursday morning, the Harris County Sheriff's Office in Texas issued Cameron Brewer a body camera, making him one of the last deputies in the department to receive one. But two hours later, the camera was off and still charging in his patrol car when he came upon a fight at a Houston intersection.

Within 30 seconds of arriving, Deputy Brewer had exited his car, confronted a man in the street whose pants were around his ankles and fatally shot him once in the chest. While the deputy's body camera did not capture the shooting, the Sheriff's Office released footage from his car's dashboard camera on Monday that offered another angle of the encounter, which many in Houston had quickly criticized as a case of excessive force and the latest example of an officer killing an unarmed black person.

In the video, Deputy Brewer, who is black, stops his car behind two men having an altercation, with shoving, in the street. The deputy can be heard yelling at Danny Ray Thomas, the man whose pants were down, as he walks toward the car. "Get down, man!

Get on the ground," the deputy screams repeatedly, before, out of the camera's view, a single gunshot rings out. Mr. Thomas, 34, was pronounced dead at a hospital.

On Monday night, Deputy Brewer declined to comment.

The shooting came in a month of renewed scrutiny and protests across the country over the use of force by the police. Hours after Mr. Thomas was killed on Thursday, hundreds of [protesters flooded the streets of Sacramento](#), blockading the entrance of a sports arena, over the death of Stephon Clark, 22, who was shot by officers in his backyard on March 18.

Like those shot in certain other high-profile police encounters before them, both Mr. Thomas and Mr. Clark were black and unarmed, and their encounters were captured on video and spread widely on social media.

On Monday, the Harris County sheriff, Ed Gonzalez, vowed that the shooting would be fully investigated and said the department had released the dashboard video as a sign of its transparency. The Houston Police Department is leading the investigation of the shooting because it occurred within the city, but the sheriff's department is conducting a separate administrative review, Sheriff Gonzalez said.

"We are going to take this very seriously," Sheriff Gonzalez said at a news conference on Monday. "We are going to review all policies and procedures to see how we can continue to be better and learn from these situations."

Deputy Brewer, who joined the sheriff's department in 2016, was placed on routine administrative leave after the shooting.

Editors' Picks

Sheriff Gonzalez said that Deputy Brewer was equipped with a Taser, which he did not use. The sheriff said that deputies had been trained on the use of nonlethal force, including during encounters with people who may have a mental illness.

Relatives of Mr. Thomas [told The Houston Chronicle](#) last week that he suffered from depression and that [two of his children were drowned in August 2016](#). The children's mother has been charged with capital murder. "Knowing that he was O.K. when I woke up every day made me fine," his sister, Marketa Thomas, told reporters on Thursday. "We'd been through everything together."

Jack Begg contributed research.

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