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POLICE BRUTALITY: TYRE NICHOLS

BY DAVINA BELLINGER

ON JANUARY 7, 2023, officers Tadarrius Bean, Demetrius Haley, Emmitt Martin III, Desmond Mills Jr., and Justin Smith were involved with the fatal beating of Tyre Nichols in Memphis, Tennessee. All five police officers were Black, like Nichols. Following the beating, Nichols was hospitalized and died three days later. At the time, police were chasing Nichols on foot during a traffic stop for reckless driving— that was when the confrontation occurred. The five officers were fired on January twentieth after the investigation confirmed that they had violated police department policy. They were then charged later that same week with second-degree murder, two counts of official misconduct, two counts of aggravated kidnapping, one count of official oppression, and one count of aggravated assault. The event video was released to the public on January 27, leading to outrage in the community where Nichols was killed.

More information about the cops and prior experiences similar to this incident have started to come out. Officer Demetrius Haley, before he joined the Memphis Police Department in 2020, worked as a corrections officer in 2016 when a lawsuit was filed. The U.S District Court of Western Tennessee accused Haley of partaking in the beating of an inmate named Cordarius Sledge. The lawsuit was later dropped in 2018 because Sledge did not attend one of Haley's summons. Officer Tadarrius Bean joined the Memphis Police Department back in August of 2020 after graduating from the University of Mississippi with his only work experience being at fast-food chains and AT&T. Officer Emmirr Martin III went to Bethel University and played football there until he graduated and joined the Memphis Police Department back in 2018. People that were close to him shared that they were shocked by the incident and claimed that he would not do something like this. Officer Desmond Mills Jr. had played football as well, but for West Virginia State University, and was described as a hard-working player. Finally, Justin Smith was hired by the Memphis Police Department in 2018 with no other relevant information available.

After seeing the video, Nichols's stepfather Rodney Wells said that anyone involved with the incident should be held responsible for what happened to Tyre Nichols. There is still an ongoing investigation to be done due to the number of people involved in the incident. Vice president Kamala Harris attended the funeral of Nichols and expressed that "[Nichols] should have been safe," and that Nichols beating was "Not in pursuit of public safety."



Photo Credit: Colin Lloyd