

Cop who killed Philando Castile facing manslaughter charges

By Zaida Green
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St. Anthony police Officer Jeronimo Yanez was charged yesterday with second-degree manslaughter, and two counts of dangerous discharge of a firearm. Yanez killed Castile on July 6 during a traffic stop in the suburb of Falcon Heights, Minnesota, firing seven times at Castile in front of his fiancée and four-year-old daughter. Moments before his shooting, Castile had informed Yanez that he legally possessed a firearm and that he was reaching for his driver's license.

Yanez believed Castile matched the description of a suspect in a robbery of a nearby convenience store, radioing to another officer that Castile had a "wide-set nose" and a broken taillight. Yanez told investigators on July 7 that he saw Castile put his hand around "an object... and he was pulling it out with his right hand." Yanez then screamed, "Don't pull it out!" and immediately drew his own pistol, firing seven rounds in rapid succession at Castile.

"No reasonable officer, knowing, seeing and hearing what Officer Yanez did at the time, would have used deadly force under these circumstances," said Ramsey County prosecuting attorney, John J. Choi. "He [Castile] volunteered in good faith that he had a firearm, beyond what the law requires. He emphatically stated he was not pulling it out. He was restricted by his seat belt. He was accompanied by a woman and a young child."

Diamond Reynolds, Castile's fiancée, captured the bloody aftermath on mobile phone video that was livestreamed to Facebook. The video shows Yanez continuing to aim his pistol at a dying Castile while screaming at Reynolds to keep her hands up. Castile's murder, along with the murder of Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge, Louisiana just a day earlier on July 5, sparked nationwide protests against police violence. Both deaths were captured on videos that quickly

spread through social media.

Choi has chosen not to release police audio and dashboard video of the killing to the public.

Reynolds learned of the charges against Yanez only after reporters contacted her requesting comments and interviews. Reynolds told ABC News that the charge of second-degree manslaughter was "absolutely not [enough]" and that Yanez should be charged with murder. "I feel as though murder ... is what would be appropriate here in Minnesota."

After the killing, Yanez was placed on paid administrative leave, then desk duty, then another paid administrative leave. If convicted, Yanez could be sentenced to up to ten years in prison and fined \$20,000 for second-degree manslaughter, and sentenced to five years in prison and fined \$10,000 on the other charges.

According to KilledByPolice.net, Castile was the 610th person to be killed by US police this year. As of this writing, according to the database, the total for 2016 has now reached 1,011.

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