



Seattle Community Police Commission

NEWS RELEASE

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CPC Co-Chair Statement on SPD East Precinct Break Room Reporting

“We are horrified and disturbed by a Seattle Police Department break room’s open display of contempt and disrespect toward a young black man who Seattle Police shot and killed in April 2017.

We are also extremely disappointed in SPD’s explanation of the video to the community, which clearly does not match what we can all see on the video.

The January 2021 body worn video shows a mock tombstone of Damarius Butts prominently displayed above a microwave next to a refrigerator in an East Precinct break room that is decorated with a Trump 2020 flag.

The culture that allows such displays and violations of policy and law have no place in any police department, especially a department seeking to come out from under federal court oversight following a pattern and practice of unconstitutional policing.

The timing of the video is also very concerning on multiple levels. By January 2021, the inquest into the police killing of Mr. Butts had already commenced and litigation into its legal issues was ongoing.

The prominent displaying of a mock tombstone of Mr. Butts, that appeared to be taken from a Black Lives Matter memorial, above a microwave – at the East Precinct no less - after the inquest into his killing had already commenced is clearly an intentional act.

Additionally, less than two-months ago SPD asked the Federal Court overseeing the Consent Decree to find that SPD was a changed department, that it was in sustained compliance with the Consent Decree, and to approve a transition agreement that continued oversight into police accountability systems and use of force during crowd control.

The January 2021 video was taken just months after SPD's egregious use of force on demonstrators following the murder of George Floyd, and SPD withheld the information regarding this video from the court and the community.

Seattle Police Officers take an oath to serve our community, and the disgusting display in their break room does just the opposite and greatly harms the community's ability to trust its police department.

We expect SPD Chief Adrien Diaz to promptly attend a public CPC meeting to answer questions regarding this video, and the culture at SPD that allowed this display. The CPC will also be reviewing SPD policies that apply to this situation and make recommendations for changes, if necessary."

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