

LoRusso Law Firm Statement On Atlanta Police Investigators Gardner and Street

ATLANTA, GA, UNITED STATES , June 3, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On May 30, 2020, Atlanta Police Investigators Gardner and Streeter were assigned to provide security for lawful protesters and businesses. Pursuant to a 9:00 p.m. curfew implemented by Mayor Bottoms, Atlanta Police officers, state officers, officers from around the metropolitan Atlanta area, and Georgia National Guard servicemembers began guiding traffic and pedestrians out of the city.

Although Atlanta Police command encouraged officers to make arrests, if people were leaving the city, or heeding lawful orders to do so, officers were not making arrests. During this time, fireworks were being discharged directly at uniformed officers, gunshots were common, and officers were being pelted with debris. Video shows officers watching vehicles leave the area. Around 9:50 p.m., nearly an hour after the curfew began, one vehicle being driven by Messiah Young and occupied by Taniyah Pilgrim was not moving with the other traffic. A pedestrian in the roadway speaking with Mr. Young refused lawful orders to leave and was arrested. Mr. Young refused multiple lawful orders to drive from the city. When a uniformed officer lawfully ordered Mr. Young to open his door. He repeatedly refused and at one point, he rapidly drove his vehicle away. These acts constitute crimes in Georgia. Given the amount of shots being fired in the area, officers were understandably concerned about the presence of weapons. Officers attempted to remove Mr. Young and Ms. Pilgrim from the vehicle. Mr. Young was placed under arrest.

Compliance with the curfew and the lawful orders of uniformed officers to safely drive away would have resulted in little or no contact between officers and Mr. Young and Ms. Pilgrim. Officers used the force they reasonably believed to be appropriate at the time based upon the facts before them. The use of force in Georgia is governed by the reasonable belief of the officer per O.C.G.A. §17-4-20. Further, the United States Supreme Court prohibits the use of hindsight in evaluating an officer's use of force. The use of force will never appear pleasant or comfortable to watch on a video.

Gardner is a 22-year veteran of the Atlanta Police who served on specialized units and as a task force officer with the FBI. He has received nearly 1,500 hours of training including use of force training. Streeter is a 16-year veteran of the Atlanta Police who served as a state task force officer with the GBI. He has received over 1,700 hours of training including use of force training. They are extremely experienced officers who have dedicated their lives in service to the citizens of the City of Atlanta. However, both were fired before they could be interviewed by the Office of Professional Standards in direct violation of the policies and procedures of the Atlanta Police

Department as well as the law.

Everyone wants to remove bad officers from agencies. We must also focus on keeping good officers. Although Georgia law allows these officers to testify before any grand jury considering criminal charges against them, the District Attorney bypassed that system. These officers do not present a flight risk and are well-known to prosecutors. Any charges brought by a District Attorney without a full investigation should raise concerns. Many more facts will emerge to shed light on this incident with Mr. Young and Ms. Pilgrim, the rush to terminate these investigators, and the rush to prosecute the officers involved.

We do not anticipate providing interviews at this time and will release more information as it becomes available.

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