

LOCAL CRIME & PUBLIC SAFETY

Family decries U.S. Park Police over fatal shooting of 17-year-old



By [Omari Daniels](#)

April 5, 2023 at 6:24 p.m. EDT

The mother of a 17-year-old fatally shot by a U.S. Park Police officer last month said at a news conference Wednesday that seeing video of her son getting killed left her lost for words.

“No mother should be here,” said Terra Martin, the mother of Dalaneo Martin, at a news conference the day after authorities released body-camera footage showing the officer shooting her son in the back. “I don’t sleep. I don’t eat, and justice needs to be served. My son should still be here. The video explains everything that they did. How can you justify this?”

Terra Martin, who wore a shirt that said, “Justice for Dalaneo ‘Debo,’” appeared at the news conference with several relatives and supporters, offering her first public remarks since police released footage of the [deadly March 18 encounter](#). The footage has already spurred questions about whether the officers used appropriate tactics, and the U.S. attorney’s office in D.C. announced that it would conduct a civil rights probe of the incident.

The footage shows D.C. and Park Police officers strategizing about taking Martin into custody after they spot him apparently sleeping in the driver’s seat of a vehicle they believe to be stolen. Two Park Police officers ultimately reach into the vehicle from both sides and grab the teen, the footage shows.

A struggle ensues, and the teen speeds off, leaving one officer tumbling away from the vehicle while another remains in the back seat, the footage shows. The officer asks Dalaneo Martin to stop over the span of about 13 seconds, then draws his gun and says, “Stop, stop, or I’ll shoot,” the footage shows. Barely a second later, he fires several shots. The vehicle ultimately crashes into a house.

“It was a lot of bad judgment and policy procedures made when it came to both police departments,” said Nee Nee Taylor, a community activist with Harriet’s Wildest Dreams. “And the same thing I say all the time, that two things could be true. He both could have been allegedly stealing a car, and also Dalaneo could have been here facing his day in court.”

Terra Martin described Dalaneo, her fifth child of 10, as her “sunshine” and called for Park Police to release the name of the officer who shot the teen — something they have so far not done. Martin said she wants the officer to be arrested and charged with first-degree murder.

“I’m planning my son’s funeral,” Terra Martin said. “You took my protector away from me.”

Andrew O. Clarke, an attorney for the family, said that he welcomed the opening of a civil rights investigation, and hinted that the family might pursue its own lawsuit.

“We will pursue justice for Dalaneo, with or without the help of the federal government or the District of Columbia,” Clarke said.

The family’s lawyers and Terra Martin both declined to answer why Dalaneo Martin was asleep in the car or whether he stole the vehicle.

“We just know that he was sleeping in it, which is not illegal or criminal,” said Jade Mathis, counsel for the Martin family.

A U.S. Park Police spokesman referred questions to the D.C. police department, saying that it is the lead agency investigating the incident. The D.C. police department did not immediately return a message seeking comment. The chairman of the Park Police union has defended the officer’s actions.

In addition to condemning the incident itself, Mathis said authorities did not show the family the complete, unedited footage of the incident that was ultimately shared with the media.

The footage the family viewed, she said, did not include when the officer got out of the vehicle after it had crashed into a home, and when officers removed Dalaneo Martin from it. When officials released the video, they compiled clips that showed key moments of the encounter, while also linking to the complete, raw footage — which is routinely requested by reporters.

One of Dalaneo Martin’s siblings said she hoped he would be remembered for how much he loved others.

“Debo is a family person no matter what goes on,” said Rahketa Steele, one of Dalaneo’s sisters. “No matter who you are. If he loved you and you met Debo, he’s going to leave an impact on you.”

Ellie Silverman contributed to this report.