

The Search for Justice for Eric Garner Continues

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On Monday, August 19, Daniel Pantaleo, the officer who held Eric Garner in a chokehold that ended his life in 2014, was fired from the New York Police Department. Mr. Garner's death and desperate last words of "I can't breathe" on July 17, 2014 helped ignite the Black Lives Matter Movement and bring national attention to the severe problem of excessive use of police force and violence against particularly young black and Latino men in the US. Based on US government mortality data, about 1 in 65 deaths of young African American men is caused by police violence. Officer Pantaleo became a representation of police misconduct and disregard for black lives.



"Today justice is done." Mayor of New York Bill de Blasio announced this statement at a city hall news conference held on the day Pantaleo was fired.

Is this what justice looks like for the victims who have died at the hands of police violence?

For many, including members of Eric Garner's family such as his mother and daughter, accountability of culpable officers is a step in the right direction, but they wonder why it took five years and the other 10 officers who were involved in Mr. Garner's arrest and subsequent death have not faced any repercussions. Mr. Garner's mother, Gwen Carr, led protestors outside of Police Headquarters on the day of Pantaleo's dismissal, holding signs in support of Pantaleo's discharge and calling for the department to fire the remaining officers involved in the arrest. She urged that they can replace their jobs, but she cannot replace her son.

The only other officer who faced a penalty in Eric Garner's case was sergeant Kizzy Adonis, who was charged with breaking departmental rules and "failure to supervise." On August 21, she agreed to a plea deal where she lost 20 days of vacation time but was still allowed to keep her job. Carr was outraged by the news of this plea deal and has continued to call out the NYPD for covering up deep rooted racism and violent tendencies amongst its officers.

Criticism has also arisen because Adonis happens to be a woman of color, and activists and critics have become skeptical that the only officer to be reprimanded is an African American woman who holds a position of authority within the department.