

IN SOLIDARITY



Name: Ezell Ford

Dates: October 14, 1988 – August 11, 2014

Place of death: Los Angeles (Florence), CA

An extra layer of controversy was added to the death of Ezell Ford when it was disclosed that he suffered from depression, schizophrenia, and bi-polar disorder. Born to teen-age parents, he was the oldest of seven. Residents of his neighborhood and police knew Ezell was mentally ill and developmentally disabled. In 2007, Mr. Ford was arrested for carrying a loaded firearm and possession of marijuana with the intent to sell. The marijuana charge, changed to a misdemeanor, was covered by a small fine and Ezell Ford spent 90 days in jail for the weapons charge. Ezell had also been arrested for trespassing. In 2008, an innocent bystander, he was shot in the leg in a gang-related violence. People noted that his mental condition deteriorated after that incident.

Officers Sharlton Wampler and Antonio Villegas, gang enforcer enforcement officers, stopped Ford in what was known to be a gang area. They believed his presence there was sufficient reason to detain him. They left a taser in their vehicle and proceeded to confront Ford, Villegas unholstering his gun. The reports of what ensued are confusing. There was flight and hiding on Mr. Ford's part. On the part of the officers, they said that Ford tackled one of them and a scuffle began. As Ford lie on Officer Wampler, Officer Villegas pushed his knee into Ford's back. Ezell Ford reportedly reached for Wampler's holstered pistol. Villegas shot Ford in the arm and fired a second shot into his side. Thirteen seconds had elapsed from the time the officers left their vehicle. Officer Wampler reached for his back-up gun and shot Ezell Ford in the back. Ezell Ford was handcuffed and taken to a hospital where, following surgery, he died.

There were witnesses to this altercation with confusing testimony. By June of 2015, the Los Angeles Board of Police Commissioners ruled that Villegas did not have good reason to initially draw his gun and Wampler did not have a good reason to suspect that Ford was in possession of drugs. Wampler was found to be in violation in four areas, Villegas in three. These rulings were not binding, and no indictments followed. By August of 2016, Villegas and Wampler filed a counter suit against the LAPD citing discriminatory actions because of their racial heritages. (Hispanic and white and/or Asian). The LAPD had a long and checkered record in its policies and actions in the African American community. Protests happened for Ezell Ford immediately after the incident and sporadically over the years. Ezell Ford's family received \$1.5 million from the City of Los Angeles in a wrongful death suit.

June 8, 2020