

Texas Sheriff Involved in the Death of Sandra Bland Fired from Previous Post for Racism

By Benjamin Clover

Sandra Bland died in police custody this past Monday. Visiting Texas from Chicago to interview for a college job at her alma mater of Prairie View A&M, she was pulled over for a routine traffic violation (failure to use her turn signal). Everything from that point forward screams racism and foul play, including her death in the Waller County jail Monday.

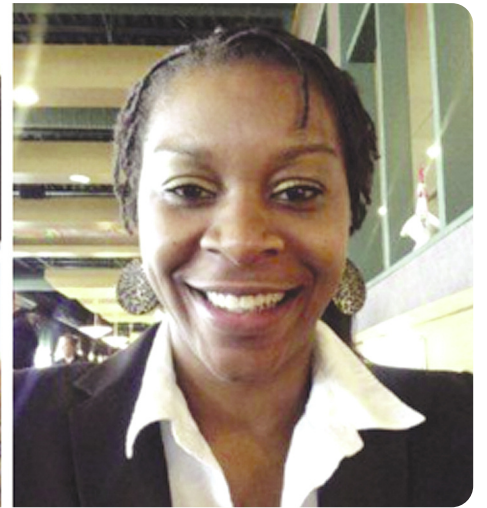
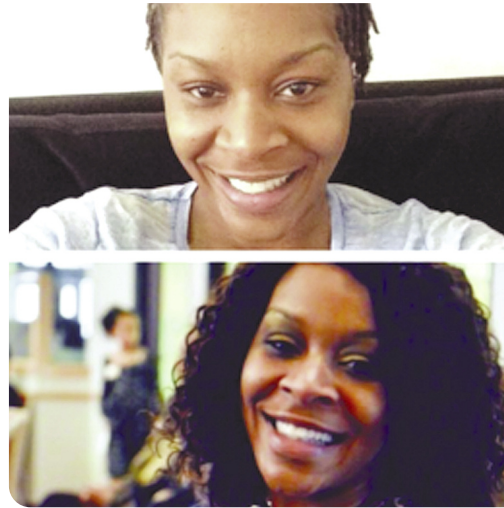
The first red flag is that Bland was officially arrested on Friday for assaulting a police officer.

What we see from a bystander video is her telling the officers she is in pain and cannot hear after her head was slammed on the ground by the male arresting officer. The

video is below. We have now learned that Waller County Sheriff Glenn Smith, who made the first public comments about Bland's in-custody death, was suspended for documented cases of racism when he was chief of police in Hempstead, Texas, in 2007.

After serving his suspension, more complaints of racism came in, and Smith was actually fired as chief of police in Hempstead:

Council members are reviewing video of four arrests and detentions over the past month. The officers and police chief, who are the targets of the complaints, are white. Some residents are calling for a third of the city's 15 person police force to be suspended, disciplined, or fired.



Allegations of racism have led to the Hempstead police chief being suspended and ordered to take anger management classes.

The Hempstead city council has been reviewing the case since last week and finally came to a decision at around 2am Tuesday. A number of residents have come forward with claims of racism by at least four white police officers.

The council reviewed the complaints, along with videotapes before making their decision to punish Chief Glen Smith. Some say it wasn't enough. The chief says he respects the decision.

"My action during the arrest did not meet professionalism as it should with language and I'm not above policy and procedure, no more than any officer of this city," said Chief Smith.

It would seem that once a law enforcement officer—a chief of police no less—is suspended and then fired for racism and abuse, his ability to serve in law enforcement would cease.

That'd be too much like right, though.

Hell, it made Glenn Smith popular in Waller County, where he then ran for the elected position of sheriff and won against—you guessed it—an African-American candidate, Jeron Barnett, who would've been the first black sheriff ever in Waller County.

Police are claiming that Bland killed herself in her cell, but all of her friends and family have serious reservations about that version of events:

Longtime friend LaNitra Dean tells the I-Team that Bland "was a warm, affectionate, outspoken woman" who spoke out about police brutality often on her Facebook page and was critical of injustice against African Americans.

"Each one of us feels like we lost a part of ourselves and it's hard, it's going to be hard for a very long time," said her sister Sharon Cooper.

"The Waller County Jail is trying to rule her death a suicide and Sandy would not have taken her own life," Dean said. "Sandy was strong. Strong mentally and spiritually."

3 Killed, 27 Wounded over Eight Hours in Chicago, Including Boy, 7

CHICAGO — After a relatively quiet start to the Fourth of July weekend in Chicago, a burst of gun violence overnight left three dead and 27 people wounded in just eight hours, including a 7-year-old boy killed after returning from a celebration. "It's crazy," said Vedia Hailey, the grandmother of the boy, Amari Brown.

"Who would shoot a 7-year-old in the chest? Who would do that to a baby? When is it going to stop?"

From 9:20 p.m. Saturday until 4:45 a.m. Sunday, 30 people were shot across Chicago, three of them fatally, including Amari.

The other victims included a 16-year-old boy and a 15-year-old girl shot shortly after midnight as they walked in Old Town, and a 19-year-old man shot around 10 p.m. Saturday as two groups fought near Navy Pier after the fireworks display.

Several of the shootings across the city

involved multiple victims: Four people shot in one incident in Austin, three shot in Albany Park, and two victims in shootings in the West Chesterfield, Humboldt Park, Old Town and Fuller Park neighborhoods.

The worst burst of violence last Fourth of July in the city occurred during a 13-hour stretch from Sunday afternoon through early Monday morning: four dead and 26 wounded.

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A Tough Beat for a Detective: Recruiting Black Police Officers

By Rachel L. Swarns

NEW YORK — The lanky black detective strode to the front of the school auditorium, grabbed the microphone and turned to face the crowd. He had a feel for the room, for the mistrust and doubt in many hearts, and a strategy to win them over. But would his pitch work? In his 14 years as a New York City police officer, Detective Yuseff Hamm has stalked drug dealers, chased gunmen and talked two men out of jumping off buildings. But as he stood last Tuesday before a predominantly black audi-

ence at a community meeting in Rosedale, Queens, he faced a challenge that some might argue was nearly as daunting: Trying to persuade African-Americans to join the city's Police Department in the Eric Garner era. About a quarter of the city's population is black and yet, Detective Hamm told the crowd, "in the Police Department, it's only 16 percent." "That's a problem," he continued. "Do you not agree?" "Yes!" several people called out in unison. "So what are we doing about it?" asked

Detective Hamm, who is president of the Guardians Association, the fraternal organization that represents black police officers in New York City. "I'm asking you to partner with us."

He didn't mention the names on many minds — Eric Garner of Staten Island, Akai Gurley of Brooklyn, Michael Brown of Ferguson, Mo., Tamir Rice of Cleveland — some of the unarmed African-Americans who have died at the hands of the police over the past 12 months.

Instead, Detective Hamm



Police officers salute as the hearse of New York city police officer Rafael Ramos drives along his funeral procession route in the Glendale section of Queens, Saturday, Dec. 27, 2014, in New York.

talked dollars and cents, pointing out that police officers earn a total compensation package of \$90,829 annually after five and a half years on the job. (And that doesn't include overtime.)

And he talked history,

reminding the crowd that Samuel J. Battle, New York's first black police officer, joined the force in 1911, a time when "there was a lot of racial turmoil similar to what we're experiencing today."

Soon, people were nodding, laughing and applauding.

The big test, though, would come after the civic meeting, at St. Clare Catholic Academy. Would anyone come forward with names of potential prospects?

"It's usually favorable," said Detective Hamm, 48, who waited in the back of the auditorium as the group of retirees, civil servants and others wrapped up discussion of new traffic lights, park cleanups and funding for local schools. "But you don't always know which way it's going to go."

Last month, Mayor Bill de Blasio vowed to increase the number of African-American recruits, saying, "We need our force to reflect every element of this city."

But that, as Detective Hamm can tell you, is easier said than done.

The number of black graduates from the Police

Academy has dropped to 9 percent this month from 19 percent in 2005, police officials say. Officials have pointed to several factors, including the shrinking black population in New York City; the department's stop-and-frisk strategy, which increased distrust in minority communities; and administrative hiccups that left some applicants hanging for years without a call from the department after taking the test.

The department's efforts haven't always been consistent, either. One day after Mr. de Blasio promised that the city would be recruiting black officers "energetically," police officials acknowledged that 18 of the 20 officers assigned to the department's recruitment unit had been reassigned to help crack down on gun violence.

Police officials said those officers would return to recruitment in the fall. William J. Bratton, the police commissioner, said the city's hiring efforts were already delivering results.

About 16 percent of the recruits entering the academy this month are expected to be black, "a very significant" (Continued on page 3A)

How FBI's Dylann Roof Gun Snafu Hurts Obama's Gun Control Agenda

By Patrik Jonsson

ATLANTA — President Obama pushed Americans to call for stricter gun controls in the wake of the June 17 Charleston church massacre, complaining that the admitted killer, Dylann Roof, "had no trouble getting his hands on a gun." What the President likely didn't know when he made those comments is this: It wasn't a lack of gun controls, but a bureaucratic failure, that led to Roof obtaining the gun legally, due, it turns out, on a senior FBI document examiner's unfamiliarity with South Carolina geography.

As such, details re-



Dylann Roof

vealed Friday in the Dylann Roof case add to the complexity of the President's earlier call for a "greater sense of urgency" on gun safety, as FBI Director James Comey said Friday that the agency "felt sick" about its role in the Charleston tragedy —

specifically, a failure to spot a drug charge that would have disqualified Roof from buying a gun on April 11.

According to Mr. Comey, a senior examiner started working on Roof's application on April 13, digging into the details of a drug arrest from earlier this year, which had the potential for disqualifying the application. But, being unfamiliar with South Carolina geography, she contacted the wrong law enforcement jurisdiction, which said it had no details on the arrest. A federal law allows the FBI three days to do a background check before either approving it or

giving gun stores the discretion to sell the gun anyway.

By the end of that week, Roof had his murder weapon in hand.

For some commentators, the question now is whether a new focus on background checks and the FBI's admission that it flubbed Roof's application will affect public opinion over gun controls in an era where a recent government study found that the number of active shooter incidents rose from an average of 6.4 situations a year in 2007 to an average of 16.4 incidents in 2013.

The role of the government (Continued on page 4A)