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Temple NAACP releases statement on DeCruz acquittal

STAFF REPORT

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The Temple branch of the NAACP issued a statement on Saturday regarding the acquittal of former Temple Police Officer Carmen DeCruz in the fatal Dec. 2, 2019, shooting of Temple resident Michael Dean last week.

“In the wake of this decision of not guilty by the jury, the NAACP Temple Branch Executive Committee first and foremost sends condolences to the family of Michael Dean,” the group said. “We are deeply sorry for their loss. We also want to offer the Dean family our support in getting through this tragedy.”

The Temple NAACP thanked prosecutors in the Bell County District Attorney's Office "for their diligence in this case and especially in recognizing that there were many questions and problems in how the incident was handled with disregard to the policies and protocols Temple police officers are expected/required to follow in such incidents, especially when they interact with citizens during traffic stops."

The Temple Police Department's policies "are important because they aim to protect police officers and citizens," the NAACP said.

"We also applaud the prosecutors for valuing Temple's African American citizens' lives," the organization said. "We know and understand that police officers want to go home at the end of their shifts. And we support that. But as the Assistant District Attorney stated in this case, Mr. Dean should have been ticketed for speeding and arrested for DWI, he should have gone on to make bond, and sit out his time – and then go home. As the prosecutor noted, Mr. Dean should not have ended up in the morgue. So, we were disappointed with the decision by the jury, considering the evidence put forth by the District Attorney' Office regarding policies violated."

The Temple NAACP said "several questions still remain in this case."

"We look forward to the release of the video to the public," the group said.

The city of Temple said last week that it would continue to withhold the Dean shooting videos because of a pending \$10 million federal civil rights lawsuit filed by a Dean family member.

"Obviously, this incident and its outcome have undermined trust in the Temple Police Department by the African American Community because of no accountability," the Temple NAACP said. "We want to work with the law enforcement community to address these issues going forward."

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