

Federal lawsuit seeks answers about H-F woman's death

BY ERIC CRUMP
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The family of the late Alexis Wilson filed a seven-count lawsuit in federal court on Tuesday, July 12, that names the village of Dolton and two Dolton police officers as defendants in the teen's death.

The suit alleges that officers Ryan Perez and Gerald Carlton deprived Wilson of her civil rights under the 4th and 14th Amendments to the Constitution when they tried to force her out of the vehicle she was driving on July 27, 2021.

The lawsuit asks for "fair and reasonable compensatory damages and punitive damages" for each of the counts, plus \$1 million for the wrongful death count.

Police were called to Baba's Famous Steak & Lemonade at 685 Sibley Boulevard in Dolton after an employee called to report a disturbance. Videos aired by area television stations show one officer apparently punching Wilson in the head after she declined to exit the vehicle, at which point she attempted to drive from the scene. Officers are alleged to have opened fire, killing her.

The suit accuses Perez and Carlton of

one count each of using excessive force and committing battery. It also accuses Carlton of wrongfully causing Alexis's death.

Alexis' parents, Cara and Alonzo Wilson of Homewood, have maintained since the incident that their daughter panicked when officers escalated the situation, and that she was not a threat. They also claim Dolton officials lied about what happened and attempted to portray Alexis as a criminal.

The Wilsons have been seeking a detailed account of what happened and why. In January, the couple filed a number of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests with the village, but they believe the responses they received were incomplete.

In March, the parents filed suit in Cook County Circuit Court in an attempt to compel Dolton officials to provide a full account of the incident, but they believe Dolton officials have not complied with their requests.

Cara Wilson said she is still haunted by her daughter's death.

"Every day is difficult," she said. "Every day I wake up and face living without my daughter, a daughter that lived in the house with me, slept in the



Eric Crump/H-F Chronicle
Cara Wilson shares word of a federal lawsuit against two Dolton police officers and the village in connection with the shooting death of her daughter, Alexis Wilson, in July 2021. With her, at left, is her husband, Alonzo Wilson, and attorney, Gregory Kulis, at right.

next room from me, helped with her little brother every day. This has been the most horrific experience of my life."

Alexis was 19 when she died. She was a graduate of Homewood-Flossmoor High School who was planning to attend Prairie State College in the fall of 2021, according to her mother.

Attorney Gregory Kulis, representing the Wilsons, said the main purpose of the lawsuit is to get answers about the incident.

"The Wilsons deserve answers about why this occurred, and they want to prevent this from occurring to anyone else," he said. "Dolton police officers clearly escalated this to a deadly outcome."

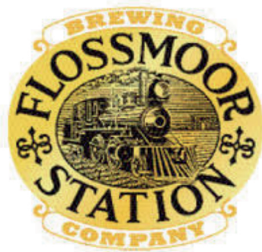
He also questioned why Dolton and Illinois State Police, the agency that investigates fatal use of force by law enforcement officers, have not issued a final report on the incident.

"I don't know why it takes so long for a law enforcement agency to investigate when one of their own shoots a citizen," he said. "If it was on the flip side, somebody would be charged within 48 hours."

An ISP spokesperson referred the Chronicle to the Cook County State's Attorney's Office for comment about the status of the investigation.

An SAO spokesperson said: "We can confirm that the matter is under review by prosecutors in our Law Enforcement Accountability Division (LEAD), who review investigations of all on-duty officer-involved shootings to determine if criminal charges are appropriate. We are unable to further comment."

Dolton officials declined to comment on the lawsuit.



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