



NEWS > CRIME AND PUBLIC SAFETY • News

“He looks like a turd”: Denver police racially profiled Black driver, lawsuit alleges

Keilon Hill’s Lawsuit stems from a minor 2020 traffic crash on Interstate 25



Body camera footage provided by Rathod Mohamedbhai law firm

A still image from Denver police Officer Gary Yampolsky’s body camera shows Officer Thomas Ludwig arrest Keilon Hill on April 27, 2020. Hill sued the city of Denver Thursday alleging officers violated his constitutional rights.



A Black man sued the city of Denver on Thursday alleging three police officers racially profiled him, illegally searched his car and violated his constitutional rights when they arrested him while responding to a minor traffic crash in 2020.

Keilon Hill, a 25-year-old graduate student at the time, called 911 after a crash on Interstate 25 and was arrested by Denver police before he was able to tell them his account of what happened. One of the officers was recorded on a body camera referring to Hill as a “turd” before interacting with the driver.

“It was a really weird experience because usually when you call the police you think that you’d have the chance to talk to them before you’re whisked away, grabbed up and put in the back of their vehicle,” Hill said in an interview. “The incident makes me uncomfortable living in Denver as a whole.”

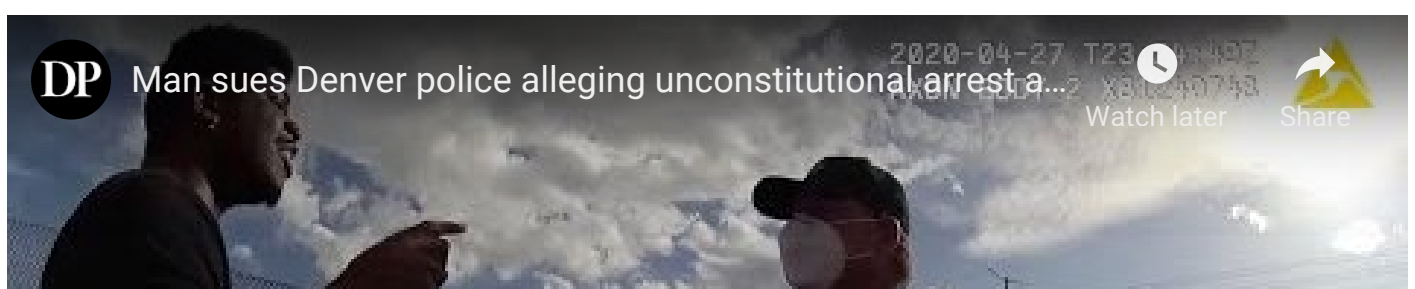
The crash investigation should’ve been a mundane interaction, said Hill’s attorney, Benjamin DeGolia of the Rathod Mohamedbhai law firm.

“The unmistakable subtext throughout this encounter is that Mr. Hill would not have been subjected to this treatment but for the color of his skin,” Hill’s lawsuit states. “Mr. Hill files this complaint not only to vindicate his own rights, but also to show the world that racial bias continues to pervade even relatively mundane police encounters, and to demand that DPD do better.”

Denver Public Safety spokeswoman Andrea Webber said in an email that a review of the body camera footage and other evidence in the case “did not support the allegations of inappropriate force.”

“However, the department recognized the language used by Officer Ludwig was inappropriate and he was counseled and reminded to maintain his professionalism during the course of his duties,” she added.

Hill called 911 on April 27, 2020, after getting into a minor crash with a truck on I-25.





Paramedics were speaking with Hill when the first police officer, Thomas Ludwig, arrived on scene, his body camera footage shows. Ludwig spoke with the two white men who had been in the truck and heard their account of what happened: that Hill had tried to thread his car between lanes and hit them. The men also said Hill had acted aggressively toward them once they stopped.

That's not what Hill says happened. Hill said in an interview that the truck hit him as it merged into his lane. But Hill never got a chance to give his account to police before he was arrested.

After speaking with the two men, Ludwig spoke to another Denver police officer, Gary Yampolsky, and told him that the truck driver said Hill was "being a (expletive)," though he hadn't interacted with Hill yet.

"I haven't talked to him yet ... I haven't got his ID yet," Ludwig said, the body camera video shows. "He looks like a turd."

Ludwig then walked to Hill's car, opened the door and looked inside. Hill walked over to Ludwig and told the officer he didn't have the legal right to search the car without a warrant. Ludwig responded that he was searching because he smelled marijuana. Police never found marijuana in the car, according to the lawsuit.

As Hill told the officers again that they had no right to search, both Ludwig and Yampolsky grabbed his arms, forced him to lie on the hood of his car and handcuffed him, body camera footage shows.

"What is happening to me?" Hill said.

"What are you doing steppin' to me, huh? You get in my face? I don't think so, dude," Ludwig said, according to the video.

After the officers walked Hill to the police car, Hill asked what he was being arrested for.

“We’ll let you know here in a few,” Yampolsky said, before putting Hill in the back of a patrol car.

Denver police Cpl. Bart Stark then arrived and took Hill out of the car and asked if Hill had any injuries. Hill said he didn’t know and needed to go to a doctor.

“Here’s the thing. If you say that you have injuries, I’m going to do something different,” Stark said, the video shows. “If you say that you don’t have any injuries, that means that nothing has happened and I can let you drive away.”

Hill told Stark he didn’t know if he was injured, or whether the injury was from the officers or the crash. The officers then put him back in the patrol car.

Hill spent 24 hours in jail, according to his lawsuit. He later paid to get his car out of impound and missed a final exam for his master’s in business administration degree while he was in jail.

Hill was charged with interference with police activity, a municipal violation, though the Denver City Attorney’s Office later dropped the charge and the case was dismissed, according to the lawsuit.

None of the officers involved in the arrest faced formal discipline because investigators found they followed department policy during the incident, Webber said. The probable cause statement for Hill’s arrest stated the paramedics told officers Hill was not injured. The officers thought Hill was going to assault them when he confronted them about the search of his car, according to the probable cause statement.

Hill said he wasn’t afraid until his conversation with Stark. He said he thought that a supervisor would calm down the situation and put the other officers in line. But that’s not what Stark did.

“That’s when I thought this could go wrong really quickly,” Hill said. “There are people that crazy things happen to in police custody.”

Stark’s comments to Hill were a blatant quid pro quo, DeGolia said.

This isn’t the first time Hill has been racially profiled by police, Hill said.

An Iowa police officer arrested Hill in 2018 while Hill was canvassing a neighborhood for a congressional campaign. Someone in the neighborhood called

RELATED ARTICLES

Protesters take Denver to trial over police response to 2020 George Floyd demonstrations

Woman dead in overnight Five Points shooting

police because they thought Hill was suspicious and an officer arrested him after Hill tried to walk away from him. A jury acquitted Hill of a charge of harrassing the officer after less than 15 minutes of deliberation, [according to the Des Moines Register](#).

“(The Iowa police officer) went and found the only African American person in the neighborhood and arrested him,” Hill said. “What happened with Denver was like part two.”

Denver police too often use force against people who are using their First Amendment right to speak against them, DeGolia said.

“Every time that Denver officers are criticized for unlawful activity, they respond with force, they respond with unlawful arrests and they make trumped-up charges,” DeGolia said.

Box of human heads stolen from parked freight truck in Denver

Man shot dead in Denver on Friday night

Motorcyclist dies after two-vehicle crash in Denver on Wednesday night

[Policies](#)

[Report an Error](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Submit a News Tip](#)

 [The Trust Project](#)

Keep your finger on the pulse.

Sign up for Breaking News email alerts.

Enter your email

SIGN UP

By signing up, you agree to our [privacy policy](#) and [terms of service](#).

TAGS: **DENVER POLICE DEPARTMENT, EXCESSIVE FORCE, RACISM**

Author **Elise Schmelzer**

Elise Schmelzer is the public safety reporter at The Denver Post and covers police, crime and

criminal justice. She previously wrote for the Casper Star-Tribune in Wyoming, the Washington Post and the Colorado Springs Gazette. She studied journalism and Spanish literature at the University of Missouri. When she's not writing, she disappears into the mountains to hike and fish.

eschmelzer@denverpost.com

[Follow Elise Schmelzer](#) [@EliseSchmelzer](#)

Sign up for Newsletters and Alerts

SUBSCRIBE

Follow Us



MOST POPULAR

- 1** Metro Denver and Colorado Springs both make list of country's 10 least affordable housing markets
- 2** She expected to pay \$1,337 for surgery. A Colorado hospital billed \$303,709.
- 3** Von Miller reuniting with Broncos? The free agent says “I kinda want that old thing back” in social media posts implying return to Denver.
- 4** Two Douglas County businesses can mandate masks despite public health order, judge says
- 5** Tons of snow fell at Colorado ski areas over the weekend, and more is coming
- 6** Twelve Tribes’ businesses like Yellow Deli exploit cult followers for free labor, ex-members say
- 7** Man enters Eisenhower Tunnel, sprays fire extinguishers and forces closure Sunday
- 8** Box of human heads stolen from parked freight truck in Denver
- 9** Nikola Jokic's 18th triple-double of the season paces Nuggets past Warriors
- 10** Denver weather: Another snowstorm is on the way, bringing frigid temperatures Wednesday

TRENDING NATIONALLY

- 1** Here's The List Of Salaries For Boston Teachers
- 2** She Expected To Pay \$1,337 For Surgery. A Colorado Hospital Billed \$303,709.
- 3** Chicago Public Schools To Drop Masks But Teachers Union Balks
- 4** NYC Asian Subway Rider Chases Down Attacker After Being Slashed
- 5** Shailene Woodley And Aaron Rodgers Get ‘loving’ And Affectionate At Friend’s

You May Also Like



China's Youngest Female Billionaire Sells Sydney Penthouse at a Loss

Mansion Global | Sponsored

Why is everyone in South Korea snapping up this affordable 4k action camera

RealAction Pro | Sponsored

Your 2022 Future - Pick Your Card

m.blancheofsaintandre.com | Sponsored

IT Departments Shift to ZTNA - How About Yours ?

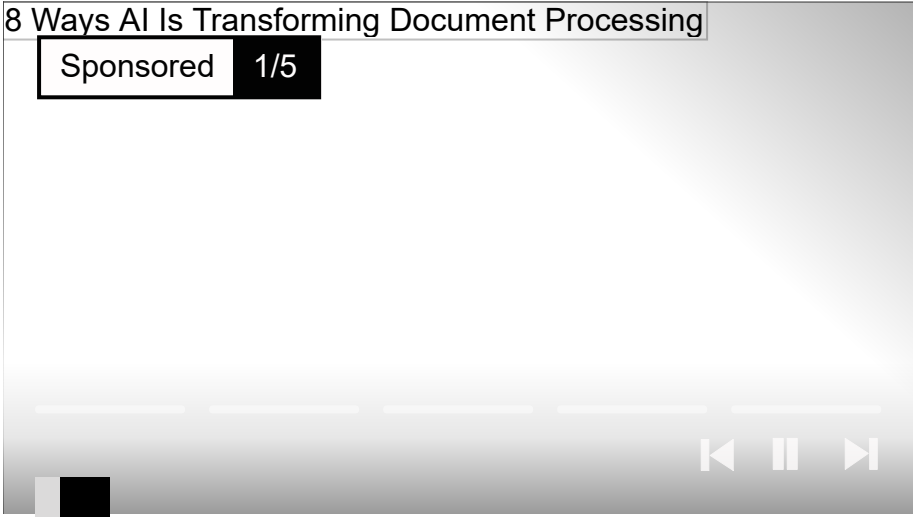
Perimeter 81 | Sponsored

State of AI Report: Transformers Are Taking the AI World by Storm

AI Exchange | Sponsored

Luxury Villas In Dubai: Prices May Surprise You!

Luxury Villas In Dubai | Sponsored Listings | Sponsored



[Read More >](#)

DP

Colorado has capacity to produce more oil and gas in response to Russian war, but some argue for pivot

The Denver Post

DP

Ask Amy: Our son and his wife just told us they are polyamorous

The Denver Post

DP

Grading the Week: Does CU Buffs coach Karl Dorrell know when he's being dumped?

The Denver Post

Real Estate Prices in Florida Might Surprise You

Real Estate Florida | Sponsored Listings | Sponsored

London Apartment Prices Might Actually Surprise You

Real Estate London | Sponsored

Ritz-Carlton Penthouse Sells for \$11 Million, a Record Deal for a Washington, D.C., Condo

Mansion Global | Sponsored

Here Are 32 of the Coolest Gifts for This 2021

Trending Boom | Sponsored

DP

Winderman's view: Kevin Durant up next, plus thoughts on Heat-Bucks

The Denver Post

DP

Protesters take Denver to trial over police response to 2020 George Floyd demonstrations

The Denver Post

DP

Denver weather: Another snowstorm is on the way, bringing frigid temperatures Wednesday

The Denver Post

How AI Is Driving Advances in Robotics: The 'Cobots' Are Coming

AI Exchange | Sponsored

Houses For Sale In Toronto Might Be Cheaper Than You Think

Toronto Homes For Sale | Search Ads | Sponsored

Mansion Global Daily: Celebs in the New York Suburbs, the Affordability Crisis and More

Mansion Global | Sponsored

The Stylish Slippers That Have Taken the World by Storm

Hyper-Shoes.com | Sponsored

MORE IN CRIME AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Stanford Smith is helped after receiving ...



Protesters take Denver to trial over police response to 2020 George Floyd demonstrations

Jordan Joseph White pleaded guilty to two felony counts, including inciting a riot and fourth-degree arson.

Colorado Springs police shoot, kill man who allegedly fired on officers

The westbound entrance to the Eisenhower ...

Man, 20, sentenced to six years in prison for destruction of Aurora courthouse during 2020 protests

Man enters Eisenhower Tunnel, sprays fire extinguishers and forces closure Sunday



Subscribe [Become a Member / Subscribe](#) [Place a Hold](#) [Digital Replica Edition](#)
[Denver Post Store](#)

Copyright © 2022 MediaNews Group

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

[Accessibility](#)

[Cookie Policy](#)

[Arbitration](#)

[Site Map](#)

[Ethics Policy](#)

Powered by [WordPress.com](#) VIP