



San Francisco Police Will Soon Be Required to Wear Body Cameras

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On August 4, 2015, San Francisco police officers [wrestled to the ground a homeless Black man](#) with a prosthetic leg.

Chaédria LaBouvier happened to be at the scene and captured the entire incident in [an 11-minute video](#) that has now been viewed more than 449,000 times.

LaBouvier was visiting San Francisco at the time, but if she had not been there with her phone and made that video, which opens with five officers straddling the struggling man and trying to pin him down, we would undoubtedly never have heard about this horrific incident.

Care2's Julie Mastrine, a San Francisco resident, realized that we should not have to rely on passers-by to record such incidents of police brutality. She decided to [create a Care2 petition](#), urging San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee to speed up the process of equipping all the city's police officers with body cameras.

As Mastrine writes in her petition:

"Week after week, incidents of police brutality surface on the Web, illustrating a systemic pattern nationwide: state agents routinely brutalize nonviolent and vulnerable citizens, shattering their bodily autonomy, personal agency and integrity. ... While body cameras on police won't solve all problems, it is the least the SFPD can do to ensure officers are held accountable for their actions."

Mastrine is thrilled that more than 59,000 Care2 members have [signed her petition](#). Earlier this month, the San Francisco Police Commission [approved body cameras for all police officers](#).

There is a caveat, however: Officers involved in a shooting or in-custody death will be required to submit an initial brief statement before viewing the footage, and then will be allowed to watch the footage before writing a full report. This is problematic, because officers could come up with justifications for their actions *after* watching the footage.

As the [Cato Institute points out](#), the initial statement is required to be simply a brief summary of events and is far too narrow.

Here's what Alan Schlosser, legal director for the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California, [said](#):

“When we said there should be an initial report, we didn't mean there should be a brief report. When we support an initial report, we meant there would be a full report and then the officer would see the video and then there would be a supplemental report, with the understanding that recollections change.”

Meanwhile, on the other side of the San Francisco Bay, Oakland has a more fair process for watching body cam footage. Officers involved in shootings cannot view body camera footage without first being interviewed and submitting a full report.

While the conditions are not yet ideal in San Francisco, officers will at least be wearing body cameras, perhaps as soon as August 1.

Police Body Cams Lead To Big Drop In Incidents Involving Force

As Care2's Lowell Williams [reported here](#), a 2015 study found that when police officers have body cameras there are drastically fewer incidents involving force.

Criminologists at the University of South Florida equipped 46 Orlando Police Department officers with body cams while leaving 43 of their peers without cameras for one year. Among those who wore the body cams, instances of police force or “response-to-resistance” [dropped by 54 percent](#). Across the U.S., more and more police officers are donning body cameras.

Congratulations to Julie Mastrine and all the Care2 activists [who signed her petition](#), helping to put in place the requirement that all San Francisco police officers must wear body cameras.

Mastrine started her petition because she was outraged to hear of yet another horrific incident involving the police. If you have a cause that you feel strongly about, [consider starting your own petition](#). Use [these tips](#) to help you get started.