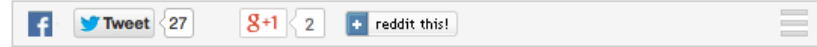


Opinion / Commentary

Curtis Young case shows need for body-worn cameras on police

As the recent case of Curtis Young demonstrates, video serves to protect the interests of everyone in the justice system.



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Curtis Young following an assault by Toronto police officers.

By: Jonathan Rosenthal and Daniel Brown Published on Mon Mar 31 2014

The Star [reported last week](#) that the criminal trial of Curtis Young was halted on account of misconduct by Toronto Police Service Constables Moorcroft, Miller, James and Piccolo. These four officers were found to have assaulted Young on two occasions while in police custody and later found to have lied, exaggerated and colluded about the events in an attempted coverup.

In the face of this misconduct, the trial judge was left with no choice but stop the trial by granting a stay of proceedings, a harsh remedy used only in the clearest of cases where it is necessary to protect the reputation of the justice system.

Fortunately for Young, there was little dispute about what transpired in his case since almost all of his interactions with police were captured on video surveillance while at the station.

However, not all accused are lucky enough to have their encounters with police captured on video.

Last month, a coroner's inquest into the police shooting deaths of three mentally ill people recommended that police use body-worn cameras when on duty.

The use of the body-worn cameras was also among 31 recommendations in a [Police and Community Engagement Review](#) last year to probe allegations of police bias and racial profiling against members of the black community.

Body-worn cameras are already used by police in Edmonton, Ottawa, Victoria and Calgary and preliminary results show that complaints against police in those jurisdictions have fallen as much as 80 per cent when used by front-line officers.

The Criminal Lawyers Association and its dedicated group of defence lawyers believe that the use of body-worn cameras by police fosters greater transparency between the interactions of police and the public and encourages officers to act more responsibly while on duty. Moreover, this technology can provide powerful evidence in court and also protect officers from false allegations of misconduct by those under investigation

or arrest.

Unfortunately, and perhaps not surprisingly, the Toronto Police Association has demonstrated a tremendous amount of resistance to body-worn camera proposals.

Earlier this year, Toronto Police Association President Mike McCormack dismissed the idea that body-worn cameras improve police accountability on the basis that they wouldn't protect officers any more against complaints or assist police in gathering evidence.

Curtis Young's case, and countless others like it, tell a different story.

Video evidence protects marginalized and vulnerable citizens like Curtis from police who might choose to disregard basic civil rights, act aggressively, and brazenly try to cover up their actions with lies and collusion.

While Curtis Young narrowly escaped conviction, the beating he suffered resulted in significant injuries, including a black eye. However, he was not the only one who suffered injuries. The justice system as a whole also suffered a black eye as did the thousands of hardworking, dedicated members of the Toronto Police Service whose reputations were tarnished by the actions of a few rogue officers.

Video is there to watch the watchmen and serves to protect the interests of everyone in the justice system. Because unlike the police officers in Curtis Young's case, videos don't lie.

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