

BLACK LIVES MATTERS MINNESOTA ISSUES ST. PAUL TRAVEL WARNING

(April 6, 2019) - Having become aware of additional acts of brutality committed by St. Paul Police officers, SPPD K-9, and Ramsey County Sheriff's officers, Black Lives Matter Minnesota finds it necessary to upgrade the current St. Paul Travel Alert, issued Feb 1, 2018, to a St. Paul Travel Warning, effective immediately, for African Americans and people of color traveling to St. Paul, Minnesota for the Final Four tournament or other purposes. BLM MN urges African Americans and people of color to exercise caution, as safety and well-being risks may be presented by St. Paul Police, SPPD K9 unit, or Ramsey County Sheriff's officers. These units have engaged in far too many non-lethal but dangerous attacks on African Americans and other people of color:

- An alarming [video](#) was released showing Ramsey County Sheriff's correctional officer, Travis VanDeWiele, "torturing" a handcuffed black man who was not physically combative nor a threat to jailers. The black man was bleeding, at times couldn't breathe (SPPD had also pepper sprayed him), can be heard praying and saying, "Please don't kill me. Please don't kill me." The black man was kicked and punched multiple times. Not one of at least four officers present chose to intervene. VanDeWiele plead guilty to a much reduced charge of misdemeanor disorderly conduct, given a \$150 fine, and resigned after being on paid administrative leave for two years without discipline.
- After St. Paul police fired 16 rounds and a Hmong man was hit multiple times, his throat was torn apart by a [SPPD K-9](#) in one of the most malicious SPPD K-9 attacks to date. In spite of the man's obvious fatal injuries (with no attempt to render first-aid), he was ordered not to move and handcuffed per standard protocol. Neither the K-9's handler, Officer Rooney, nor any other officer, attempted to call off or control the K-9 turned zombie-vampire.
- A Hmong woman was strip-searched in a crowded public hallway at Hmongtown Market during an investigation lead by SPPD Sgt. Brenda Brozik. The Hmong woman was accused of selling illegal merchandise. Her booth was nearly destroyed in the search which found no illegal goods. Next, two male SPPD Officers, J. Parsons and J. Sipes, moved her to a public hallway. In full view of shoppers, the two men, pulled down her pants, searched inside her underwear and raised her top, exposing her breasts to the public. We are aware of three other woman who experienced being publicly strip-searched who filed successful law suits against SPPD and Ramsey County Sheriff Department.
- A black man walking to his car at 2AM to go to work was told to lie on the ground for his safety. The black man was far from safe and became another victim of an SPPD [K-9 attack](#). The K-9 ignored multiple commands from its handler, SPPD officer Mark Ross. The K-9 continued to bite, in spite of the electronic collar that had been activated. The dog had to be physically removed. The victims' wounds were on his forearm and back as well as his side which received a 4" deep puncture. The case was settled for \$75,000.
- Officer Brian Ficcadenti ordered his police dog to attack a 52 year-old black man for no reason, causing permanent injuries. Police had been looking for a group of teens. Despite not matching the description of the suspects, while Ficcadenti's dog was attacking him, he was also stomped and kicked by Officer Brett Palkowitsch causing his lungs to collapse. The dash cam [video](#) was released. The city was recently ordered to pay him \$2,000,000.
- Officer Thaddius Schmidt allowed his police dog to attack a 52-year-old black woman as she was taking her trash to the alley behind her home. The woman is an amputee with only one hand. Her leg, hand and arm were seriously mauled requiring hospitalization and treatment for serious infection. The K9 ignored more than 10 commands to release the woman. Body camera [footage](#) was released. The lawsuit was settled for \$520,000.

- Officer JM Rothecker made a number of Facebook posts targeting protesters attending the Tale of Two Cities Rally calling for Justice for Marcus Golden and Jamar Clark. JM Rothecker instructed people to “run them over” and told them how to legally justify it. The incident made national [news](#). Officer Rothecker resigned, stopping the internal investigation.
- Officers Michael Johnson, Bruce Schmidt and Lori Hayne tased and roughly arrested a black man for simply being in a public skyway. He was charged with trespassing, disorderly conduct and obstructing the legal process. After the man posted his cellphone video online, the charges were dropped. The skyway [video](#) was also released. The city of St. Paul paid \$100,000 to settle the case.
- Officer Michael Soucheray was charged with fifth-degree assault for punching a handcuffed 14-year-old girl, who was suicidal, in the face two times. Soucheray was acquitted of assault charges. St. Paul Police released [video](#) of the incident.
- Sgt. Heather [Weyker](#) was the lead investigator who “likely exaggerated or fabricated important aspects” in a case that sent a Somali woman to federal prison for 4 years and 2 of wearing an electronic monitor. She is suing for \$12 million. There were roughly 20 additional law suits filed by other victims of Sgt. Heather Weyker’s lies, seeking a total of \$200,000,000. The City of St. Paul was eventually removed from the lawsuits and some cases were thrown out.
- Officer William Krouse lured a black male former Central High School student into a remote area where Krouse then used a chemical irritant and violently arrested him. A student captured the incident on a cell phone [video](#) that went viral.
- Officer [Joel Johnson](#) used profanity with the mother of a 15 year old black teen attending a church picnic. Johnson called her fat and told her to “get your (explicative) up from the buffet.” Johnson was recorded on cell phone as he aggressively arrested the small statured teen. Onlookers screamed in horror. Johnson had the wrong child.

The St. Paul Police Department is the deadliest department in the state of Minnesota, and the 14th deadliest in the nation. African Americans and other people of color are especially at risk. SPPD homicide victims include, William Cordale Handy, Phumee Lee, William Hughes, Geno Smith, Jaffort Smith, Justin Tolkinen, Phil Quinn, Marcus Golden (unarmed, contrary to SPPD report), and Guillermo Canas-Culahay. St Paul Police homicide event details are changed at will, thus, media reports regarding SPPD homicides often do not reflect factual details.

This travel alert will remain in effect until African Americans and people of color have equal protection under new laws, by which, police experience real consequences and appropriate penalties for misconduct.

Black Lives Matter Minnesota provides this travel alert as a public service.