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Verdict in Shooting Death

Jury: Cop's Use of Force In Shooting 'Excessive'

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STAFF WRITER

Nassau County Police Officer Anthony Raymond said he felt his life was in danger when he shot an Elmont man nine times during a confrontation five years ago, but a civil jury yesterday concluded he used "deadly excessive force."

Jurors deliberated for eight days before determining that the actions of Fifth Precinct Officer Raymond, 37, were unjustified, even though the victim, Christopher Wade, had a gun at the time of the incident. Wade, 28, was struck in the head, body, arm and buttocks, testimony showed.

The fatal shooting on Dec. 30, 1995, sparked community outrage at the time, prompting some residents to condemn the Nassau County Police Department and Raymond, who is white, for shooting Wade, who was black.

Raymond was cleared of criminal wrongdoing by a Nassau grand jury as well as departmental investigations and returned to work at the Fifth Precinct shortly after the shooting. He will not lose his job as a result of the verdict, police spokesman Pete Matuza said yesterday.

In the last three days of deliberation, Raymond was seen in the courthouse corridor, looking relaxed and chatting with court personnel. Yesterday, Raymond, dressed in his police uniform, sat silently in U.S. District Court Judge Joanna Seybert's courtroom in Central Islip, as the verdict was announced. Later, he declined to comment as he left with his fiancée and friends.

The eight-member jury, which included three blacks, is to return on Thursday to determine how much to award Wade's family, which filed the \$4.5-

million lawsuit against Raymond and Nassau County alleging that the officer violated Wade's civil rights.

The jury also found Raymond violated a state law prohibiting the unlawful use of force and that the officer was not justified in taking Wade's life, said Wade family attorney, Frederick Brewington. But jurors cleared him of unlawful search and seizure, unlawful arrest and confinement.

Wade's family members, including one of his sisters, Joyce Shealey, 40, of Central Islip, and his former fiancée, Ervie Augustin, hugged each other after the verdict was announced.

"I am just happy that the jury found justice for Christopher and I hope that they will continue to do so," Augustin, 26, who was engaged to Wade and the mother of one of his three children, said outside the courtroom.

Paul Millus of Mineola, the attorney for Nassau County as well as the po-



Christopher Wade

lice department, declined to comment.

On the early morning of Dec. 30, 1995, Wade was walking on Henderson Avenue near Hempstead Turnpike in Elmont when Raymond, who said he suspected Wade was selling drugs, stopped and questioned him. When Raymond ordered Wade to put his hands against a fence, Raymond said Wade pulled out a handgun. Raymond fired 16 shots at him. Police found Wade's handgun at the scene but said he had not fired it.

Eugene Kennedy, a former Elmont minister who said he saw part of the shooting from a window in his home, testified at trial that Raymond fired two shots at Wade, who Kennedy said was on the ground and not moving — contradicting Raymond's version of events.

In addition to his fiancée and siblings, Wade left behind two sons, Christopher Wade Jr., 10, and Christopher Augustin, 4; and a daughter, Shaniqua Wade, who is 9.

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