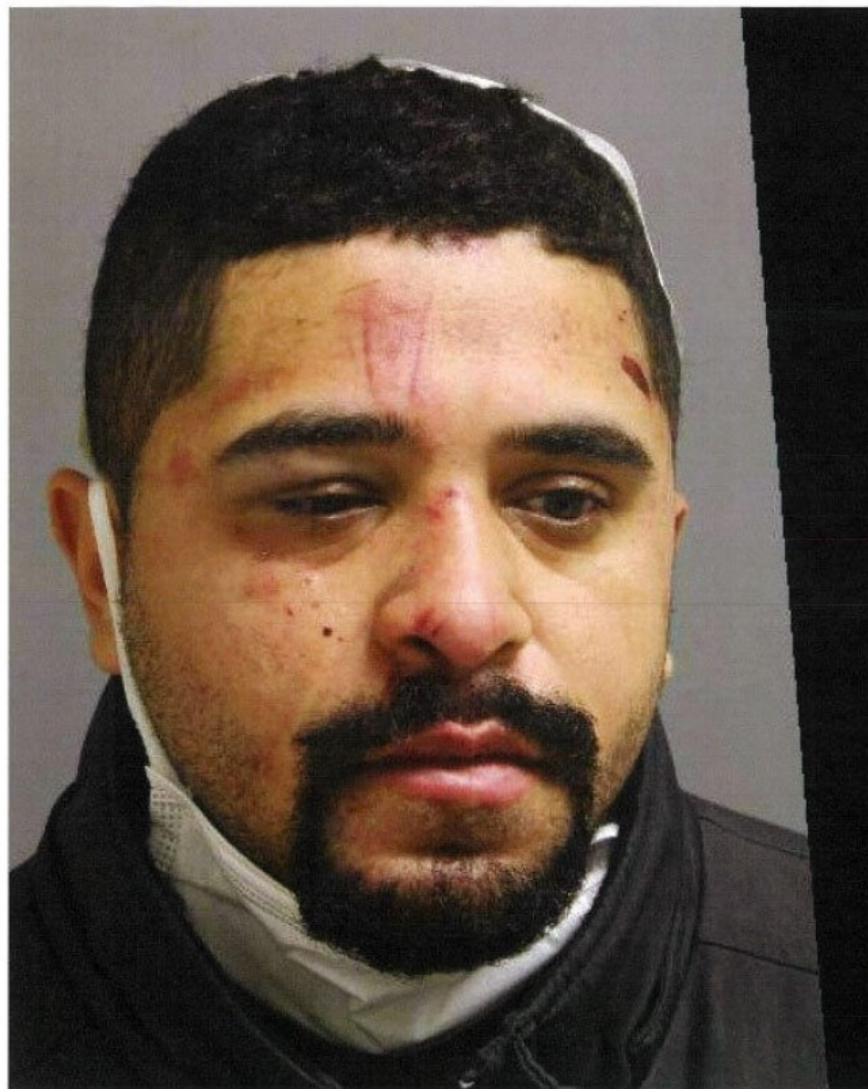


Lawsuit: Suffolk County Police Lied, Abused Suspect, And Hid From Body Cameras

By CHARLES LANE • MAR 4, 2021



Christopher Cruz following his arrest on February 24. Police say Cruz was resisting arrest; his attorney has filed notice to file a lawsuit.

A lawsuit filed on Thursday alleges that Suffolk County Police officers beat and used a racial slur against a handcuffed man who is an alleged car thief. The lawsuit claims nearly a dozen police officers attempted to cover up the incident by lying, providing false evidence and hiding from a body camera.

On Tuesday night, Police Commissioner Garoldine Hart [announced the suspension of two officers](#) who repeatedly kicked Christopher Cruz while he was handcuffed and surrounded by nearly a dozen officers. Hart also placed four other officers on modified duty, including a supervisor.

Suffolk County District Attorney Tim Sini also announced a criminal investigation into the incident.

Cruz's lawyer and civil rights attorney Fred Brewington said police gave false statements, fabricated evidence, and perjured themselves.

Cruz was arrested on February 24. Hart said he evaded police and crashed into a police car in an alleged stolen vehicle. She said Cruz's beating wasn't divulged until the next day during a routine inspection of the body camera footage.

Four days later, Hart viewed the footage and suspended the officers.

"The actions of these two officers are concerning and what is equally unacceptable is the number of officers who did not intervene which is a direct violation of our rules and procedures," she said the next day during a press conference last Tuesday night.

The following Suffolk County Police Department body camera footage of a violent arrest on Feb. 24 released by attorney Fred Brewington contains expletives and racial slurs.

Suffolk County has a small pilot program for body cameras. Only one officer on the scene appears to be wearing one. That officer turned the camera away instead of intervening while the beating took place.

Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone said on Tuesday that police body cameras are a necessary reform measure.

Brewington said body cameras aren't enough.

"This incident shows every aspect of what people have been raising as being wrong in this culture," he said. "That's why we have to change it. The culture has to change."

According to a notice of claim of a forthcoming civil rights lawsuit, Cruz, who is Hispanic, was ordered by police to eat snow. Brewington said police refused to let Cruz up until he ate snow.

Brewington said Cruz had multiple injuries, was knocked unconscious, and accused of crimes he did not commit.

Police officials and the police union declined requests for an interview.

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