



## **NAACP Fairfax County Branch Denounces Former Governor Youngkin’s Pardon of Ex-Officer Wesley Shifflett: “A Cowardly Betrayal of Justice”**

**FAIRFAX, Va.** – The NAACP Fairfax County Branch condemns former Gov. Glenn Youngkin’s decision to grant an absolute pardon to Wesley Shifflett, the former Fairfax County police officer responsible for the fatal shooting of Timothy McCree Johnson outside Tysons Corner Center in February 2023. The pardon was issued Jan. 15, two days before Youngkin left office, but was not publicly announced.

Youngkin previously granted Shifflett clemency and commuted the three-year prison sentence he received following his October 2024 conviction for recklessly discharging his firearm in the shooting of Johnson. Shifflett was acquitted of a manslaughter charge.

“This executive action is a slap in the face to the Johnson family, the Black community, and the tireless advocates who spent years fighting for Shifflett to be held accountable,” said Branch President Niki Zimmerman.

“From the moment Timothy Johnson was chased down and shot while unarmed for allegedly stealing a pair of sunglasses, the NAACP Fairfax County Branch stood shoulder to shoulder with his grieving family,” Zimmerman said. “We supported them through the agony of the investigation and the hard-won initial sentencing. To see that judicial decision discarded by executive fiat is not only a breach of public trust, but a definitive declaration that Black lives remain expendable in the eyes of the former Commonwealth’s leadership.”

Zimmerman said the pardon reinforces a systemic culture of impunity. Data on police interactions with the Black community paints a grim picture of the reality Timothy Johnson faced.

According to national policing data from <https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/>, Black Americans experience significant disparities in law enforcement encounters:

- **Lethal disparity:** Research from Mapping Police Violence - National Trends shows Black Americans are three times more likely than White Americans to be killed by police. From 2013 to 2024, Black people were killed at a rate of approximately 31 per million, compared with 10 per million for White people. According to <https://policescorecard.org/va>, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, Black individuals are 2.4 times more likely to be killed by police than White individuals. While fatal shootings are less frequent in Fairfax County than in major urban centers, disparities in nonlethal force and arrests—which can escalate into fatal encounters like the Johnson case—remain

severe. According to <https://policescorecard.org/va/police-department/fairfax-county>, in Fairfax County, Black residents are 6.3 times more likely to be arrested for low-level, nonviolent offenses such as the alleged shoplifting in the Johnson case, than White residents.

- **The unarmed reality:** According to <https://policeviolencereport.org/>, despite making up approximately 13% of the U.S. population, Black people account for a disproportionate percentage of unarmed individuals killed by law enforcement.
- **The accountability gap:** According to the same data, nationwide, approximately 98% of officer-involved killings between 2013 and 2023 resulted in no criminal charges. When charges are brought, executive pardons like this one serve to ensure that even "guilty" verdicts carry no real-world weight.

The NAACP Fairfax County Branch will not allow Timothy Johnson's memory to be erased by political maneuvering. The organization remains committed to demanding a justice system that values human life over property and accountability over political optics.

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#### **ABOUT THE FAIRFAX NAACP**

The Fairfax County NAACP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization whose mission is to achieve equity, political rights, and social inclusion by advancing policies and practices that expand human and civil rights, eliminate discrimination, and accelerate the well-being, educational and economic security of Black people and all people of color. More information can be found at [fairfaxnaacp.org](http://fairfaxnaacp.org).