

Ex-Nashville Cop Sues Metro After Being Fired

By: Jason Lamb

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. - An ex-Metro Police Officer has sued Metro government after he was fired for a controversial Facebook post in 2016. The suit was filed Tuesday in U.S. District Court.

According to the lawsuit, in the aftermath of the 2016 police shooting of Philando Castile in Minnesota, Metro Police Officer Anthony Venable commented on a post he found on his Facebook feed.

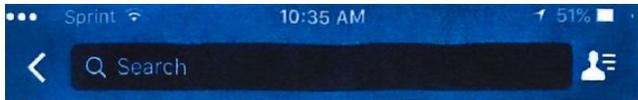
The lawsuit also says another officer who was punished for a similar Facebook post received only a 10-day suspension while Venable was fired.

Metro Police have said they stand by their decision to terminate him.

Even though it's been more than a year since the original Facebook comment, it was only on Tuesday that Venable's termination became final.

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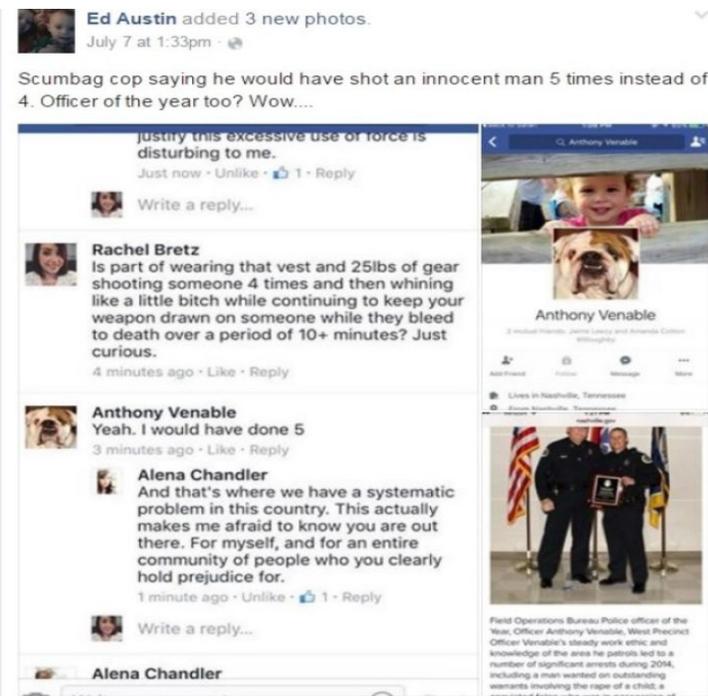
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Amanda Cotton Willoughby

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You know what's sad? It just completely baffles me. I'm going to go get in my car, drive to the library, drive home. I do not fear that I will be pulled over and shot while doing so. Even if I have a gun in the car legally, I do not fear for my life. And, I am so sorry that so many of my friends do. It breaks my heart. Why don't I fear that? Because I'm a white female. I'm sorry that you have to read and listen to media and people tell you that you have nothing to fear and that your lives aren't in jeopardy when you know they are. I'm sorry that you have to think about even getting in your car and going somewhere. I'm sorry. I'm so, so sorry. I can't begin to imagine what you feel when an officer pulls you over. Of course you're scared. Why wouldn't you be? I'm just so sorry.



The post, which was critical of police, spawned a series of comments from others, including multiple responses from Venable, including, “Yeah. I would have done 5,” implying Venable would have shot Castile five times instead of four.



Anthony Venable
Yeah. I would have done 5
3 minutes ago · Like · Reply

Metro Police saw the comment and fired Venable.

Venable's attorney, David Raybin, said what got Venable fired wasn't that Facebook comment alone. He says it happened only after someone else grouped a screenshot of Venable's comment and placed it alongside a picture of Venable and the Police Chief, and that post went viral.

Raybin says because Venable himself never mentioned he worked for Metro Police on his Facebook profile, he should have been allowed to post that comment -- under the first amendment.

"Officers do not lose their First Amendment protection simply by donning a uniform," Raybin said.

Raybin said the only reason Venable was even identified as a police officer online in the first place, was because of an additional picture, taken and posted by Metro themselves, after Venable won the Officer of the Year Award.



"Metro itself listed him as a police officer on their own website," Raybin said.

He appealed the firing, and it was originally overturned by an Administrative Law Judge, but on Tuesday, Metro's Civil Service Commission overruled that decision, hours before Venable filed the lawsuit.