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Protesters push for police apology in Dafonte Miller case



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Protesters are calling for Toronto and Durham police to issue a public apology to Dafonte Miller and his family.



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Members of Black Lives Matter- Toronto and the Anti-Racism Network of Durham Region held a rally outside the Oshawa courthouse on Wednesday morning ahead of a pre-trial hearing for a Toronto cop and his brother accused of brutally beating Whitby teen Dafonte Miller.

Prior to the arrival of Toronto police Const. Michael Theriault and his brother Christian Theriault, who have both been charged with aggravated assault, assault with a weapon and public mischief in connection with the Dec. 2016 incident, protesters made a number of demands, including that Durham and Toronto police issue a public apology to Miller.

"It is obvious that both services have treated this man and his family utterly inhumanely," Rajean Hoilett, coordinator of Durham Region Anti-Racism Network said. "We want to see an apology promptly that recognizes this fact."



Images of Dafonte Miller after he was brutally beaten by an off-duty Toronto police officer in Whitby in December of 2016.

Julian Falconer, one of Miller's lawyers, previously told reporters that his 19-year-old client was walking to a friend's house in the area of Thickson Road and William Stephenson Drive in Whitby in the early morning hours of Dec. 28 when he passed by two men standing inside a garage in the area.

Falconer said that one of the men identified himself as a police officer and when Miller refused to answer the man's questions, the two men began to chase him.

Falconer said the pair eventually caught up with Miller and beat him "within an inch of his life."

Following the attack, Falconer said Miller's left eye was dislodged from its socket and was split in four, causing him to permanently lose vision in that eye. Falconer added that Miller also suffered a broken nose, broken orbital bone, bruised ribs, and a fractured wrist.

Miller was initially charged with five offences, including assault with a weapon, but the Crown withdrew those charges on May 5.

Michael and Christian Theriault were charged by the Special Investigations Unit in June.

None of the allegations have been proven in court.

Hoilett said members of his organization and Black Lives Matter-Toronto do not believe the Durham Regional Police Service and the Toronto Police Service have been held accountable for the way they handled the case.

The province's police watchdog was not contacted about the incident by either police service but rather by Falconer's office months after the incident occurred.

In a complaint filed with the Office of the Independent Police Review Director, it is alleged that the father of the two accused, Det. John Theriault, who is a detective with the Toronto police's Professional Standards Unit, improperly contacted Durham police investigators to "gain information relating to the status of the investigation and to provide additional false information about injuries suffered by his son, Christian."

Hoilett urged the police service to fire both Const. Theriault and his father.

The Waterloo Regional Police Service has been tasked with conducting a third-party review of the case.