

Danville community leaders praise police chief on - Danville Register & Bee (VA) - April 10, 2018

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Local leaders are taking a measured tone on the fatal police-involved shooting that killed 25-year-old **Juan Markee Jones** early Sunday morning.

Danville Police Chief Scott Booth released the body-camera video of the shooting to the media Tuesday afternoon.

The Rev. William Avon Keen, president of the Virginia and Danville/Pittsylvania County chapters of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, said he and a group of other ministers got a look at parts of the video Monday. He would not comment on what he saw.

"Right now, it would be better for me to see other parts of the video," Keen said.

Keen and ministers met with Booth on Monday when the video was shown.

"I was glad he allowed us to see it," said Keen, who is also president of the Danville Ministerial Alliance. "It helped give clarity as to what was going on."

Keen said he wanted to hold more meetings with young people in the community to advise them on how to properly protest and reduce violence in the community.

Danville City Councilman Larry Campbell Jr. said the community should have the opportunity to view the video so everyone can come together and evaluate what happened.

Campbell, who has seen parts of the video, commended Booth for his transparency and said the issue of black men getting killing by police is a problem across the country.

"It's more of a national issue than a local issue," Campbell said, calling it black male genocide.

Referring to the police shooting of an unarmed black man last month in Sacramento, California, Stephon Clark, Campbell said there is a problem with the "one- or two-second decision [police] have to make" in those situations.

"It's open for discussion," Campbell said.

Campbell's father, Bibleway Cathedral Apostle Lawrence Campbell Sr., said he could not comment without knowing more about the shooting.

"Before I would give a statement, I would like to know some more of the facts about it," he said Tuesday.

Mayor John Gilstrap urged everyone to pray for the community, including Jones' family and the police officers.

"Right now, that's all we can do is pray until we get answers to all of our questions," the mayor said.

The Rev. Cecil Bridgeforth, pastor at Shiloh Baptist Church in Danville, said he saw portions of the video Monday.

"It is somewhat disturbing," Bridgeforth said.

He said he teaches members of his congregation to comply when pulled over by police. Failing to do so causes suspicion and puts them in danger, he said.

"We jeopardize our safety when we're not compliant and we jeopardize a whole community when we fail to do what is asked," said Bridgeforth, president of the Danville Voters League.

Once all the facts are out, "we can allow the legal system to do what it needs to do if the police are wrong," he said.

He cautioned everyone not to jump to conclusions about what happened, and added that it was dark outside when the incident occurred. The Virginia State Police, which is investigating the shooting, will find out whether it was justified, he said.

"In the meantime, we need to try and talk to our youth and adults and let them know the police is there to protect us," Bridgeforth said.