

# Hotel workers fired after death of man

He pleaded with security as he was held down

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USA TODAY NETWORK

MILWAUKEE – Hotel employees in Wisconsin have been fired after the death of D’Vontaye Mitchell, a Black man who was held face down by security guards outside a downtown Milwaukee hotel last month.

Aimbridge Hospitality, which operates the Hyatt Regency in downtown Milwaukee, announced the decision in a statement late Wednesday.

Mitchell, 43, died on June 30 after being pinned down on his stomach by four security guards outside the hotel. Milwaukee police alleged that Mitchell had “caused a disturbance,” which led to an altercation with security guards while he was being escorted out, according to civil rights attorney Ben Crump.

Crump, who represents the Mitchell family, said Mitchell was having a mental health crisis. The Milwaukee Police Department has released no information.

Surveillance footage from the hotel showed Mitchell being confronted by security guards after appearing to run from something and into the women’s bathroom.

Mitchell had his hands up but was dragged to the floor and beaten, begging for the blows to stop, according to the Mitchell family’s attorneys.

“The conduct we saw from several associates on June 30 violated our policies and procedures and does not reflect our values as an organization or the behaviors we expect from our associates,” Aimbridge Hospitality said in a statement. “We will continue our independent investigation and do everything we can to support law enforcement with their investigation into this tragic incident.”

Milwaukee police have referred four charges of felony murder to the district attorney, a police spokesperson said Thursday.



**“We’re going to miss his presence,” Nayisha Mitchell said. She said the security guards that held down her brother D’Vontaye Mitchell should be ashamed.**

EBONY COX/MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

Sgt. Efrain Cornejo told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, part of the USA TODAY Network, that the department has been in consultation with the Milwaukee County District Attorney’s Office since July 5 and that they subsequently referred the charges. The district attorney’s office has not made a decision on that, he said.

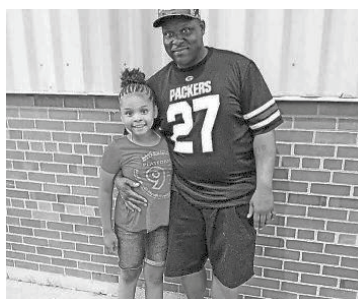
The four people are not in custody and police are not seeking them at this time, Cornejo said.

The district attorney’s office said in a statement Wednesday that it was investigating Mitchell’s death as a homicide. The office is awaiting the final autopsy from the Milwaukee County Medical Examiner’s Office.

**‘We need to be united in this’**

On Thursday, Mitchell’s family held a funeral for the 43-year-old man. Prominent civil rights activist and minister Al Sharpton gave the eulogy, and hundreds attended the service.

Crump repeated Mitchell’s last words while speaking at the funeral for the father of two. Mitchell’s final words were



**D’Vontaye Mitchell is pictured with his daughter Morgan. Mitchell was killed after being held down by security on June 30.** PROVIDED BY MITCHELL FAMILY

“please” – he said it while gasping for breath six times – followed by “I’m sorry” and “Please help me.”

The service oscillated between enthusiastic song and heartfelt prayer, Bible readings and remembrances from Mitchell’s family. Mitchell’s mother, Brenda Giles, said his death couldn’t be “swept under the rug.”

“We going to fight. We going to fight,”

Giles said. “We need to be united in this.”

Mitchell’s wife, DeAsia Harmon, described him as her best friend and protector. His brothers and other family members said they would miss how he danced, rapped and loved to cook. The family described Mitchell as one who cared too much to say “no” to anyone asking for help, making him a frequent go-to for family.

During the service, Sharpton handed a check to each mother of Mitchell’s two children, an 8-year-old daughter and a 6-year-old son. His civil rights organization, the National Action Network, paid for the funeral’s costs, and he called on those in attendance to support the family through a GoFundMe campaign.

**Mitchell’s family reacts to video**

Mitchell spent the last few minutes of his life being repeatedly beaten by a security guard with a retractable baton as onlookers failed to intervene, his family’s attorneys said.

Members of Mitchell’s family told reporters they were “repulsed and shocked” by video footage they viewed alongside Crump and lawyers B’Ivory Lamarr and William Sulton.

The footage showed Mitchell running and seeking safety in the women’s bathroom in the hotel, the lawyers said.

“D’Vontaye was trying to run for his life,” Sulton said. It’s not clear what Mitchell was running from, the attorneys added.

They joined dozens of supporters, many wearing T-shirts with Mitchell’s image, marching from the district attorney’s office to the Hyatt Regency.

“To see them beat him over and over and over .... they could have stopped at any time,” Harmon said, her voice choked by tears. “They murdered him. They didn’t have to do him like that.”

Giles described her son as a harmless teddy bear and “a joy in his family.” She said she was “devastated” watching the videos on the eve of his funeral and pleaded with prosecutors to issue charges in Mitchell’s death.

“I always thought my son would be the one to bury me, not for me to be burying him,” Giles said.