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A Black Man Putting Up Halloween Decorations Has a Seizure and Is Tased Seven Times by a Police Sergeant

What happened to Dwight Jackson — and what the police response tells us about the treatment of vulnerable people.



William Spivey Follow 4 min read · 1 day ago

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File:Chattahoochee City Hall.jpg — Wikimedia Commons

Chatahoochee, Florida, is about 45 miles West of Tallahassee on Interstate 10. There aren't many reasons to go there if you aren't a resident. No major private businesses are headquartered there. The town doesn't have a Walmart; the closest one is 20 miles away in Quincy, FL. Chatahoochee doesn't have a college or university. What they do have is Florida State Hospital, with 959 beds; it is the largest psychiatric institution in Florida by overall institutional capacity and combined civil and forensic services. When people in Florida were less thoughtful about mental health. They would joke with (or threaten) people demonstrating aberrant behavior about sending them to Chatahoochee.

My first professional job was as a sales representative with Procter & Gamble in its Professional Services Division, calling on doctors, dentists, and hospitals. I lived in Jacksonville at the time, and Chatahoochee was in my territory. I called on the state hospital, a potential customer, not knowing what to expect when entering the gates for the first time. It was a sprawling

facility with over 200 buildings spread over 620 acres. I bring all this up to say it's impossible to live in, or work as a police officer in Chatahoochee, without having some awareness of mental health, which sometimes includes seizures.

Dwight Jackson, a Black man, woke up on Sunday, October 25, with plans to put Halloween decorations around his home. During the process, he suddenly suffered a seizure and collapsed. It wasn't his first seizure, and family members, including his brother, Caleb Johns, called Emergency Medical Services (EMS). EMS arrived at the scene and began treating him, recognizing he was having a seizure. Not all seizures are related to mental health; epileptic seizures, for example, stem from a neurological condition. No seizures call for the response Dwight Jackson received at his own home.

According to Johns, approximately 45 minutes after Jackson began receiving medical attention, Chattahoochee Police Sgt. Price arrived. Johns said the officer pushed people aside, jumped on Jackson, and began using his Taser. I'm sure Sbt. Price has a first name, but the Chattahoochee Police Department chose not to release it. Despite being advised by EMS, whom Price got into an argument with, and family members, that Jackson was having a seizure. Price threatened others to stay back while he subdued Mr. Jackson. Price used his Taser on Jackson seven times while Jackson was "failing to comply."

> *"They are all still rendering aid to him; they are already holding him down, they pretty much got it under control, this is just now when he's starting to come back to. And in that moment, that's when Price started; he shoves everyone out the way and jumps on top of Dwight," — Caleb Johns*

Jackson was initially placed in the back of a Chattahoochee Police Department patrol car rather than being transported directly to the hospital by ambulance. A supervisory review of available footage identified another

use-of-force incident while Jackson was being transferred into the police department. When I speak of "available footage," I don't mean Sgt. Price's body camera. He was wearing one at the time but failed to activate it.

Caleb Johns recorded much of the incident on video, which went viral when released on Facebook. Three days later, after thousands of complaints, the Chattahoochee Police released a statement:

The chief's initial explanation was that:

- EMS personnel were having difficulty restraining an individual described as combative.
- Sgt. Price was called to assist.
- Jackson allegedly physically resisted and pulled on the officer's body armor.
- The officer responded by using his Taser.
- The officer involved had been fired.

I don't know the Chattahoochee Police Department's policy on how many times it is acceptable to use a Taser. Most major departments suggest no more than three times without exigent circumstances. Riverside, California, allows up to four times. Nowhere in the United States does a policy exist allowing a person to be Tasered seven times.

Kenyata Jackson was driving through the neighborhood and stopped to witness the incident:

> *"It was very horrible, and I just felt bad for the family and Jackson because if you're calling EMT and police to help you because you're having a seizure, but yet you're getting tased, like what was the problem?" — Kenyata Jackson*

Dwight Jackson, who did survive, gave this statement"

Jackson said he wasn't combative; he was experiencing a seizure.

"I've never experienced in my life something like this right here. That's why I said that was more terrifying than being in the war because it's unexpected; I'm defenseless." — Dwight Jackson.

Jackson is considering legal action.

The investigation of Sgt. Price is in its early stages. No information is currently available about prior excessive-force complaints. Florida has a documented history of law-enforcement officers leaving one police department under disciplinary circumstances and then joining another department. I hear Quincy, Florida, is nice. They even have a Walmart.

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