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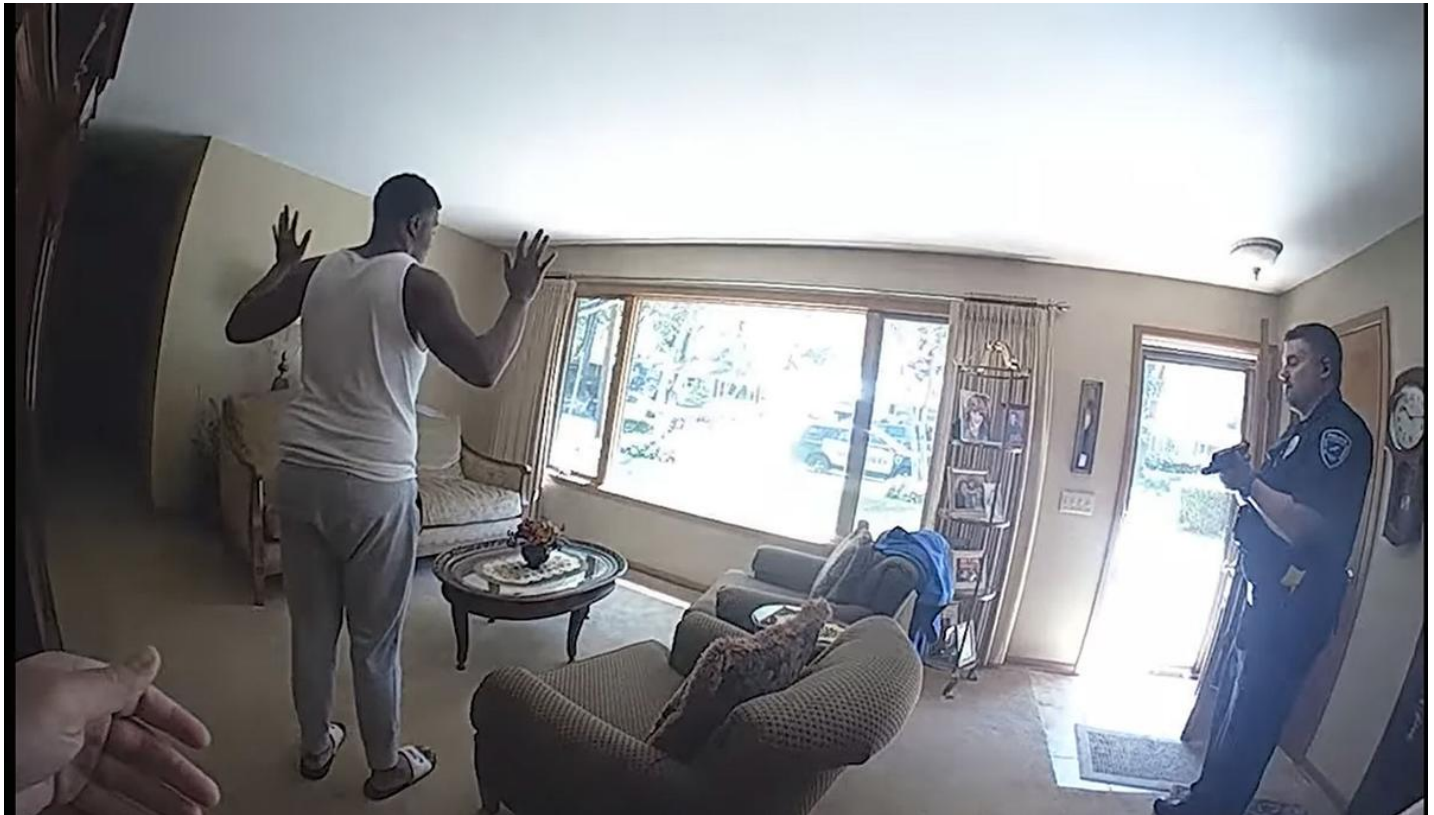
ALERT**TOP STORY**

MONONA | CIVIL SUIT

Monona's insurer agrees to pay \$150,000 to settle civil rights case brought by Black man detained by police

Chris Rickert | Wisconsin State Journal

Apr 7, 2022



Monona police body-camera footage shows officers questioning Keonte Furdge on June 2, 2020.

MONONA POLICE DEPARTMENT

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The city of Monona's insurer has agreed to pay \$150,000 to settle a civil rights suit brought by a Black man who was briefly detained by police at gunpoint in a home where he was staying in 2020.

A federal judge in February ruled that officers Jared Wedig and Luke Wunsch violated 25-year-old Keonte Furdge's Fourth Amendment right to be free from unreasonable search and seizure when they entered the home where he was the guest of a friend, ordered him out of a back bedroom and briefly handcuffed him on June 2. Furdge's presence at the home had been reported as suspicious by the girlfriend of a neighbor because the home had previously been vacant.



Monona Police Dept: Dispatch Audio & All Body Ca

Monona Community Media



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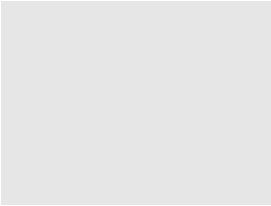
The city, which had no say over whether to settle the case according to city administrator Bryan Gadow, admits no guilt as part of the settlement, which also bars Furdge from taking any other legal action against it later.

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A trial had been set to determine how much to award Furdge in compensatory damages after U.S. District Judge James D. Peterson rejected Furdge's bid for punitive damages, finding that while the officers' conduct was unconstitutional, it was "a good-faith effort to protect the community by investigating what they believed, however wrongly, to be a possible crime."

One of Furdge's attorneys, Rick Resch, said his client "is happy to put this terrible experience behind him and to not have to relive the trauma at a jury trial."



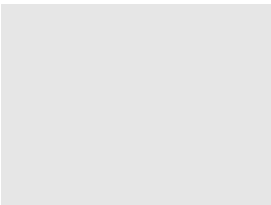
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His other attorney, John Bradley, said Furdge did not want to comment and declined to say how much of the \$150,000 will go to attorneys.

"The city is thankful the matter has been resolved in a collaborative manner," Gadow said. "We hope this unfortunate incident may serve as a learning exercise as we all grow in our desire to become an inclusive community for all."

Mayor Mary O'Connor declined further comment, and Gadow declined to speculate on whether the city would have agreed to the settlement had it had a say in the matter.



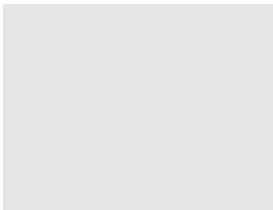
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The city's outside counsel in the case did not respond to a request for comment. The settlement, signed March 25, says "payment is being made for the sole purpose of avoiding the substantial expense of further litigation."

The June 2 incident during the height of public protests over the murder of George Floyd spurred Monona, an overwhelmingly white Madison suburb of about 8,600 people, to confront how it's perceived by people who aren't white.

Furdge alleged at the time of his brief detention that police were called because he is Black, but he never filed a formal complaint with the police department and did not assert in his civil rights suit that he was targeted because of his race.



Madison police captain named Monona's top cop

Chris Rickert | Wisconsin State Journal

Wedig and Wunsch, who are white, also did not know Furdge's race until he emerged from the back bedroom after officers entered without a warrant, thinking a burglary could be in progress. The person who saw Furdge outside the home and made the non-emergency call to police that sparked the incident identifies as Latina.

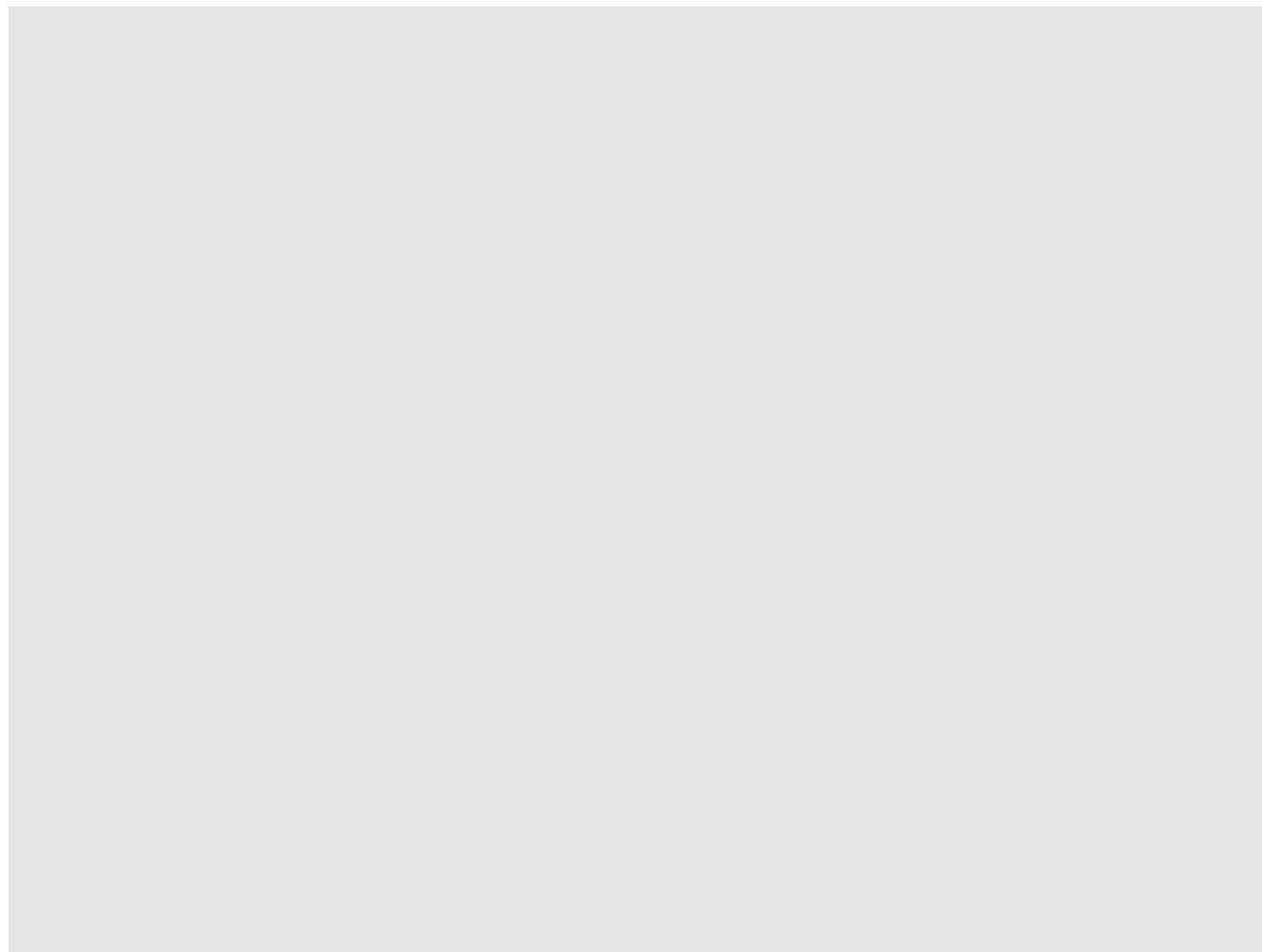
Still, Peterson said there was no evidence of "exigent circumstances" — such as an ongoing crime or someone in danger — that would have excused Wedig from getting a warrant before entering the home. Wunsch, meanwhile, violated Furdge's rights by remaining in the home and helping to detain Furdge after it became clear Furdge was allowed to be there, he ruled.

"The most dangerous course of action was the one actually taken by Wedig and Wunsch," Peterson wrote. "They entered the home unannounced with guns drawn. Their actions escalated the danger by risking a violent confrontation with a surprised suspect."

The city hired **a consultant to do an outside review of the incident** and **continues to work** with Madison-based Nehemiah Community Development Corp. on diversity, equity and inclusion training and other related work.

Photos: Look back at Madison's 'Forward' statue through the years as protesters down Capitol Square replica

Shaping 'Forward'



Menasha native Jean Pond Miner is shown working on her "Forward" statue in 1893 in the Wisconsin Building at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Photo courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society.

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