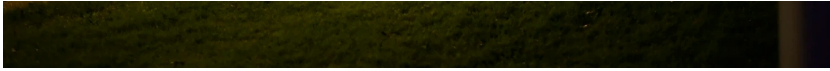


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DA drops charges against 5 people who led Elijah McClain protest outside Aurora police station

Move by 17th Judicial District prosecutor follows dismissal of charges by judge, 18th Judicial District DA





Rachel Ellis, The Denver Post

Following a rally for Elijah McClain at his memorial site, protesters remain outside of The Aurora Police Department on East Montview Boulevard. through the evening on Friday, July 3, 2020.

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The Denver Post

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Prosecutors dropped criminal charges Thursday against five people arrested last summer after leading protests in Aurora against the police over the death of Elijah McClain, the latest in a series of dismissed counts related to a July 3 demonstration.

The 17th Judicial District Attorney's Office in Adams County announced the dismissal of all remaining felony and misdemeanor charges against Lillian House, Joel Northam, Whitney Lucero, Terrance Roberts and Trey Quinn tied to the protest outside an Aurora police substation.

"After a thorough review of these cases, I have decided to dismiss the charges against these five individuals. I have an ethical obligation to only proceed on charges my office can prove and to dismiss charges that we cannot prove," 17th Judicial District Attorney Brian Mason said in a statement. "My job is to do the right thing. After considerable thought and reflection, I believe dismissing these charges is the right thing to do."

The now-former co-defendants, members of the Party for Socialism and Liberation, were leaders of last summer's protests, which drew as many as 600 demonstrators around the July 4th holiday.

Protestors surrounded the police station and some used ropes to tie the building's doors shut or obstructed exits with furniture. House and other leaders said protesters would not leave the area that night until Aurora police fired two officers involved in the death of McClain, the 23-year-old who died after being stopped by police, placed in a chokehold and injected with ketamine in 2019.

When the individuals were arrested in September, [affidavits more than 30 pages long](#) explained how Aurora police used recordings of livestreams, a transcript of a call between House and Aurora police Chief Vanessa Wilson and social media posts by protesters in building criminal cases.

Charges had included felony attempted first-degree kidnapping and inciting a riot.

In March, an [Adams County judge threw out attempted-kidnapping charges](#) against House, Lucero and Northam. In a rare ruling, Judge Leroy Kirby dismissed the charges following a preliminary hearing in which the judge did not find sufficient evidence to proceed to trial.

In April, the 18th Judicial District Attorney's Office in Arapahoe County moved to withdraw the most serious charges it had filed against three protest leaders, House, Northam and Roberts, a move that continued to trend as the cases moved forward, leading up to Thursday's development.

According to a news release, Daxx Dalton still faces misdemeanor charges of false imprisonment, engaging in a riot and obstructing government operations. Cameron Frazier is charged with felony possession of a dangerous weapon and felony possession of a weapon by a previous offender.

Attorneys representing the protesters whose charges were dropped Thursday released statements acknowledging lines were crossed when protesters tied the police station's doors closed, something that could have prevented officers from responding to an emergency. The statements said the former defendants did not endorse that action.

“The law is clear that tying doors to a police station is not legal and there has never been an allegation that our clients did so,” the attorneys representing House, Northam and Lucero said. “The goals of peaceful protest are not to prevent police from responding to calls for service, but to affect change that addresses the needs of the community.”

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