

George Floyd, October 14, 1973 – May 25, 2020, 46 years old

George Perry Floyd, Jr., also known as “Perry Jr.”, “Big Floyd”, and simply, “Floyd,” was born on October 14, 1973 in Fayetteville, NC, to parents George Perry Floyd Sr. and Larcenia Jones Floyd. George’s family moved to Texas soon after his birth, where he grew up in Houston’s Third Ward community. George had six siblings and four step-siblings, as well as many aunts, uncles, and cousins. Cousin Tera Brown said, “He was everyone’s favorite everything, the favorite friend, the favorite cousin.” Christopher Harris, who became friends with George in middle school, remembers his warm personality: “If he had a stamp and it had his signature on it, it would be his smile. It literally lit up a room just because it was his smile.”

George was also a gifted athlete, playing both basketball and football in high school. In 1992, he played for Yates High School in the televised Texas High School 5A Division II championship against the Temple Wildcats at Texas Memorial Stadium in Austin as #88. He was offered a football scholarship to Florida State University, but was unable to attend because of required math mark in the standardized high school exit exam required in Texas at the time. George continued studying and got his GED, after which he was recruited to play basketball at South Florida State College.

Stephen Jackson, NBA champion basketball player and ESPN analyst, also grew up in Houston’s Third Ward and was a longtime friend of George’s. In an Instagram post he said, “Floyd was my brother, we called each other twin.”

In the 1990s, George was also involved in Houston’s hip-hop scene, as part of a rap crew led by Texas music pioneer, DJ Screw, a well-known local musician. Houston rapper Trae the Truth remembers George for his dedication to his community: “He believed in people to a point it seemed he believed in people more than he even believed in himself.”

A father to three children, George lived in St. Louis Park, Minnesota, after moving there from Houston in 2014. There, he worked as a security guard at Salvation Army and Conga Latin Bistro until, like millions of other Americans, he was laid off in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Jovanni Thunstrom, one of the owners of Congo Latin Bistro, where George worked for 5 years, said George was a close friend, not just an employee. Thunstrom said George knew customers by their first names and would make sure that Jovanni’s wife, Ruth Thunstrom, made it safely to her car at night when Jovanni wasn’t there.

George's partner, Courtney Ross, met him while visiting a loved one at Salvation Army, where he was working. "He just saw how taxed I was and came over and prayed with me, loved me and we were together ever since" Ross said. "He was not only the man I loved but the man I admired... He taught me how to be a better person."

In St. Louis, George was a regular customer at Cup Foods, where the store owner, Mike Abumayyaleh knew him as a regular customer who never caused problems. However, Abumayyaleh was not working on May 25, 2020, when a teenaged employee called police at 8:01pm, concerned that George appeared drunk and may have paid for his cigarettes with a counterfeit \$20 bill.

Two officers, J. Alexander Kueng and Thomas Lane, arrived at 8:08pm. While approaching the car George was sitting in, Lane pulled out his gun and ordered George to show his hands. He was cooperative and the transcripts from the body cameras show George apologizing repeatedly to officers and saying, "Please don't shoot me." Lane pulled George out of the car and handcuffed him. When the officers tried to put him in their car, a struggle ensued. George told the officers he was claustrophobic, pleading with them not to leave him in the squad car by himself. Officers Derek Chauvin and Tou Thao then arrived, and Chauvin was involved in a further attempt with the other officers to put George in the police car. During this, at 8:19pm, Chauvin pulled George away from the car, causing him to fall, where he laid face down, still handcuffed.

Witnesses started to film the videos that would later be shared widely on social media. Chauvin placed his left knee on George's neck and kept it there for over 9 minutes. Minnesota prosecutors initially reported the time as 8m 46s, but later revised it to 9m 29s based on the police body camera footage.

The police body camera transcript showed George saying he could not breathe more than 20 times while Chauvin kept his knee on his neck. George also called for his mother and begged, "please, please, please."

George said "You're gonna kill me, man" to which Chauvin responded, "Then stop talking, stop yelling. It takes a heck of a lot of oxygen to talk."

George continued, "Can't believe this man. Mom, love you. Love you. Tell my kids I love them. I'm dead." A bystander told police, "His nose is bleeding, come on now."

About 6 minutes in, George stopped talking and became non-responsive. Bystanders urged police to check his pulse. When Officer Kueng did so and reported no pulse, the other officers didn't move.

At 8:27 pm, Chauvin removed his knee, over a minute after paramedics arrived on the scene. George was put on a gurney and taken to Hennepin County Medical Center by ambulance, where he was pronounced dead an hour later.

On May 26, 2020, the four officers involved in George's death were fired. Civil rights attorney Ben Crump announced he would be representing George's family in seeking justice. Protests began in Minneapolis at the police precinct and at the site of the incident.

On May 27, 2020, as the videos taken by bystanders spread on social media, protests began in other cities, including Los Angeles and Memphis. In Minneapolis, police used rubber bullets and tear gas against protesters as tensions escalated. This was compounded as Minnesota Governor, Tim Walz, signed an executive order to activate the Minnesota National Guard the next day, with many other governors doing the same in the days that followed.

On May 29, 2020, Derek Chauvin was arrested and charged with third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. Governor Walz issued a curfew for the entire Minneapolis-Saint Paul metropolitan area, and at least twelve other cities issued their own curfews as incidents of violence and looting took place at large, mostly peaceful protests. Thousands of demonstrators continued to protest in cities across the country, including near the White House on May 31st, chanting George's words: "I can't breathe."

On June 3, 2020, the other 3 officers were charged with aiding and abetting second-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. Chauvin was also given an additional second-degree murder charge.

On September 18, 2020, the Minneapolis City Councils voted to rename the intersection of 38th Street and Chicago Avenue, near the site of George's death, *George Floyd Square*.

On March 12, 2021, the Minneapolis City Council unanimously approved a 27 million dollar settlement in the civil lawsuit brought by George's family against the City and the four officers.

In April 2021, Chauvin was found guilty on all counts in George's death and sentenced to 22.5 years in prison. In December 2021, Chauvin also pleaded guilty to federal charges of violating George's civil rights. In February 2022, the other three officers were charged with deliberate indifference to George's serious medical needs, and in June 2022, Kueng and Tao were also convicted of violating George's civil rights. Chauvin, Kueng, and Tao are currently serving time in prison.

In the time since his death, George Floyd has become one of the most well-known victims of police violence. In the ABC news special, *After Floyd: The Year that Shook the World*, released on the one year anniversary of George's death, his brother Philonise said:

*"I want people to be able to look at him and realize that we don't want any more George Floyds. We don't want any more T-shirts. We don't want any more hashtags. We have to stop this. And when you look at George, I want people to look at him and say, 'We gotta fight. We gotta keep fighting. We gotta keep pushing because we have to change laws. We gotta change everything.'"*

In loving memory of George Perry Floyd, Jr.

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