



Tribune photo by Abel Uribe

Christina Centera (center) and son Carlo (left) cry as she talks of her son Demetri, who was killed by police.

# Police shootings spur suits

## Families call killings of 2 men unjustified

By Rudolph Bush  
Tribune staff reporter

The families of two men killed in separate shootings last year by Chicago police officers filed wrongful death lawsuits against the city and Police Department in federal court Thursday, saying their loved ones were gunned down unjustifiably.

Jon Loevy, representing the families of Demetri Centera and Michael Dunbar, said the Police Department performed whitewash investigations with the aim of clearing the

officers who shot the men.

"The Chicago Police Department has never met a shooting that is not justified," Loevy said. "It has gotten completely out of control in Chicago in a way that is not true in other major cities."

On April 7, off-duty Officer Edward Yerke shot and killed Centera, 31, and his friend Kenneth Elrod after a confrontation at a Northwest Side bar.

Yerke told investigating officers the men had pulled guns on him after he helped throw Elrod out of the bar. He was cleared of wrongdoing in the incident.

Yerke and the Police Department are named as defendants in Centera's suit.

Dunbar, 31, was shot and killed May 3 after he was pulled over during a traffic stop on Chicago's West Side.

An officer fired at him after Dunbar began to drive off.

Investigators cleared the officer after he said he was being dragged by Dunbar's car and feared for his life.

The city is the sole defendant named in Dunbar's suit.

Loevy called the police versions of both shootings nonsense. Centera and Dunbar "were unarmed and doing nothing that could have provoked their execution by the Chicago Police Department," Loevy said.

Police spokeswoman Monique Bond declined to comment on the suits, citing de-

partment policy not to address pending litigation.

But she did say there were 44 shootings by police officers in 2006. Of those, 17 were fatal.

At a news conference in the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse to announce the suits, family members of Centera and Dunbar spoke emotionally about the impact the men's deaths has had on their lives.

Centera's mother, Christina Centera, broke down crying about the loss of her son, saying he had done nothing to deserve his fate.

Tribune staff reporter David Heinzmann contributed to this report.

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