

'We finally got justice for him'

City to pay \$5 mil. for fatal shooting of paraplegic man

BY STEFANO ESPOSITO
Staff Reporter

The city has agreed to pay \$5.2 million to the family of a paraplegic shot and killed during a police traffic stop in summer 2003.

The settlement was reached over the weekend, after a federal jury on Friday found Chicago Police liable in the death of Cornelius Ware. The jury's ruling came despite police maintaining that officers acted appropriately in the shooting of the 20-year-old Chicagoan.

"One of the things that makes this country great is that we don't have to rely on the police department to be the final arbiter of what is justice," Ware family lawyer Jon Loevy said Monday.

Jennifer Hoyle, a spokeswoman for the city's Law Department, said the city settled the case because jurors "were obviously going to come up with some damages against the city."

Officers pulled over Ware's 1989 Chevrolet Celebrity after Ware ran a stop sign in the 8400 block of South Loomis in August 2003.

Police at the time said Ware was armed, refused to drop his gun and pointed it at one of the officers.

Loevy said there's no evidence — despite four officers testifying to the contrary — that Ware was armed. Neither fingerprints nor blood was



Tammy Grant, mother of Cornelius Ware (inset), on Monday said her biggest concern was seeing justice done after Ware, a paraplegic, was shot and killed by police in 2003. Relatives disputed police claims that Ware was armed. —AL PODGORSKI/SUN-TIMES



found on the gun, which Loevy claims police planted in Ware's car.

Loevy said three witnesses, including two Ware family members, said Ware was unarmed at the time.

City 'badly miscalculated'

The city initially offered \$25,000 to settle the case before trial, Loevy added. Ware's family probably would have taken less than \$1 million, but the city wouldn't agree to that, Loevy said.

"They said, 'We're going to see you in court,' and they badly miscalculated," Loevy said.

Tammy Grant, Ware's mother, made a brief statement to reporters Monday:

"I'm just so happy that we finally got justice for him. That was my biggest concern, to get justice for my son."

Loevy said he doesn't expect either police or prosecutors to punish the officers involved in Ware's shooting.

John Corman, a spokesman for Cook County State's Attorney Richard Devine, challenged Loevy to bring prosecutors evidence that would

warrant a criminal investigation.

"The state's attorney's office has charged more than 125 police officers over the last 10 years," Gorman said. "That's more than one a month."

"Where there is evidence, we have no hesitation in charging Chicago police. If Mr. Loevy has evidence, he can bring it to us."

sesposito@suntimes.com