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Seattle Office of Police Accountability Recommends Sustained Findings for Officer Who Said Student Fatally Struck 'Had Limited Value'

Seattle, WA — The Office of Police Accountability (OPA) recommends sustained findings for the Seattle Police Department (SPD) officer who made callous remarks about 23-year-old Jaahnavi Kandula; struck and killed by a police cruiser driven by another officer on January 23, 2023. OPA found that the officer violated SPD's professionalism and bias-based policing policies by laughing about Kandula's death, describing her as having "limited value," and making other disparaging remarks.

SPD prohibits "behavior that undermines public trust," including "any language that is derogatory, contemptuous, or disrespectful toward any person." It also forbids prejudice or derogatory language about someone's discernible personal characteristics.

An SPD employee initiated OPA's investigation by forwarding the inadvertently recorded comments captured by the officer's body-worn video equipment. SPD also publicly released the video, resulting in hundreds of OPA complaints.

OPA Director Gino Betts Jr. described the officer's words as "derogatory, disturbing, and inhumane."

"The officer's comments undermined public trust in the department, himself, and his colleagues," Betts said. "For many, it confirmed, fairly or not, beliefs that some officers devalue and conceal disparaging views about community members."

A discipline meeting is scheduled for January 23, 2024, where OPA and the officer's chain of command will discuss OPA's findings and forward recommended discipline to the chief of police.

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