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Trenton cop targeted by FBI sued for using excessive force

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TRENTON — A former Trenton cop [who is being investigated by the FBI](#) is being accused of launching into an “unprovoked physical assault” on a former city man two years ago.

Saalam Felton, who now lives in St. Charles, Missouri, says in a lawsuit filed late last month that he was a victim of former Trenton Police officer Anthony Villanueva, who was fired from the department in June.

Villanueva is being examined by federal authorities as part of an excessive force investigation.

The status of the probe is unknown at this time as the feds have refused to even confirm the existence of it.

The lawsuit also names Trenton officer Sh’Quanah Lopez, and former police director Ernest Parrey Jr., along with his right-hand-man, Capt. Stephen Varn.

But the lawsuit focuses in on Villaneuva’s actions during the March 2017 arrest of Felton in the area of Gladstone and Cleveland avenues.

The arrest was captured by on Villanueva’s body-camera, a copy of which was obtained by [NJ.com](#) under the state Open Public Records Act.

The footage showed Villanueva chasing down and tackling Felton from behind. Villanueva then hits Felton with at least two blows to the head.

The stunned suspect responds: “What are you punching me for, yo?”

Felton was accused of scaling fences and dashing through alleys as he led cops on a foot chase, allegedly ditching a gun in the 300 block of Cleveland Avenue.

Villanueva was caught on tape describing the foot pursuit in a phone call with a colleague.

“He didn’t see coming through the other alleyway. He took off his hoodie. When he threw his hoodie, I came from behind. He didn’t even see me. He started walking. He thought he got away. I snuck up from behind and punched him. He just fell.”

Then Villanueva appeared to mock Felton: “You ain’t gotta punch me, man.”

The lawsuit claims Felton never attempted to fight back or resist arrest as he was bludgeoned by the alleged overzealous cop who caused him “serious bodily injury, which includes, but is not limited to, head injury; blood on the brain.”

The lawsuit, filed jointly by attorneys Clifford Bidlingmaier III and Robin Lord, alleged that Lopez saw “a portion” of the vicious assault and goes on to accuse TPD upper brass of not doing anything about the alleged out-of-control officer’s conduct.

[Lord also represents another of Villanueva’s accusers](#), Quaree Singletary, who says he spoke to the feds after he was beat up by the TPD cop inside police lockup.

Villanueva was assigned to TPD lockup after he was pulled off the streets following a separate altercation with suspect Chanzie

Washington, which was also captured by body camera.

Villanueva was shown decking a muddied and wet Washington in the face after he appeared to surrender to cops, putting his hands in the air from behind a chained-link fence.

Villanueva had been suspended without pay at the time *The Trentonian* reported last March that he was under investigation.

Villanueva no longer shows up among active contributors in state pension records, and a city spokesman confirmed he was cut loose last summer.

Villanueva's attorney, George Dougherty, in a previous interview last year attempted to paint his client as the fall guy in the Washington case, saying it was troubling the actions of other cops involved in the arrest weren't be scrutinized the same way.

He was referring in part to cop Drew Inman, the son of a Hamilton cop Daniel Inman. The younger Inman was caught on body cam bragging about beating the living shi..." out of Washington.

Dougherty did not immediately respond to a request for comment Monday afternoon.

As it relates to Villanueva, Felton's lawsuit says department brass knew he was an alleged hot head and, instead of stopping him in his tracks, "invited and encouraged and promoted a variety of policies and practices" that resulted in his repeated instances of excessive force.

The Trentonian previously reported Villanueva filed 14 use-of-force reports in a two-year period. Statewide average over a five year period is 4.1 use-of-force reports per officer, according to [NJ.com's reporting on statewide use-of-force records](#).