

Planet Fitness

I'm watching the police shoot an unarmed Black man while I run on a treadmill. His arms are raised and he's walking backward toward his car as I run in place and an officer aims a gun and others arrive on the scene. The man's hands are empty when he falls against his car and they're empty when he drops to the ground. From the viewpoint of the helicopter hovering above, Terence Crutcher—his name, I'll later learn, after looking it up, since no one said it as the footage played—walks backward, then dies on continuous loop on four of the fourteen screens. There's Terence Crutcher on the ground once more. There are his hands raised. There's his car, stopped in the middle of the road. There's the guardrail, ditch. Here's the moment—it's becoming familiar already—when the helicopter swings to one side and the view becomes partially blocked before Terence Crutcher drops from sight and then he's on the ground. Now the footage begins to play on a split screen—there's the backward walk, his empty hands raised, the circling as he falls to the road—but his death is already a bit smaller because people have begun to speak. I can't hear what they're saying, but I watch their mouths move across from where Terence Crutcher lies in the road. Behind the row of TVs, in bright gold on the wall, a gigantic thumbs-up crashes through a cogged wheel next to emblazoned slogans. *No Critics. Judgment Free Zone.* Someone out there wants me to feel comfortable. Someone wants me to feel good. On other days when I'm running, I'll anchor my eyes on that gigantic thumb or perhaps stare directly into one of the O's in the words *You Belong!*, but today, instead, I'm watching Terence Crutcher stand in the road with his arms raised. The sound is off, but captions appear in boxes at the bottom of the screens. *That looks like a bad dude*, someone says from the helicopter hovering above, and then, just after the shots are fired, *They're going to need to get this eastbound closed down.* The words lag then lurch forward again each time someone speaks. A day or two from now, I'll learn that Terence Crutcher was born three minutes before his twin sister, that he loved the Dallas Cowboys and the gospel song "I Won't Complain," that he left behind three teenage daughters and a four-year-old son, but none of that fills the boxes on the screens. I'm running in place as Terence Crutcher walks backward or raises his hands or dies next to his car once more and whatever was said is being said yet again out of sync in a box of words.