

# North Chicago police beating death sparks public outcry

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Over the past several years, the city of North Chicago, located 35 miles north of Chicago, Illinois, has seen a disturbing spike in police brutality. Recently, Darrin “Dagwood” Hanna, 45, was beaten and Tasered at his home on November 6 of this year. He died on November 13.

Police arrived at his home to address a domestic disturbance. Hanna’s girlfriend was found sitting outside the apartment. Hanna refused to exit the home. The police entered the residence to subdue and arrest Hanna, who was beaten and shot with a Taser repeatedly for more than 20 minutes.

Witnesses reported that police took Hanna out of the apartment covered with a sheet to hide the injuries from onlookers. He was taken straight to the hospital.

Family said that Hanna was beaten so badly that he was not recognizable. His mother, Gloria Carr, identified her son by his feet.

According to a recent report in the *Sun Times*, the Lake County coroner stated that the cause of Hanna’s death is still pending, and that Hanna’s body had multiple traumatic injuries, including marks from a Taser.

North Chicago residents have responded with outrage over the beating and death. More than 200 people protested outside North Chicago’s City Hall on November 19 at a memorial rally for Hanna. On December 5, a large crowd packed into a city council meeting. Photos were shown of Hanna in the hospital, connected to a ventilator. Members of the man’s family and other victims of police brutality have attended city council meetings to demand the resignation of North Chicago police chief Mike Newsome.

Local Democratic politicians have also become involved in the demonstrations. Democratic state representative Rita Mayfield of the nearby suburb of

Waukegan has said that the November 19 demonstration was not “an anti-police rally,” and that justice will come through maintaining pressure on the city council.

On December 8, the North Chicago city council voted 4-3 to suspend Police Chief Newsome. However, the suburb’s mayor, Leon Rockingham, Jr., overrode the decision, and chose to keep Newsome in his position. Mayor Rockingham stated that Newsome has done a good job overall, with only a few “isolated incidents.”

Darrin Hanna’s family has decided to pursue legal action against the six officers named in the incident: Tristan Borzick, Gray Grayer, Marc Keske, Brandon Yost, Arthur Strong and Jayson Geryol.

Muriel Collison, an attorney representing the Hanna family, told the *Lake County News Sun*, “Some of the same officers have been named in these lawsuits and other claims.”

“Our phones have been ringing off the hook. People are saying this isn’t an isolated incident. It’s ongoing.”

Collison is also representing Walter White, 70, who required hospitalization after being beaten subsequent to his arrest in 2010. He suffered several facial fractures.

Ten lawsuits have been filed against North Chicago police since 2005, in response to four fatal shootings and numerous beatings.

Recently, the city settled for \$1 million for the 2008 shooting death of Aaren Gwinn. Ninety-thousand dollars was paid to Van Alston, who was beaten during a traffic stop in 2009, when he was 60 years old. Alston presented video of the incident at a recent city council meeting and demanded harsher punishment for the officers involved.

Despite the investigations, settlements and growing popular opposition to police brutality, the violence

against the population continues.

On December 12, Waukegan resident Charles Smith, 50, was brutally beaten by North Chicago police. The officers followed Smith, who was suspected of a burglary, to a nearby Sleep Inn. Smith fled, but was caught and arrested.

Smith required surgery the following day to relieve the pressure on his brain from the massive swelling caused by the head trauma inflicted by the North Chicago officers on that Monday night. Two days later, Smith underwent facial reconstructive surgery. In all he suffered severe head trauma and broken bones on the left side of his face, and lost several teeth.

North Chicago police chief Newsome said the two officers involved in Smith's arrest did a "great job."

The police brutality in North Chicago is not accidental. It is a reflection of worsening living conditions and rising social tensions. Residents themselves pointed to this at meetings in response to Hanna's death. At one city council meeting, Vanessa Peterson, Darrin Hanna's cousin, described rampant crime as well as limited jobs and recreation opportunities caused by years of poor city leadership.

"You don't have a grocery store," Peterson told aldermen, whom she accused of looking smug. "I have relatives who have to go to Timbuktu to get a piece of meat."

In fact, North Chicago is one of the poorest municipalities in the Chicago region. Thousands of manufacturing jobs in North Chicago and nearby Waukegan have been eliminated, and North Chicago residents have an unusually high tax burden because of a massive US Naval station that is part of the city, but which contributes no tax revenue.

Just a few miles south of this deprived area is the tony "North Shore," the location of some of the richest cities in the United States, where many Chicago-area executives and business owners keep palatial homes.



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