

Anaheim, California residents speak out on police killing

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Protests in Anaheim, California continued on Tuesday in front of City Hall, amidst mass anger over the police killing of an unarmed man on Saturday, followed by a police attack on protesters. On the very next day, a second fatal shooting happened in an adjacent neighborhood, bringing the total to six officer-involved shootings so far this year in this city, up from four a year before.

In the first shooting incident, eyewitnesses say that 25-year-old Manuel Diaz was shot in the head after being first shot in the back while running away. (Video of the police surrounding the body immediately after the killing can be found [here](#), and the attack on protesters [here](#).)

On Sunday, police shot and killed another man, Joel Acevedo, who police say was also a known gang member fleeing in a stolen vehicle. Police have reported that Acevedo fired at the officers and was then shot in return. Other witnesses have claimed that Acevedo was actually shot after being handcuffed by police.

Numerous reports claim that no one was allowed to take photos, and that police shined bright flashlights on an adjacent apartment building after residents attempted to capture the aftermath of the incident on film.

Saturday's shooting of Diaz was followed by a protest of dozens of neighborhood residents, who were fired upon by police using rubber bullets, bean bag guns and pepper spray balls. A police K-9 came off of its leash and attacked some of the protesters, including a young mother and her child.

Police have stepped up patrols in response to the protests and are threatening to use force against any escalation. On Tuesday, several hundred residents gathered outside a city council meeting, but police

refused to let them in. They later marched through nearby streets.

Anaheim police have announced an investigation into the killing and have placed two of the officers involved in the Diaz shooting on paid leave. Mayor Tom Tait has called for federal assistance. The purpose of any such investigation will be to cover up for the crimes of the police.

Also on Tuesday, Genevieve Huizar, Diaz's mother, filed a \$50 million federal lawsuit against the police, according to her attorney Dana Douglas. She also plans to file a claim for damages against the City of Anaheim.

World Socialist Web Site reporters spoke with residents in the working class neighborhood in eastern Anaheim where Diaz was killed. A makeshift memorial was set up with votive candles, flowers and posters denouncing the police. Many youth and adults were sitting or standing about, talking among themselves. One group of youth stood by a sign that read, "Criminal cops need to be fired."

Esdras Castillo, a student at Anaheim High School, said, "Most of the people in this neighborhood are working people, and the police always come around here for nothing. There's a lot of harassment and they get away with it. About a month ago, the police arrested three people. One was a drug dealer, but the other two had nothing to do with him. They were 16 or 17 years old. The cops had them on the floor for 20 minutes.

"Manuel [Diaz] was drinking water and he wasn't

armed. Why did they shoot him? During the protest, the police let a dog loose. It wasn't an accident, like the cops said, and I know the girl who was holding her baby that got hurt."

Xochitl Guerrero was shopping at the nearby Northgate Grocery Store, which is frequented by many Latino immigrants. "For me, it was abuse. I've lived here 11 years and this area has become a lot more working class. My husband works in an auto body shop. He works extremely hard like thousands of others, but there's little respect for the population here nonetheless. There's a lot of aggression by the police and there's a lot of discrimination against the Latino population."

Maria Gomez lives in the neighborhood and works as a medical assistant in Costa Mesa, a city approximately a half hour south of Anaheim. "I do think it was very unfair what the police did. He was shot in the head. If they wanted to stop him, they could have shot him in the leg or something like that.

"When the protest was going on I passed by and saw people shouting. I know there are gang members in that area, but the police shouldn't be shooting. That was unnecessary. When I saw the police dogs, it was very scary."

Maria also spoke about deteriorating social conditions in the city and how it can be seen in her own job.

"I work at Planned Parenthood in Costa Mesa. Often there are people outside protesting against abortions, but that's only a small part of what we do. We also provide prenatal care and cancer screenings, among many other things. The government is trying to defund us. But we're in very high demand, especially with so many people having no health insurance or employment."

Ryan and Hannie Thomas are both students at Cal State University Fullerton who work long hours to make ends meet. Hannie is majoring in graphic design while working in marketing for a janitorial company, and Ryan is studying business while working at the Brea Mall.

Hannie said, "This reminds me of the Fullerton police killing of that white homeless man Kelly Thomas. He wasn't armed either.

"With us being students, we really feel the impact of

the budget cuts. Our tuition goes up about 9 percent every year. We're trying to work hard to avoid having to take out loans. But it's getting harder and harder to do it.

"When I finish, I'll have been in school six years. Ryan would have been in for five years. And all this for a bachelor's degree. It's because the classes are overcrowded and the university sometimes cuts classes that we need, so it takes longer to get your degree."

Another resident who wished to remain anonymous said, "We look out for each other on this whole street. Stuff like this has been happening for a while, but it was different this time because we all stood up. It was wrongful. There have been a lot of lies on the news. Manuel wasn't on parole. He had nowhere to run to and he had nothing in his pockets. He didn't throw anything on the roof.

"A lot of witnesses were recording what was happening on their cell phones. Then the cops were going around trying to buy the recordings from those people.

"At the protest here the other night we just wanted justice. There were kids out here when they let the canine loose. Why take his life? The police should be charged with murder."

Police-involved shootings have jumped significantly over the past two years across the entire Southern California area. According to a report in the *Los Angeles Times*, 52 people were shot fatally by Los Angeles County Police in 2011. This is a 70 percent increase from the previous year. Police officers discharged firearms at suspects a total of 63 times, a 60 percent increase over the previous year.

The report also noted that the number of homicides in the Los Angeles area had fallen to historic lows. With 612 confirmed homicides, nearly 1 out of every ten of these was the result of a police shooting.



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