

Three more US police killings

Shannon Jones
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Three more people in the US have died at the hands of the police over the past several days. The killings, coming in the wake of the tragic death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, underscore the pervasive character of police violence in the United States.

On Monday, 35-year-old Shad Griffis died after being tasered by police in Columbia County, Florida. Police said they fired the electrical stun device after the man made an “aggressive” movement. Shortly afterward, Griffis stopped breathing. He was pronounced dead at a local hospital.

On Sunday, Chicago police shot and killed two young men in separate incidents. Roshad McIntosh, 18, of Chicago was shot by police in the North Lawndale neighborhood on the west side of the city by gang enforcement officers. In the other incident, Desean Pittman, 20, was killed by police following what was described by officers as a shootout between two men. In both cases, police allege the victims were armed.

Meanwhile, protests are continuing in Salt Lake City, Utah over police killings in that city and nationwide. On Monday, some 40 protestors marched around Library Square to draw attention to the case of Dillon Taylor, 20, who was shot to death by police on August 11.

Griffis was white, while Pittman and McIntosh were both African-American. The shooting in Salt Lake City involved an officer who was black and a white victim.

The shooting of McIntosh in Chicago led to a protest by dozens of area residents. Family members and neighbors said they did not believe police accounts that claimed the youth was armed. Protestors said McIntosh was already on his knees with his hands in the air when he was shot.

Marcia Sloan, one of the North Lawndale residents who organized the protest, told the media that the community was showing its solidarity with the people of Ferguson. “It is like they (the police) are at war with

us,” said Sloan.

A relative of McIntosh described a version of events that contradicted police accounts. He said police had jumped from their vehicles with guns drawn, shouting for everyone to get on the ground. While he said he couldn’t see what happened next, he indicated that he did not believe McIntosh was armed.

The events surrounding the death of Pittman are sketchy. Police say they responded to reports of a shooting and saw a man holding a gun standing over someone lying on the ground. Police claim Pittman pointed the gun at them and they fired. Amelio Johnson, 22, who had been on the ground, died later at the hospital.

According to a review by the *Chicago Tribune*, police have shot 34 people in the city so far this year. Chicago Police Superintendent Gary McCarthy said there had been 45 cases of officers firing their guns.

In the case of Griffis, Sherriff’s deputies in Columbia County responded to reports of a suspicious person in a yard. The deputies said they found Griffis in a shed and when they ordered him out, he failed to comply.

According to friends, Griffis went by the nickname of “Concrete” because he worked with cement. “He was a young guy, so hard to believe he had gotten tased,” a neighbor told the media.

Police confronted Taylor, who was facing a felony arrest warrant, outside a Salt Lake City convenience store. Taylor, who was with his younger brother at the time, didn’t respond immediately to officers because he was wearing headphones.

According to a witness, one officer told him to put his hands on his head while another told him to get on the ground. Dillon, apparently confused, reached to pull up his pants and officers shot him. Police are not at this point claiming Taylor had a gun.

The case has received virtually no media attention, outside of local news reports. A Facebook group called

“Justice for Dillon Taylor” has more than 2,200 members.

According to data compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation , some 400 police killings are reported to it annually by local police. The figure is undoubtedly an underestimation, since the numbers are unaudited and the vast majority of law enforcement agencies do not participate.

There is a conscious and pervasive lack of reporting of police-related violence. A 1994 congressional mandate to the attorney general’s office to compile and publish annual statistics on the use of excessive force by police officers was never carried out.

However, data compiled by the Centers for Disease Control shows that there were more than 5,000 deaths at the hands of US law enforcement officers between 1999 and 2011.



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