

Another homicide at hands of New York City cops

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1 September 2014

For the second time in less than a month, the New York City Medical Examiner's office determined that New York Police Department officers were criminally responsible for a man's death. A spokeswoman announced Friday that the death of Ron Singleton was a homicide attributable to "physical restraint by police." Singleton, a 45-year-old worker, was killed by police officers on July 13 after being taken into custody as an "emotionally disturbed person."

Singleton's death took place just four days prior to the killing of Eric Garner, who was strangled by police officers in Staten Island for allegedly selling untaxed cigarettes. Video of Garner's killing, which showed a violent assault by police officers who ignored Garner's cries of "I can't breathe," sparked widespread outrage.

No video exists of Singleton's killing. According to police reports, a taxi driver in Midtown Manhattan alerted police to a backseat passenger "acting overly irate and irrational, cursing and screaming and causing alarm." Police allege that as Singleton exited the vehicle he "became combative with the officer, trying to fight with him."

Backup was brought in, including from the NYPD Emergency Service Unit, which also functions as the city's SWAT unit. Singleton was subsequently restrained by several officers and placed in body wrap. He suffered cardiac arrest, reportedly while in an ambulance en route to Roosevelt Hospital, where he was announced dead on arrival.

The medical examiner reported that Singleton was in a state of "excited delirium due to acute phencyclidine (PCP) intoxication" at the time of death. Singleton had struggled with drug abuse for some time, and had dozens of arrests on drug charges.

In an interview with Pix 11 news, the victim's cousin Ed Robinson said, "[Singleton] spoke to his mother

from the back of that cab and he was happy, upbeat, he would never do anything or cause trouble, but [NYPD Internal Affairs Bureau] called us to say there was an altercation at the scene."

"Ron was a good guy," Robinson added, "he would never act out. We are a law abiding family, we need the system to work for us."

Singleton's wife, Lyn Warren Singleton, told *New York Post*, "They used brute force, not paying attention to the person's needs. They should have paid attention to him," she said. "I'm lost, I can't find my way. I loved him. I was thinking this was very similar to Garner."

Singleton's death is under investigation by the Department's Internal Affairs Bureau. It is unlikely that a true accounting of events, let alone any punishment, will come out of the Police Department's notoriously corrupt internal investigation arm.

The incident is yet another example of the endemic levels of police violence not only in New York but throughout the country. Rarely does a day go by without a report of a killing or brutal assault by police officers in one or another American city. The execution of 18-year-old Michael Brown, followed by the militarized occupation of Ferguson by police and National Guard in Missouri, marked a new high point in the increasing repression by local police forces in America.

The attitude of the ruling elite, which permeates through to the police at the front lines of defending inequality, is one in which workers and the poor are entirely expendable. Anyone who fails to submit entirely to police commands—including those struggling with substance abuse or mental illness—is met with the full force of police violence.

A report by the Treatment Advocacy Center estimates

that at least half of the people shot and killed by police officers in the US have some form of mental illness. The crisis in mental health treatment in America, where state after state has shuttered facilities and restricted access to care, has only served to push large populations of the mentally ill out onto the streets, in hospital emergency rooms and into the “criminal justice” system.

New York State, which is by no means unique, is in the process of closing nine facilities for the acutely mentally ill. The closures come on top of a decade of cuts, which have already produced a shortage of approximately 3,000 beds in the state, according to mental health advocates.

At the country’s largest jail on Rikers Island, New York City holds a mentally ill population, now approximately 38 percent of all inmates, which is subjected to “rampant use of unnecessary and excessive force” by guards, according to a recent Justice Department report.



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