Notes on police violence in America

Texas man dies after being tased by police

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The family of a man killed by a Sheriff's deputy early Monday morning says the officer tased him twice before he died. Macario Cisneros Garcia, 54, died in a hospital in Jourdantown, Texas, shortly after the incident.

The family members claim the situation escalated during a confrontation between Garcia and an Atascosa County Sheriff's deputy in the front yard of a home. The man's brother, Felipe Cisneros Garcia, witnessed the deputy tase him. After being tased the first time, Garcia began convulsing. "He was flopping like a fish, and he [the deputy] thought my brother was being combative, which he wasn't," he said, according to a local ABC affiliate.

The deputy tasered Garcia a second time as his brother tried to tell the deputy that he had a heart condition. The deputy then handcuffed Garcia and placed him in the back of his squad car, where he collapsed moments later. "There was no reason for them to have done that. Tased him twice? His heart stops," said Janie Pena, Garcia's sister. "They screwed up. The department screwed up."

Milwaukee police officer who killed homeless man fired

Milwaukee Police Chief Edward Flynn announced this week that the department has fired a police officer who shot a mentally-ill homeless man to death in a city park. Officer Christopher Manney, 38, instigated a confrontation with the man, then fired 14 rounds at him at point blank range.

The dismissal of Officer Manney comes six months after he shot and killed Dontre Hamilton, 31. The officer will face no criminal charges. Hamilton had been sleeping on a bench in a downtown park when Manney responded to a call for a welfare check. When Hamilton, who was clearly mentally ill, resisted a search, Manney became aggressive with him and, according to the officer, the two began to exchange blows. The officer claimed that Hamilton grabbed his baton and hit him on the neck, after which Manney pulled out his gun and shot him.

Hamilton's family notes that while he was diagnosed with schizophrenia, he was not violent. They are skeptical of official claims that Hamilton struck Manney and demanded to see photographs of the officer's injuries which, as of yet, have not been released. While Hamilton's family said they are glad to see the officer's badge revoked, they want charges brought against him. "Yes, he was fired, but he took a man's life," said Hamilton's mother.

When asked if the department was looking into pursuing criminal charges against Manney, Flynn said that he had found "errors of judgment, but no malice" in Manney's actions.

Michigan police shoot unarmed man

The family of an unarmed man gunned down by a Michigan police officer, recently filed suit in federal court over the death of their son, Tony Mitchell. The family is arguing that the killing of Mitchell was a civil rights violation, and that the officer used excessive deadly force.

On July 14, Tony Mitchell got into a verbal argument

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with an acquaintance and drove away. Someone called 911, telling officers that Mitchell was heavily intoxicated. Police saw Mitchell's car in Munising, Michigan, and began chasing it. A dash-cam video from Munising police officer Justin Schlabach's vehicle shows him exit his car with his weapon already drawn.

Although the walk-around microphone allegedly did not work that day, Schlabach claims that he repeatedly demanded that Mitchell get on the ground. Schlabach also claims that Mitchell told him he was going to have to kill him (Mitchell) to stop him. Mitchell did not lie down on the ground and instead allegedly walked toward the officer. Schlabach took a couple steps back, then fired his weapon twice, killing Mitchell.

Inmate death cover-ups at Orleans Parish prison

A recent investigative story by the *Times-Picayune* revealed that Orleans Parish Prison (OPP) in Louisiana has covered up numerous inmate deaths. The most recent occurred in 2007, with a man being held overnight at the prison due to a minor offense.

Oscar Fuselier, 59, had been arrested for missing his traffic court date. He was placed in a cell with an 18-year-old arrested on an armed robbery charge, who allegedly beat Fuselier into a comatose state. Fuselier was quickly moved to a hospital, under guard. When doctors realized he was dying, the Sheriff's office released him from custody, and he was placed in a hospice where he died a week later.

The hospice autopsy report ruled the cause of death as lung cancer. The Sheriff's office did not conduct their own autopsy report. In an interview with a reporter from the *Times-Picayune*, Fuselier's son lamented, "It's like my dad fell through the cracks."

Fuselier's death is the seventh instance of an inmate death that went unreported with no autopsy. In all instances, the Sheriff's office released inmates to hospitals where they later died. Because the individuals were no longer in their custody, they did not count them among the dead in the already high death rate at OPP. Critics have accused the Sheriff's office of releasing dying inmates in order to avoid public scrutiny.

Arizona police officer threatens to kill driver

A police officer in Buckeye, Arizona, threatened to kill a driver last Friday. The officer had pulled over Teodulo Sanchez, 30, claiming there was a suspicion that he might have been carrying drugs and weapons. A video Sanchez took recorded the interaction.

After pulling Sanchez over, the officer proceeds to begin speaking in a mixture of English and Spanish in an aggressive tone. He asks Sanchez if he has any weapons, to which he replied "no." The officer then asked for his driver's license, then said "Show me the license right now. If you do something, I will kill you right here. Understand?" A few moments later, he said, "Ok. Don't get out of the car. Stay there. If you move, I will shoot you right here. Do you understand me?"

Sanchez claims that the officer also pointed a gun in his face, which the police department denies. Police Chief Larry Hall dismissed the severity of the officer's actions. "It was a poor choice of words," he said.

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