

Los Angeles police gun down man at busy Hollywood intersection

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Shortly before 7:00 p.m. last Friday, as dozens of tourists strolled along the Hollywood Boulevard sidewalk among the street entertainers, stores and restaurants, gazing at the star-shaped placards commemorating famous entertainers, at least two Los Angeles Police Department officers shot and killed a man at the intersection of Highland Avenue, the heart of the Hollywood “Walk of Fame.”

Cell phone videos posted online shortly after the shooting show multiple officers pointing handguns at a motionless body. No footage has surfaced so far that captures the shooting itself.

One witness to the shooting, Jordon White, tweeted a photo of the police officers and the victim's body, taken by his cell phone. White said that the officers shot the victim repeatedly even though he posed no threat.

“Police just shot a man in the head 10 times for no reason right in front of me,” said White, who posted his cell phone video of the shooting’s aftermath on his Facebook page.

“LAPD just murdered an unarmed man right in front of me,” White said.

“I heard like five shots go off and then all of a sudden I saw police run across and they’re pointing a gun at this guy that’s lying on the ground,” said local resident Neil Barnett, in a statement to local media similar to those of many others.

One witness, Henry Hodge, told a local television reporter that the man had his hands in his pocket when shot, and that the police were advancing toward him.

Shortly after the shooting took place, the LAPD “tweeted” that “Ofcrs respond to ADW [assault with a deadly weapon] in progress, Susp armed w/ knife, #OIS [officer involved shooting] occurred, knife recovered.”

Some witnesses reported the police bullets split the victim’s head open. After the shooting, the man’s limp

body was handcuffed, before paramedics finally arrived to take his body to a local hospital, where he was declared dead.

The victim supported himself by posing with tourists while dressed as a character from a popular horror film, according to Danny Howe, a street entertainer who works near the scene of the shooting.

“He scares people for a living,” Howe said.

Statements from the LAPD Friday claimed that the victim was engaged in “assault with a deadly weapon” at the time of the killing. The photograph of the “knife” attached to the LAPD tweet, however, depicts a folding pocket knife similar to the popular “Swiss Army” model, complete with a corkscrew. The blade appears less than two inches in length.

As of Monday afternoon, the LAPD still had not issued a press release identifying the victim or officers, or attempting to explain the circumstances. Media reports describe the victim as a 22-year-old white male.

“The officers arrived in the area of Hollywood and Highland when they observed a man in the intersection. The male was armed with a knife. When he saw the officers, he approached them, and an officer-involved shooting occurred,” according to LAPD Detective Meghan Aguilar.

No alleged victim of any knife assault has been identified, nor has anyone been identified as calling for the police. There are reports that the dead young man lived on the streets of Hollywood, supporting himself by working in costume for photo tips from tourists.

The killing comes amid repeated demonstrations by Los Angeles residents against rampant police killings and unnecessary violence taking place in LA county and nationwide. Police forces in LA County have killed at least 589 people since 2000, or an average of at least one person per week during the past 14 years,

according to a recent report by the Los Angeles Youth Justice Coalition.

The night before the shooting, the same Hollywood-Highland intersection was used for a “die in” by a small group protesting the orchestrated killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and Eric Garner in Staten Island, New York. Protesters in LA chanted “Hands up” and “I can’t breathe,” in reference to the killings of Brown and Garner.



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