

Cleveland, Ohio woman's death at hands of police ruled a homicide

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Directly contradicting statements made by police both during the investigation and to the public, the Cuyahoga County medical examiner found that Tanisha Anderson was killed by “sudden death associated with physical restraint in a prone position.” A police officer slammed her head face down on to the pavement with his knee on her back, pressing her to the ground.

Tanisha Anderson was killed in front of her family on November 13. Just nine days later, police in Cleveland shot and killed 12-year-old Tamir Rice while he played with a toy gun by himself in a park.

Police spokesperson Sergeant Ali Pillow directly lied to the public when he said in a news conference that Tanisha “began to kick at officers,” and “a short time later, the woman stopped struggling and appeared to go limp.” Cleveland Police Patrolmen’s Association President Jeff Follmer made similar false statements in a YouTube posting about Tanisha’s murder.

Tanisha’s 40-year-old brother Joell Anderson, who witnessed the assault, said that the family called 911 for help when Tanisha, who suffers from schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, began having an attack. Dispatchers sent a police car rather than an ambulance.

Police say Tanisha and her family members agreed to Tanisha being transported to a hospital, but her brother says that when Tanisha was placed in the back of the car, she became nervous from the confined space and wanted out. Tanisha called out to her brother and mother and felt that she was within her rights since she voluntarily agreed to be transported to the hospital.

Police prevented her from leaving the car and, in what her brother describes as a “smothering” move, pushed her head down which only made Tanisha more agitated.

As Tanisha continued to seek to get out of the car, police followed with a “takedown” move in which

Tanisha was slammed down head first hitting the concrete and an officer placing his knee on her back and handcuffing her while she laid dead on the ground.

Tanisha’s daughter, 16-year-old Mauvion Green, who also witnessed the assault, says that her mother didn’t move or say a word after that. “When they put her on the stretcher, her arms just fell over, lifeless,” she told Cleveland.com.

Furthermore, police refused to attempt to resuscitate her or provide any first aid, and it took another 20 minutes before an ambulance arrived. The police claim they felt a pulse, but doctors at the hospital state that she was dead when she arrived.

The family has filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the officers and the police department, claiming in part that police officers “pushed on her and then slammed her to the ground and put pressure on her back while handcuffing her. As a result, Tanisha lost consciousness and stopped breathing. The officers unduly delayed calling for medical assistance and did not provide any medical care themselves.”

The county medical examiner’s ruling that Tanisha’s death was a homicide was released in a report last Friday; however, no charges have been filed against the two police officers and they remain on the Cleveland police force with full pay. Tanisha’s death is being investigated by the city’s Use of Deadly Force Investigation Team, a part of the Cleveland police department which has consistently cleared police officers of any wrong doing.

Last week, Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson said that the investigation into the November 22 shooting of 12-year-old Tamir Rice would be handed over to the county’s sheriff department. However, County Sheriff Frank Bova is a longtime law enforcement official and a former Cleveland police officer.

Video of the shooting shows that police shot and killed Rice within two seconds of driving their cruiser within feet of the boy while he was playing in the park. Additional video of the incident was released on Thursday which shows police throwing Rice's 14-year-old sister to the ground as she rushed to her dying brother's aid. Officers then handcuffed the young girl and placed her into a police cruiser.

As in the case of the shooting death of 18-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, the death of Eric Garner who was choked to death by police in New York City, and the death of Tanisha Anderson, no charges have been brought against the police in the killing of Rice.



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