

Notes on police violence in America

Police shoot and kill teenage girl in Longview, Texas police station

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Police in Longview, Texas released footage Wednesday of officers killing a 17-year-old girl in the lobby of a police station on January 22.

Officers Glenn Derr and Grace Bagley shot and killed 17-year-old Kristiana Coignard last Thursday, after officer Gene Duffie fired a taser at her. The three officers have been on paid leave since the shooting.

Longview Police Chief Don Dingler and spokeswoman Kristie Brian told reporters Wednesday that Coignard used the station's phone to speak with dispatch, requesting the help of an officer.

When officer Derr arrived, police say she threatened him, indicating that she was armed with a gun. A struggle then ensued between Derr and Coignard, with officer Duffie entering the lobby during the confrontation and quickly drawing his Taser.

Officers claim that Coignard then charged at Derr, allegedly brandishing a knife, prompting Duffie to fire his Taser at Coignard, which police claim had no effect. Derr fired his weapon three times, and Bagley fired her weapon twice. The girl was then taken to Good Shepherd Medical Center at roughly 6:45 p.m., where she was later pronounced dead.

The video of the incident, recorded by a police station camera, contradicts aspects of the police story, while showing the brutal methods used by Derr against the teenager. It also reveals that medical attention did not arrive for nearly six minutes, during which time none of the officers attempted to perform CPR or assist Coignard in any way.

The video shows that immediately upon entering the police station, Derr reaches to his left side, presumably to have his taser ready to fire at the teenager. A struggle ensues, and he quickly draws his weapon from the right

side of his waist. During the subsequent three minutes when they are alone in the lobby, Derr appears to have his firearm drawn nearly the entire time, pressing it against the back of Coignard's head multiple times. At one point he has her stand up, and then violently slams her to the ground face-first, seemingly unprovoked by any action on her part.

Shortly after Duffie arrives, Coignard appears to charge at Derr, to which Derr responds by shooting her with his pistol at least once. Bagley entered the lobby as this took place, and visibly fires at least one bullet. The police claim that Duffie's taser failed to stop her, thus prompting Derr to shoot her with his pistol, does not hold water, as Derr shot her immediately after she moved towards him.

Above all, the video plainly demonstrates that Derr had ample opportunity to defuse the situation entirely by handcuffing Coignard.

Coignard's family has since said that she suffered from depression and bipolar disorder, and had been hospitalized twice in recent years after attempting suicide. Coignard's aunt, Heather Robertson, told *Think Progress* "I think it was a cry for help. I think they could have done something. They are grown men. I think there is something they are not telling us."

In 2014, Longview police shot and killed 15-year-old Justin Michael Aguilar and 23-year-old Regan Marshall Wagner in separate incidents. In both cases, the officers were cleared by a Gregg County grand jury.

Official story in Denver police killing of 16-year-old Jessica Hernandez contradicted by witness

A passenger in the car in which 16-year-old Jessica Hernandez was gunned down by Denver Police on

Monday has disputed the police story, saying that officers began shooting before one of them was struck by the car she was driving.

Initially, police chief Robert White told a local news station, “as [the officers] approached, the driver of the vehicle struck the original officer at which time the officers fired several shots.”

On Thursday, the witness told the *Associated Press* “When the cops walked up, they were on [Jessica’s] side of the car, and they shot the window and they shot her. That’s when she wrecked, and that’s when the cop got hit.”

On Thursday, in response to this and other statements made by friends of Hernandez, White retracted his earlier outline of what led to the killing, and told reporters that there were “unanswered questions” regarding the case, which he said will be answered when the ongoing district attorney’s investigation into the killing is complete. White also declared that the other teenagers present in the stolen car would not be charged with a crime.

On Wednesday night, a crowd of roughly 200 people protested outside the District 2 police station in Denver, where the two officers involved in Hernandez’ shooting are based. Smaller protests took place Thursday and Friday as well.

San Francisco public defender arrested for shielding client

Jami Tillotson, a deputy public defender in San Francisco, was arrested Tuesday for attempting to prevent a plainclothes officer, identified as police inspector Brian Stansbury, from questioning and photographing her client outside a courtroom.

A video taken by one of her colleagues in the San Francisco public defender’s office shows her calmly blocking Stansbury from taking pictures, to which he responds with threats of arrest, absurdly claiming she is resisting arrest. He tells her, “look, you can either step aside, he can be released in two minutes, or we can make this...”

Tollitson responds, “I’m pretty sure that we’re OK here. We don’t need any pictures taken, thank you,” to which Stansbury replies “No, you’re not pretty sure. If you continue with this ... I’ll arrest you for resisting arrest.” Tillotson responds, “Please do,” and is promptly handcuffed and walked away.

Immediately after Tollitson is arrested, Stansbury

resumes taking pictures of her clients. The Public Defender’s Office has noted that officer Stansbury was the subject of a 2013 federal civil rights lawsuit filed by a black SFPD officer alleging racial profiling.

“I was arrested for what we do as public defenders every day,” Tillotson said at a news conference Wednesday. “I asked questions. I talked to my client and explained to him his rights. At that point, I was told I was interfering and taken into custody.”

“It was very clear to me that I hadn’t been doing anything illegal,” she added. “I was challenging him, telling him that you know that I know that I did not violate the law. He moved it forward.”

“This is not Guantanamo Bay,” said Public Defender Jeff Adachi at a Wednesday news conference. “You have an absolute right to have a lawyer with you when you’re questioned. Ms. Tillotson was simply doing her job.”



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