

Notes on police violence in America

Video shows police gunning down mentally ill Texas man

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Body camera footage released Monday shows police killing a mentally ill man in his Texas home last year, claiming that they felt threatened by a small screwdriver he was holding. Jason Harrison, 38, who suffered from schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, was shot by police officers in June 2014 in Dallas, Texas.

The video clip was made public by the Harrison family's attorney, Geoff Henley, who has filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the two officers responsible for the shooting, claiming that they violated Harrison's civil rights.

The footage begins as the officers arrive at the Harrison home. Harrison's mother opens the door calmly, with her son standing behind her, quiet and unassuming. She slowly walks past the officers, audibly informing them that her son is "bipolar and schizo." Her son is now standing still in the doorway by himself, and can be seen holding a screwdriver.

Instantly, the officer with the body camera begins screaming at the man to "drop that for me, guy!" Seconds later, he shouts even louder, "Drop it!" As the officers both draw their firearms, Harrison's mother repeatedly cries out, "Jay!" In less than five seconds after his mother walks past the officers, they collectively fire at least three bullets into Harrison.

He then falls to the ground in front of the garage, near where the other officer was standing. Police claim that Harrison was moving in the officer's direction when they opened fire, but by the time police begin shooting the camera is no longer facing Jason and it is impossible to tell whether he was moving toward the officers when he was shot.

While Harrison is lying on the ground, writhing in pain, with blood visibly flowing onto the driveway, the

officers repeatedly yell, "Drop it guy!" and "Put the damn thing down!" When he slips into unconsciousness, the officers pick up the screwdriver and place his hands behind his back, discussing whether or not to handcuff the unconscious man. Neither officer attempted to administer first aid, apply gauze or help the man in any way, and by the time paramedics arrived he was pronounced dead.

Dallas police have closed their criminal investigation, with the case now under the Dallas County District Attorney's office. Both officers were placed on paid administrative leave for five days, and have been on active duty since then.

David Harrison, Jason's older brother, denounced the officers' actions at the news conference where Henley released the body camera video. He notes that the officers "didn't acknowledge him... they just acknowledged the screwdriver. As soon as [my mother] got out of the way, [the officers said] 'I need you to put that down, sir!' It went from zero to 100."

Henley added, "When you're dealing with somebody who is mentally ill, you're not supposed to agitate. You're not supposed to move fast... you're not supposed to inflame."

Bystander video shows officers failing to help dying victim of police shooting

A bystander's cell phone footage, taken in the immediate aftermath of the February 20 police shooting of unarmed 31-year-old Ruben Garcia Villalpando, was

released by the family's lawyer last Saturday. Grapevine, Texas police have refused to release the shooting officer's dash-cam footage to the public, making this cell phone footage the first to appear publicly.

The 46-second video shows Villalpando lying on the freeway motionless, with numerous officers standing nearby and none providing any sort of medical assistance to the dying man. The footage was captured a few minutes before the arrival of an ambulance that took him to nearby Fort Worth hospital, where he was pronounced dead hours later.

The man who released the video, Juan Pablo Chico, says that he was driving home from work, and recorded the scene as he passed by. Chico claims that after he stopped recording he saw Villalpando raise his head up from the ground.

Relatives and the family's attorney, Domingo Garcia, have been shown dash-cam footage from that evening, and assert that the officer who killed Villalpando first shouted profanities at Villalpando. They claim that as he walked toward the officer with his hands up, he asked the officer, "Are you going to kill me?"

Police had pulled Villalpando over, alleging that he fled from a possible burglary scene. Villalpando's family has urged police to release the video to the public.

Attorney Garcia told reporters that "We won't know if he would have gotten immediate medical care from these officers if they had applied the tourniquets, they applied the blood-clotting gauzes on those two gunshot wounds, if maybe he would have been stabilized enough by the time the ambulance took him to the hospital. What we do know is he was left to lie like roadkill on the side of the road."

Protests have been held in recent weeks, demanding that police release the dash-cam footage to the public. The Grapevine police department had initially stated that it would release the video, but was instructed not to do so by the Tarrant County district attorney's office.

Officer Pablo Torres shot and killed Aaron Siler, 26, of Kenosha, Wisconsin on Saturday morning, following a vehicle and foot chase. Siler, who leaves behind a four-year-old daughter, was the second man shot by Torres this month.

Witness Gysai Daniels and his partner, Brenda, told the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* that they heard six gunshots fired by the officer.

A Kenosha Police Department press release states that "When confronted by an officer, the suspect armed himself with a weapon. The officer fired his handgun, striking and killing the suspect." As of this writing, the "weapon" that prompted Torres to fire at least six bullets at Siler is still unnamed.

Torres had returned to patrol work that very day, after a stint of paid leave following his shooting of a suicidal 64-year-old man. Police allege that the elderly man, who survived the shooting, had been wielding knives at the time. His name has not been released to the media.

Since January 5, 2015, there have been seven police shootings in Wisconsin alone, with four of them fatal. There have been at least 229 police killings in the US so far this year.



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Kenosha, Wisconsin police officer shoots second man in one month