

Hundreds attend funeral for South Carolina man killed by cop

Evan Blake
13 April 2015

Hundreds of people attended a public funeral service for Walter Scott, the unarmed man who was killed April 4 by police officer Michael Slager in North Charleston, South Carolina. A video emerged last week showing Slager shooting Scott multiple times in the back as he was attempting to flee, and Slager was charged with murder on Tuesday.

Roughly 450 people filled Word Ministries Christian Center in North Charleston to capacity during the funeral ceremony Sunday, and another two hundred people waited outside the church.

Chris Stewart, an attorney for Scott's family, declared that "The epidemic of powerless people being taken advantage of no matter what color, no matter what gender, no matter what belief system you have, needs to stop," he said. "We're not going to let this case boil down to just racial issues, because it's bigger than that. It's a human issue."

The day after the funeral, Democratic politician Al Sharpton spoke at a public ceremony at Charity Missionary Baptist Church, in which he praised the response of the city's political establishment to the shooting.

On Saturday, the *Washington Post* released an independent investigation on police violence, conducted with researchers at Bowling Green State University. Their investigation found that since 2005 a mere 54 officers have been charged for fatally shooting someone while on duty across the US, a minuscule portion of the thousands of police killings that have occurred during that time period.

According to the news aggregating site killedbypolice.net, police killed a total of 1,100 people in 2014 alone, while 768 were killed in the final eight months of 2013. For 2015 thus far, 324 people have been killed by police. At this pace the total will reach

1,285 police killings by the end of the year.

In recent years, police have killed an average of three people every day. If one were to extend this average over the last 10 years, the time period which the *Post* investigation covers, the police would be responsible for the deaths of at least 11,413 individuals in the US.

The *Post* report notes that, "In an overwhelming majority of the cases where an officer was charged, the person killed was unarmed. But it usually took more than that" for them to be charged with a crime. Forty-three of the 54 cases involved at least one of the following four factors, while 19 involved at least two: "a victim shot in the back, a video recording of the incident, incriminating testimony from other officers or allegations of a coverup." 35 of the cases have been resolved, of which 21 were either acquittals or were dropped entirely.

The article notes that "even in these most extreme instances, the majority of the officers whose cases have been resolved have not been convicted" and that "when they are convicted or plead guilty, they've tended to get little time behind bars, on average four years and sometimes only weeks." Only eleven of the officers who charged in relation to police shootings were convicted.

On Friday, the Tulsa, Oklahoma Sheriff's Department released body camera footage of the shooting of unarmed Eric Harris, 44, who was shot by volunteer deputy Robert Bates on April 2.

In the video, police chase Harris briefly and tackle him to the ground. A voice, presumably that of Bates, is heard shouting "Taser!" Within seconds, a gunshot can be heard, followed by the same voice saying, "I shot him. I'm sorry."

With an officer pressing his knee into the back of Harris' head, as he lies motionless on the street

bleeding, Harris repeatedly cries out “He shot me!” As the officers proceed to handcuff him, he exclaims, “Oh my God, I’m losing my breath,” to which one of the officers responds “F**k your breath.”

Harris’ dying words invoke those of Eric Garner, who cried “I can’t breathe!” as officer Daniel Pantaleo asphyxiated him with an illegal chokehold last summer.

Bates, who worked as a cop for one year in the 1960s, is a major patron of the Tulsa police department, donating thousands of dollars in cars, guns and other equipment in recent years. In return, he has the status of “reserve officer,” which allows him the privilege of accompanying patrol officers on duty, in this case on a gun-buying sting operation seeking to entrap Harris.

Major Shannon Clark stated, “There are lots of wealthy people in the reserve program. Many of them make donations of items. That’s not unusual at all.”



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact