

Notes on police violence

Prosecutors release documents from Washington police shooting investigation

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Pasco, Washington

Prosecutors released videos, reports and interviews Wednesday from an investigation documenting the killing of Antonio Zambrano-Montes, a 35-year old Mexican immigrant, who was shot dead by police in Pasco, Washington in February.

Zambrano-Montes was shot 17 times by the police before falling to the ground and dying. According to the released documents, the man was struck in the chest, the abdomen, the chin, buttocks and forearm. Zambrano-Montes had no gun, knife or any other weapon but is alleged to have been holding a rock before the final volley of police-shots.

The police have argued that they were under threat of grievous bodily harm from Zambrano-Montes. “Well, one rock can kill you,” said one of the officers involved in the shooting.

In one of the videos which has been publicly released, Zambrano-Montes can be seen running away after having been shot by police. The police then follow him with weapons drawn, closely trailing him. At one point, Zambrano-Montes stops and yells something. The police then open another volley of fire, killing him.

Franklin County Prosecuting Attorney Shawn Sant, who is leading the investigation, has yet to decide whether to bring criminal charges against the officers involved in the shooting. “The right decision is more important than a quick decision,” Sant told reporters.

Jose Baez, the lawyer of the Zambrano-Montes family, declared in a press release on Tuesday that he and the family had “significant questions about the investigation and its lack of objectivity.” He stated, “I see cases across the country where instead of a hardnosed investigation, which would normally be

conducted by law enforcement, it appears these types of cases, and particularly this one, are investigated not as an investigation, but more of a process of protection.” The family’s lawyers pointed out that the officers involved in the shooting were not interviewed until three months after the killing.

Zambrano-Montes had reportedly been throwing rocks at cars before police were called to the scene. His family said that he had sunk into depression after a work-related injury. Zambrano-Montes had been employed as an agricultural worker. The median pay of an agricultural worker in the US was just \$9.09 an hour in 2012, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Though Zambrano-Montes was not divorced, he had recently separated from his wife and children. According to various family members, he was depressed and had begun using drugs. His blood reportedly tested positive for methamphetamine at the time of his death. Witnesses on the scene described him as having a “disability” and being “on a planet.” According to one witness, he shouted to police, “you’re gonna shoot me, shoot me.”

Rochester, New York

Two police killings occurred recently in Rochester, New York. On May 31, 50-year-old Gregory Davis died after being tased by police; he was unarmed.

Rochester Police claim Davis refused to obey orders after crashing his car and driving erratically. They claim he charged at police before being tased. Davis’s family members said that Davis was in poor health and had bad respiratory problems. He died later as a result of the electrocution.

In 2012, an article in the American Heart Association’s *Circulation* concluded that tasers “can

cause cardiac electrical capture and provoke cardiac arrest resulting from ventricular tachycardia/ventricular fibrillation.” Amnesty International reports that over 500 people have died after being shocked by the device.

Just one day after the death of Davis, 23-year-old Joseph M. Ladd was killed by police in a mall parking lot in the Rochester suburb of Greece after friends had called 911. Ladd’s friends were concerned that he was missing and assumed him to be mentally distraught.

Ladd was found by police sitting in the passenger seat of his car with his girlfriend at the wheel. The police officer claimed to have seen an ammunition clip in Ladd’s pocket from outside of the vehicle. The officer then entered the window of the car, after which, the officer claims, Ladd’s girlfriend started the car and drove, dragging the officer 70 feet. At some point the officer opened fire, killing Ladd.

It is not clear why the officer, Eric Hughes, decided to enter the vehicle window when he suspected Ladd had a gun. The surveillance video footage is also unclear as to whether the officer shot Ladd before or after being dragged by the moving car. According to reports, a taser was also used, though it remains unclear who was tased.

The features of all three of these slayings are similar and are characteristic of many others. A working class individual, under severe pressures, suffers some kind of mental break. Unarmed and mentally unsound, he or she is confronted by the police and killed.

The widespread conditions of economic and mental instability, and the violence that accompany them, are fundamentally social problems. Though they find individual expression, their unsettling frequency expresses truths about American society as a whole—the degradation of social conditions for hundreds of millions of people has been accompanied by the continued militarization of police forces who use deadly force on a daily basis.



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