

Notes on police violence in America

Alabama officers repeatedly use Taser on teenager having seizures

Evan Blake
15 July 2015

A woman from Etowah County, Alabama, has filed a lawsuit on behalf of herself and her teenage daughter, alleging that Rainbow City and Gadsden police repeatedly fired Tasers at both women while the daughter was suffering from grand mal seizures. Their names were not made public.

The lawsuit accuses at least five Rainbow City officers and three Gadsden officers of torture, excessive force, “and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.” The officers assaulted the teenager and her mother at a hip-hop concert in January that the teenager and her sister had been attending when she suffered from a seizure.

The teenager suffers from a medical condition that induces seizures, causing her to lose consciousness and experience sporadic muscle contractions. The lawsuit states that at one point during the concert, the performer descended into the crowd, creating a “stampede” that “trampled” the teenager, triggering a seizure.

When her sister sought help from an employee, they carried her to the lobby, “unceremoniously dumped” her on the floor and held her in a chokehold, at which point she suffered another seizure.

Her sister had notified their mother, who came to the concert venue. When she arrived, police immediately “held her down on the ground at five different points of her body” and restrained her with handcuffs. One officer then told another to “get her,” prompting them to fire their Taser at the defenseless, restrained woman, causing her to urinate.

The lawsuit states that at this point, the daughter “attempted to raise her head,” prompting officers and a venue employee to restrain her by pinning her down violently. An officer then shocked her with a Taser

three times on her chest while she was “face down with her arms secured behind her,” inducing yet another seizure that rendered the youth unconscious.

After the teenager slipped out of consciousness, she was driven to Gadsden Regional Medical Center and her mother was arrested for disorderly conduct. The suit alleges that, while at the hospital, police made jokes about the teenager and threatened to commit her to a mental hospital.

The allegations presented in this lawsuit are a damning indictment of the police immediately involved. Their collaboration in brutalizing the woman and her daughter indicate the increasingly sadistic, gang-like character of police in America.

Denver, Colorado

Paul Castaway, 35, was killed by Denver police on Sunday night, suffering up to five gunshot wounds to the torso. Immediately after the shooting, police claimed they were responding to a call from Castaway’s mother, alleging that her son had cut her in the neck. They now say he had threatened her with a knife, leaving her with a very superficial injury to the neck.

When police arrived at the mobile home, they claim to have found Castaway in an alley holding a “long knife,” and after he approached within six feet of them, one officer opened fire. Witnesses claim to have heard four or five shots fired. Castaway was then taken to a nearby hospital in very critical condition, and died

shortly thereafter.

Soon after police accused Castaway of charging at them with a knife, witnesses came forward contesting this version of events. The manager of the Capital City mobile home park possesses video footage of the incident, which was screened for FOX31 Denver reporter Tammy Vigil.

Vigil writes that after officers found Castaway in the alley, “He then turned back around onto the street with a knife to his neck the whole time, when an officer shoots him. The video seems to not match what police say happened.”

Castaway’s cousin Rick Morado, who has also viewed the footage, said “He was probably trying to figure out a place to run. And they didn’t let him go. They trapped him like a mouse and they killed him.”

effects can become compounded, and often fatal, when the victim is subjected to restraining techniques that restrict the breathing passages, which appears likely to have been the case in the death of Ware.

Ware was the 604th person killed by police in the US this year. In the four days since his death, 16 additional people have been killed by American police, twice as many police killings as in Germany in 2013 and 2014 combined.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Anthony Dewayne Ware, 35, died shortly after being pepper sprayed by police in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Last Friday police received a call from a neighbor saying Ware was sitting on his porch, armed with a gun. The police claim that when they arrived at Ware’s house, he ran into nearby woods, as he was wanted on previous charges of attempting to elude police.

When the officers caught up with him, they sprayed Ware with pepper spray and handcuffed him. They claim that Ware then began having trouble breathing and collapsed while walking out of the woods.

Police say that the officers then performed CPR and called for medical help. Upon arriving at a local hospital, Ware was pronounced dead. All six officers involved, who are unidentified, remain on active duty.

Already, one witness has come forward saying that police “had a lot to do with his death, I think the police had a lot to do with it because his head was swole.”

Police will show body- and dash-cam footage of the incident to Ware’s family in the coming days, before it is released publicly. It has already been confirmed that Ware was in fact unarmed when the police arrived.

Pepper spray has been associated with a number of deaths, and is more likely to be lethal for those with asthma or taking other drugs. Also, the excruciating