

Notes on police violence in America

# Cleveland officer pepper sprays crowd of protesters

**Evan Blake**  
**28 July 2015**

A Cleveland police officer pepper sprayed a group of activists affiliated with the Black Lives Matter organization shortly after the conclusion of their first national conference Sunday evening. The incident unfolded when the activists saw police arresting a 14-year-old boy and demanded that officers release him.

There are conflicting reports of what led police to arrest the youth. Numerous protesters claimed on Twitter that the teenager was arrested for failing to pay bus fare, while the Cleveland Police Department claims that he was inebriated and in possession of an open container of alcohol at the bus stop.

A witness tweeted that police “slammed the teen to the ground while making an arrest.” The subsequent pepper spraying of protesters, captured on video, shows the officer indiscriminately dousing those in his vicinity.

Witness Destinee Henton described the scene as follows: “When they were linking arms and just kind of doing chants, one of the police officers began pepper spraying just the whole line. They were on the ground, covering their faces, and he was still macing them towards the ground.”

The blanket use of pepper spray prompted the crowd to denounce the assembled officers even more forcefully, shouting for the release of the arrested youth. Eventually, the officers did in fact release him from custody when his mother arrived at the scene.

The protesters were evidently pepper sprayed due to their opposition to police violence. Cleveland has been the site of some of the most horrific police killings in recent years, most notably of Tamir Rice, Tanisha Anderson, Timothy Russell and Malissa Williams. The

latter two were the unarmed victims of a full squad car chase through the city, after which police fired more than 130 rounds into their vehicle.

The Obama administration has shielded the city’s notorious killer cops, including Officer Michael Brelo, who fired 49 of the shots that hit Russell and Williams’ car. Brelo jumped onto the hood of the car and shot the occupants directly through the windshield multiple times.

## Mississippi man dies after being placed in hogtie

Troy Goode, 30, died roughly two hours after being placed in a four-point “hogtie” by police in Southaven, Mississippi on July 18.

Goode and his wife, Kelli, had attended a rock concert in Memphis, and had pulled over on the side of the road during their drive home. Family attorney Tim Edwards said, “He without explanation got out of the car and apparently started acting in an erratic fashion to attract the attention from a bystander, and they called Southaven Police.”

After police arrived, they quickly sought to arrest Goode, for alleged disorderly conduct. At this point, Goode was hogtied by officers and placed face down on an ambulance stretcher, with his head strapped in place.

Edwards told the *Huffington Post*, “A witness heard him tell police that he could not breathe.” An eyewitness video filmed by David McLaughlin, captured the arrest and hogtie.

McLaughlin told the *Clarion-Ledger*, “His crossed, pulled back, by my vantage point, his hands were pulled back, and I think affixed to at least one of his legs.”

“He looked to me like he was struggling or convulsing or both. He appeared to be in distress to me,” McLaughlin said.

The video stops abruptly after an officer points directly at McLaughlin and shouts, “Sir, come here!” A statement issued by Goode’s lawyers alleges that bystanders were threatened with arrest for filming the incident.

Police subsequently threatened Goode’s wife and family members with arrest if they chose to visit the hospital where he was taken, warning that they would be charged with obstruction of justice, according to another family attorney, Kevin McCormack.

Regarding the officers’ excessive use of force, Edwards declared, “There was no threat to any police officer. He weighed 160 pounds. He was a small guy.”

Immediately after Goode’s death and long before any toxicology report had been conducted, local authorities sought to tarnish his reputation by claiming that he had ingested LSD.

“LSD did not take Troy Goode and hogtie him. LSD did not place him facedown, hogtied with his head strapped down on a stretcher. The Southaven Police did that,” McCormack said.

During a press conference on July 21, District Attorney John Champion sought to absolve police of any wrongdoing, claiming police handling had nothing to do with Goode’s death. He refuses to use the term “hogtie,” saying instead that police restrained Goode by his feet and ankles, which were then connected to his arms.

The official autopsy has yet to be released, at which point the family will consider launching civil litigation over the case.

## Georgia man carrying stick killed by police

On July 21, Bartow County Deputy Anthony Parker shot and killed 47-year-old Darren Wilson in White, Georgia after he allegedly threatened another officer

with a stick. were

Wilson was dressed only in boxer shorts and a baseball cap at the time of the shooting, which took place in broad daylight at around 3 p.m. Thus, officers could clearly discern that he was not armed with anything other than the stick.

Wilson had reportedly threatened someone else with the stick, prompting them to call the police. Police claim that when they arrived he began threatening one of the officers with the stick, at which point Parker shot Wilson, who died at the scene.

Both deputies involved have been placed on paid administrative leave. The Georgia Bureau of Investigation will conduct an independent investigation, with Bartow County District Attorney then determining any action she deems appropriate.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**