

Notes on police violence in America

Four recent police shootings spark outrage

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Video recordings emerged last week, each depicting a law enforcement murder. In both instances the new video exposed lies by the shooters in cases in which local district attorneys refused to prosecute.

Meanwhile the body count from law enforcement shootings continues to climb. Early last Saturday morning, an off-duty Baltimore, Maryland police officer shot and killed a white man who was supposedly holding a toy gun. Later that day, a Los Angeles police officer shot and killed an unarmed Hispanic man during an altercation in a hospital emergency room.

These four cases illustrate the growing chasm between the working class and the state apparatus, which relies more and more on overwhelming force, covered up by official lies and the manipulation of prosecutions, to defend the vicious and outmoded capitalist system.

According to websites that track shooting data from news reports, there have been 1,158 people killed by law enforcement throughout the United States this year. In contrast, only 36 law enforcement officers have been shot and killed while on duty, and two of those were accidentally shot by other officers during training exercises.

New video released in the 2014 murder of Noel Aguilar

At 10:00 a.m. on Memorial Day morning, May 26, 2014, Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD) deputies Albert Murad and Jose Ruiz pursued and tackled 23-year-old Noel Aguilar, a father of two riding a bike through Long Beach, an area outside the deputies' patrol area.

The newly released video begins with Murad (labeled Officer 1 in the video) straddling Aguilar's legs while Ruiz (Officer 2) holds a pistol to his head and shouts:

"You fucking move and I'll kill you, bitch." Murad strikes Aguilar's right hand with a collapsible baton before reaching down and apparently removing a gun from Aguilar. Murad stuffs the gun into his waistband, but inexplicably does not tell his partner that their suspect has been disarmed.

While being handcuffed, Aguilar suddenly breaks free and gets to his hands and knees. With both deputies wrestling to control Aguilar, Ruiz's gun fires, hitting the other deputy, Murad, in the abdomen, just below the ballistic vest. (Aguilar was not shot.) Murad yells "I've been shot." Ruiz does not say he did it.

Next, as the deputies are asking Aguilar, "Where's the gun?", Murad can be seen clearly removing the pistol from his waistband and planting it next to Aguilar. With Ruiz waving a pistol in his face, Aguilar tells the deputies that he didn't have a gun and, several times, "I didn't shoot nobody," and then asks Ruiz, "C'mon, man, why you pulling a gun on me?"

Over 30 seconds after firing the first shot into his partner, Ruiz shoots Aguilar in the thigh, then Morad draws and puts three bullets point blank into Aguilar's back, a clear execution. The deputies finish handcuffing Aguilar and sit on him.

As Aguilar squirms, he can be heard saying "I'm dying." Morad gets off and staggers away, Ruiz's bullet in his abdomen. Meanwhile, Ruiz stays on top of Aguilar for several minutes, until he is pulled off by deputies. The paramedics pronounced Aguilar dead at the scene.

The Los Angeles County District Attorney, Jackie Lacey, cleared both deputies of wrongdoing in an 11-page letter issued last February. The new video demonstrates that the deputies lied about shooting Aguilar in self-defense. They executed Aguilar to cover up for Ruiz's accidentally shooting his partner Morad.

Dash-cam video shows police shooting of Andrew Thomas in Paradise, California

Around midnight on the night before Thanksgiving this year, in Paradise, a small city located in northern California, police officer Patrick Feaster followed a speeding Andrew Thomas, who rolled his vehicle, killing his wife, Darien Ehorn. Thomas was driving with a blood alcohol level of .15.

The patrol-car video shows that as Thomas climbed out of the wreck, Feaster suddenly drew, aimed and shot him. Thomas immediately collapsed back into the car. Feaster radioed that Thomas was “in the car, refusing to get out.” Thomas told Feaster that he couldn’t get out because he was shot.

When other officers responded, one ordered Thomas out of the car. Thomas said he was shot. When asked who shot him, Thomas said, “The cop.” The officer responded, “You’re not shot.” By the time firefighters removed Thomas from the car he was unresponsive. They then discovered the gunshot wound.

Feaster then said his firearm had discharged accidentally, but not while aimed at Thomas.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey announced on December 10 that no criminal charges would be filed against Feaster because the shooting appeared to be accidental.

Thomas died of his wounds on Saturday.

LAPD officers kill Ruben Jose Herrera at hospital after subjecting him to brutal beating

About 8:00 a.m. Saturday morning Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) officers responded to reports of a man throwing bottles at an apartment complex in the Harbor Gateway neighborhood of South Los Angeles.

Graciela Herrera said that her son, 26-year-old Ruben Herrera, was putting air in his bicycle’s tires and cooperated with the police. She said the officers used pepper spray and a taser, and beat him with their fists.

“My son was doing everything he was told. I told them to stop. My son was bipolar. You know, ‘please, don’t hit him,’” Graciela Herrera said. “An officer just told me to shut up and go inside.”

The officers took Herrera to the emergency room at

Harbor-UCLA Medical Center for treatment of the resulting injuries.

An LAPD spokesperson claimed that after he was uncuffed from a hospital gurney, Herrera picked up a metal stool and swung it over his head. Supposedly a taser was again used, but had no effect. An LAPD officer fired one round in front of shocked doctors and nurses, using the excuse that Herrera was reaching for an officer’s weapon. Hospital staff tried to save Herrera, but was unable to do so.

LAPD officers have shot 35 people this year; twenty, including Herrera, have died.

Off-duty Baltimore police officer shoots and kills Edel Cato Moreland

At 1:30 a.m. Saturday morning a still unidentified off-duty officer assigned to the Baltimore Police Department’s “special operations section” shot and killed 32-year-old Edel Cato Moreland in the suburb of Linthicum Heights. According to police spokespersons, the officer claimed that Moreland was trying to rob him with a toy gun.

Speaking for the family, Moreland’s brother expressed disbelief in the official story. “He was a great person,” Ulric Moreland told *The Baltimore Sun*. “He would give the shirt off his back. I’ve never known him to do anything like that before.”



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