

Notes on police violence in America

North Miami police shoot unarmed man as he lay on the ground

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On Monday, North Miami police shot Charles Kinsey, a behavior therapist at a group home, as he lay in the street with his hands in the air.

At the time of the incident, Kinsey was attempting to explain to officers that one of his patients was autistic and holding a toy truck, and not a gun. Police had been called to the scene after receiving reports that an armed man was threatening suicide.

In a cellphone video of the event, Kinsey can be seen lying on his back encouraging his patient to be calm and lie down. “All he has is a toy truck in his hand,” Kinsey can be heard yelling to the police. “That’s all it is. There is no need for guns.”

Despite Kinsey’s assurances the officer opened fire three times, hitting the caregiver once in the leg.

According to Kinsey, after being shot he called out to the officer asking, “Sir, why did you shoot me?” and the cop replied, “I don’t know.”

Police proceeded to flip Kinsey over and handcuff him as he bled from the bullet wound, according to Kinsey’s lawyer. He lay on the ground for another 20 minutes before an ambulance arrived to take him to the hospital. He is currently in good condition, according to a hospital spokeswoman.

John Rivera, president of the Dade County Police Benevolent Association, told the *Miami News* on Thursday that the officer was aiming for the autistic patient and not Kinsey when he opened fire. He denounced the media coverage of the shooting and attempted to portray the officer as seeking to protect Kinsey.

“It appeared to the officers that the white male [Kinsey’s patient] was trying to do harm to Mr. Kinsey,” Rivera remarked. “The officers, realizing and

believing that there was a firearm—many officers thought the white male had a firearm. Only much later when we’re able to ‘Monday-morning quarterback’ do we find out that it’s a toy.”

Rivera did not explain why the officers thought the “white male” had a firearm, when Kinsey can be heard in the video telling police it is a toy.

Javier Ortiz, head of the Miami Fraternal Order of Police, also claimed that the media coverage was “sensationalism.”

The North Miami Police Department has announced that the officer involved in the shooting has been put on administrative leave, and that there is an ongoing investigation.

North Carolina passes law to limit public access to police body camera footage

On July 11, North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory signed a law that denies public access to footage taken from police body cameras and police vehicle dashboard cameras.

Prior to the passing of the law, the state had allowed individual police departments to release footage gathered from these devices at their own discretion.

McCrory later told a press conference, “We are initiating a necessary balance to gain public trust, while also respecting the rights of our public safety officers,” adding, “Technology can mislead and misinform, which causes other issues and problems within our community.”

The release of footage of police killings by departments, as well as recordings from witnesses, have incited popular protests across the United States against the brutal actions by officers and demands for cops to be prosecuted.

Susana Birdsong, the Policy Counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of North Carolina, told *ABC News*, “People who are the subject of the body camera footage should be able to access that footage.” She also claimed that the access should extend to the representatives of the subject, as well as his or her family.

She also criticized the law for further limiting the accountability of officers for their actions, since lower-income sections of the population would not be able to afford court costs necessary for gaining access to body camera footage.

Tulsa cops kill two people within 48 hours

Officer Stephen Blaylock shot Michael Ray Ramsey Jr., a 43-year-old black man, in Tulsa, Oklahoma on Sunday night. Police were called in response to reports that Ramsey was creating a disturbance outside of a home in Southeast Tulsa.

According to reports, three officers confronted Ramsey—who police claimed was carrying a large knife—and commanded him to drop his weapon. When Ramsey did not comply one of the officers used a Taser on him.

Ramsey reportedly responded by throwing a screwdriver—which officers had initially reported was a knife—at two of the officers. Blaylock responded by shooting Ramsey three times. He was pronounced dead at St. John Medical Center at 9 pm that same night.

No officers were injured during the incident, and Blaylock has been put on paid leave pending an investigation.

The following night, Tulsa cops gunned down Jerry Brimer, a 56-year-old white man, after responding to a domestic dispute call by his wife.

Tulsa police Sergeant Shane Tuell claimed that Brimer “was making statements and comments toward officers to the effect he wanted to die, things of that nature.”

The two officers who confronted Brimer reported that both opened fire after he charged at them with an ax. The two cops involved in the shooting have been placed on paid administrative leave.



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