

# Baltimore County police shoot, kill young mother

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4 August 2016

Korryn Gaines, a 23-year-old mother, was shot and killed by Baltimore County police on Monday. Her five-year-old son, whom she was holding at the time of the shooting, was shot in the arm. The police, none of whom were equipped with a body camera, were at Gaines' residence to serve a warrant for failure to appear in court over citations for several traffic violations dating from March.

Three Baltimore County Police Department officers arrived at Gaines' apartment in Randallstown, a suburb of Baltimore, at about 9:20 am on Monday. Initially, they say, no one answered the door. Stating that they could hear people inside, including the cries of a child, the police obtained a key to the apartment.

Gaines asked her son who was at the door. "It's the police," he answered. "Why are they here?" Gaines then asked. "They're here to kill us," he cried.

Upon entry, the three officers discovered Gaines sitting on the floor of the apartment, holding her five-year-old son in one arm and a shotgun in the other. She told the officers to leave. When they did not, an hours-long standoff ensued; in the course of that siege, police dispatched the SWAT unit to the home.

The police continued to try and apprehend Gaines for hours; they evacuated her apartment complex, served her with the warrant, and at one point, called her parents to the apartment to coax her out.

In the late afternoon, around 3:00 pm, officers report that Gaines pointed her gun at them and informed them that she would shoot them if they did not leave her apartment. They fired their guns at her, at which point they claim that she returned fire. By 3:20 pm, Gaines was dead and her son, Kodi, had been wounded.

The police, using Facebook's law enforcement portal, requested an exigency deactivation of Gaines' Facebook page during the siege. Shortly before she was

killed, Gaines' Facebook and Instagram pages were taken down.

The recent case of Philando Castile, whose death after being shot by Falcon Heights, Minnesota police was live-streamed onto Facebook by his girlfriend, sparking national protests, must have no doubt weighed heavily upon the department's calculations in deactivating Gaines' social media sites.

For their part, the police have stated that Gaines' social media followers were encouraging her recalcitrance.

In their official statement, the department claimed, "On-scene command staff filed a request with Facebook during the barricade to deactivate Gaines' Facebook and Instagram accounts in order to preserve the integrity of negotiations with her and for the safety of Gaines, her child and officers. Gaines was posting video of the operation, and followers were encouraging her not to comply with negotiators' requests that she surrender peacefully. This was a serious concern; successful negotiations often depend on the negotiators' ability to converse directly with the subject, without interference or distraction during extremely volatile conditions."

The department has since stated that Gaines' accounts have not been deleted, and that they will be entered into evidence in the course of investigation into the shooting.

Disturbing information has emerged in the aftermath of Gaines' shooting, all of which points to the role that the wretched social conditions faced by Baltimore and the surrounding area's working class played in shaping Gaines' life in the years before her fatal encounter with police.

Gaines was the victim of lead poisoning as a child, and had successfully sued the landlords of two different

Baltimore homes for lead exposure. Her doctors had diagnosed her with neurocognitive disabilities. She struggled academically throughout high school, and she was prone to anger and impulsivity.

These facts were not unknown to police. Gaines had been stopped by police in March for having no tag on her car; in its place was a handwritten, cardboard sign proclaiming, “Any Government official who compromises this pursuit to happiness and right to travel, will be criminally responsible and fined, as this is a natural right and freedom.”

Footage from the March encounter shows an officer removing a child from Gaines’ lap as another officer dragged her out of her car by the arm. Gaines had told them that if they wanted her to get out of the car, they were going to have to murder her. She frequently posted on Instagram about police shootings. She also posted long statements challenging the constitutionality of the police force.

After the traffic stop, she was convinced that the police were intent on “kidnapping” her. Given these facts, it seems highly unusual that a SWAT unit would be set upon her without a bodycam, yet that is exactly what the Baltimore County Police Department alleges.

This, along with the deactivation of Gaines’ social media accounts, suggests that the police could have had a motive to not only target Gaines, but to do so with as little oversight and as few witnesses as possible.

The deadly showdown between Gaines and the Baltimore County police took place mere days after Baltimore State Attorney Marilyn Mosby dropped charges against the remaining three police officers in the Freddie Gray murder case.

Immediately following Gray’s killing, President Obama took to the airwaves to urge Baltimore citizens towards nonviolence, calling protestors “criminals” and “thugs.” He elevated the role of race in police killings, despite the fact that three of the officers implicated were black: “We have seen too many instances of what appears to be police officers interacting with individuals—primarily African-American, often poor—in ways that have raised troubling questions,” he said after Gray’s death.

Despite their posturing, Obama and Loretta Lynch, the US Attorney General, failed to ensure that there was an independent investigation into Gray’s murder. Mosby claims that the police department harassed her

and other state employees who were tasked with the prosecution of the case, filing suits against them and successfully demanding gag orders against them.



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