

Police seek to cover up murder of 20-year-old man in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Samuel Davidson
9 August 2016

Hundreds of people gathered in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to demand answers Sunday night outside the home of 20-year-old Earl Pinckney who was shot and killed by police the same evening.

The young man was pronounced dead shortly after being shot. The Harrisburg police officer who shot Pinckney, whose name has yet to be released, has been placed on administrative leave with full pay.

“That cop needs to be in handcuffs,” one bystander who asked that their name not be used told Pennlive.com shortly after the body was taken away from the scene. “It’s to the point we don’t know if the cops are gonna keep us safe.”

A woman who identified herself as the mother of Pinckney’s child was prevented from seeing him, and police declined to answer her questions about what happened. Harrisburg Police Chief Thomas Carter arrived on the scene but also refused to tell upset residents what had happened.

At a press conference held Monday morning, police officials began the cover-up, claiming that police were responding to a domestic disturbance, and that when police arrived, Pinckney was holding a knife to his mother’s throat in the home’s bedroom.

The police claim that when Pinckney refused to drop the knife after being ordered, his mother tried to pull away and one of the four officers in the room opened fire, fatally wounding the young man.

The District Attorney’s office for Dauphin County, which includes Harrisburg, has said they will conduct an investigation. However, they are already repeating the police version of events and stating that the use of deadly force is permitted when another person’s life is in danger.

The mother of Pinckney, Kim Thomas, disputed the police version of the events, saying her son was bipolar

and that she was in the process of defusing a family argument. She said police knew her son was bipolar but not dangerous.

“They killed my son. They shot my son,” Thomas told Pennlive.com. “We had a little fight, argument, like families have arguments.”

Thomas said her son, his sister and her niece were arguing. “They were arguing. They got a little rustling,” Thomas said. “I stopped it. I told everybody to get out of the house. I held my son. I was talking to my son. I know how to control my son. He was calming down. Everything was getting fine.”

Thomas denied that her son was holding a knife, and she showed her neck to reporters revealing no marks or bruises. She, however, showed reporters a rug burn on her knees that she claimed resulted from police officers’ efforts to forcibly remove Thomas from her home.

Marques Thomas, Pinckney’s older brother, told Pennlive.com that more than a dozen police descended on the house, entering the home as well as climbing onto the porch roof. Thomas reported that police shot Earl through a window before ever entering the bedroom.

The median household income in Harrisburg, the capital city of Pennsylvania, is just \$32,476, or about 60 percent of the national average. Over one third of all people live below the official poverty rate, and nearly one in two children grow up in poverty. The official unemployment rate, 6.6 percent, is well above both Pennsylvania and the United States as a whole.

Pinckney was one of at least three people killed by the police across the country on Sunday and into Monday.

Jawari Porter, age 25, was killed by Cincinnati, Ohio, police early Sunday morning. Police say that Porter had

robbed a grocery store 20 minutes earlier and was armed with a knife.

Early Monday morning, two Louisville, Kentucky, police officers shot and killed 57-year-old Darnell Wicker when he reportedly approached them holding a knife and another unidentified weapon.

Pinckney was the 701st person killed by the police so far this year, according to the website *killedbypolice.net*. This is slightly less than the 722 people killed by police at the same time last year. A total of 1,207 people were killed by the police in all of 2015 according to the site.

No official figures are recorded of police killings; *killedbypolice.net* gathers its reports from news accounts and postings on social media.

In all three deaths, police have not claimed the victims posed an immediate threat to them, and only in Earl Pinckney's case are police even claiming he represented a threat to another person—in this case, his mother.

In cases in which *killedbypolice.net* identified the race and gender of the victims, 299 were white men, 167 black men 116 Latino men, 13 Native American and the others Asian, Pacific Islanders or not identified. Forty-two women have been killed so far this year: 23 white; 10 black and nine others Latino, Native American or not identified.

While proportionately black men are three times more likely to be murdered by police than white men, what unites the majority of the dead is their class. Overwhelmingly, the victims are members of the working class, low income or unemployed.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact