

Notes on Police Violence

Murrieta, California police caught on video savagely beating unarmed man

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Video caught on cell phone was released last week shows several Murrieta police officers severely beating an unarmed man outside of a CVS pharmacy.

The incident allegedly began when a police officer was flagged down by a pedestrian who noticed the victim, 22-year-old Alejandro Rojo, “acting strangely” outside the drug store last Tuesday.

According to police, Rojo was tearing open medical supplies in the store and began ingesting them. His family has said he gone to the store to buy medicine for an earache. Police say Rojo became unresponsive and started to fight with the officer, at one point allegedly trying to grab his weapon.

The Murrieta Police Department (MPD) released security footage from the store but only after the video of Rojo’s beating outside the CVS was made public. The security footage shows Rojo struggling with the police officer but it does not show Rojo trying to grab his gun.

What is unambiguous is what happened to Rojo after he got free from the officer and ran out of the store. Thanks to a bystander recording on their cellphone, which can be seen here, Rojo’s sadistic treatment at the hands of the MPD is now available for everyone to see.

In the video, three officers pin Rojo to the ground, yell “stop resisting” and proceed to punch and kick him repeatedly. One officer can be seen using a taser on Rojo as the other two beat him with batons. The allegation that Rojo, even if he was intoxicated, could not be restrained by three heavily armed men simply does not hold water.

When another police cruiser rolls up on the scene, rather than restrain the officers giving the beating, at least three more officers join in on the melee and

deliver more blows to Rojo, who can be heard screaming in pain before going totally limp.

Rojo had to be transported to the hospital after posting \$20,000 bail. His mother, Minu Rojo, told ABC7 news, “All his body, all his muscles, are all mashed up really bad, really bad. His face, his back, his elbows, his arms, everything is mashed up.”

While Rojo’s family says he is expected to recover physically from his wounds, he faces serious charges, including attempting to disarm a police officer, resisting an officer causing injury, trespassing and battery on emergency personnel.

The family attorney, Brett Parkinson, also told ABC7, “Are we looking at a lawsuit? Absolutely,” adding, “We’re concerned by what is seen in the videos and we’re doing everything we can to make sure Alex’s rights are protected.”

After meeting with local representatives of the NAACP, Murrieta Police Chief Sean Hadden promised a thorough investigation and said the officers’ actions will be judged “in a fair manner.” After the police conduct an internal investigation (i.e., coverup) they will submit the case to the District Attorney’s office, which will decide what if any charges are filed against the police.

All officers in the video remain on full duty, except the initial officer on the video, who will return to duty as soon as his broken hand heals.

Rojo’s father, Arturo Rojo, told KTLA news, “I want people to know he’s a good kid... They can say whatever they want but I know my kid.”

Washington State Attorney General will not file charges in 2015 police killing of immigrant worker

The Attorney General of Washington state announced last Thursday that no charges will be brought against the three Pasco police officers who shot and killed Antonio Zambrano-Montes on February 10, 2015.

Zambrano-Montes was a 35-year-old Mexican immigrant with a history of mental health issues, living in Pasco, who was shot 17 times while he was unarmed and running away from the police. The video footage of the shooting showed three officers cornering and shooting Zambrano-Montes execution-style outside a grocery store.

The shooting caused mass protests in the city of 60,000 people, whose population is composed mostly of Latino and immigrant farm laborers. There have been at least four fatal police shootings in Pasco since 2014.

Attorney General Bob Ferguson announced that his investigators found the shooting to be justifiable, saying in a press release “that the Pasco officers’ actions on February 10, 2015, did not exceed the legal standards for the justifiable use of deadly force.”

Ferguson’s review was the third and final say by a prosecuting attorney’s office on whether or not to press charges. Both the Franklin County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office and the US Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Washington earlier declined to press charges after concluding their investigations.

Police officers Adrian Alaniz and Adam Wright, two of Zambrano-Montes’ killers, have since returned to work, while Officer Ryan Flanagan has left the department.

The surviving family of Zambrano-Montes has filed a lawsuit in federal court accusing the officers of using excessive force. The case is scheduled for trial in May.

Grand jury to decide if cover-up took place in fatal shooting of Laquan McDonald by Chicago Police Department

A special prosecutor, Patricia Brown Holmes,

appointed to investigate the October 2014 police shooting of Laquan McDonald, announced this week that a special grand jury will be impaneled to determine whether the Chicago Police Department engaged in a cover-up.

Judge LeRoy Martin Jr., presiding judge of Cook County who appointed Holmes as special prosecutor, told news media that a grand jury would convene in two weeks to hear evidence. Holmes said the decision to use a grand jury is “fair and it’s impartial and it lends credibility to the process.” In reality, secretive grand juries are the preferred method by the authorities to sweep corruption and murder under the rug.

McDonald was an unarmed 17-year-old minor who was executed by Officer Jason Van Dyke in 2014. The police dashboard camera video was only released a year later when an independent journalist threatened to sue the city for obstructing access to public records.

Prior to the release of the video the city attempted to buy the McDonald family’s silence with \$5 million, in a desperate effort in damage control.

Chicago mayor Rahm Emanuel, the former Chief of Staff to President Barack Obama, and other leading Democrats engaged in a deliberate cover-up of the murder and tried to appease widespread anger and mass protests with promises to make the CPD more “transparent” and accountable.

In a move to soften public mistrust, police Superintendent Eddie Johnson sought to fire four police officers and a sergeant that he accused of lying about McDonald’s shooting last month.

The grand jury will be made up of 16 individuals who will meet at least once a month and have its deliberations kept secret. The state prosecutor will play a lead role in deciding whether criminal charges are filed or not. The process could last weeks to months, allowing the state maximum time and opportunity to defend its police officers.



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