

Columbus, Ohio 13-year-old gunned down by police

Shannon Jones
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In yet another brutal police killing of a young person, Columbus, Ohio cops shot and killed a 13-year-old boy Wednesday following a short foot chase. The youth died a little while later in the hospital. No officers were injured.

Police said they were responding to a report of an armed robbery when they spotted three people, all African American, they say matched the description of the suspects. Two fled on foot with the cops in pursuit. Police said one of the pair pulled a gun and one officer fired, hitting the victim, Tyre King, multiple times. The weapon King allegedly brandished turned out to be a BB gun.

Demetrius Braxton, one of the youth who was with King, was not injured. He disputed police claims that King brandished a weapon. He told the *Columbus Dispatch* newspaper that he saw the shooting. Braxton said police started chasing them and they ran. “The cops said to get down. We got down but my friend (King) got up and ran.

“He started to run. When he ran the cops shot him.” He said that police fired four or five times.

“I didn’t think a cop would shoot. Why didn’t they tase him?” Braxton said.

The officer involved in the shooting, Bryan Mason, was a nine-year veteran of the force. He has been placed on administrative leave while police conduct an internal investigation. In 2012 an officer with the same name was involved in another fatal shooting. The Columbus police department has not confirmed if it was the same officer.

Columbus was the scene of several protests against police violence earlier this year. The mayor and other city officials called for calm in the wake of the shooting of King and asked the support of religious and community leaders in an attempt to diffuse social

anger.

The shooting of King is the latest in an unending series of police atrocities. According to the website, killedbypolice.net, already 40 people have been killed by police in the US this month. The immense and growing level of police violence is rooted in widening inequality and growing social tensions.

King was the second youngest person killed by police this year. The shooting follows the killing of 12-year-old Ciera Miller during an eviction in Pennsylvania. In another incident, a six-year-old child was shot and wounded by police in Louisiana while they were apprehending the boy’s father.

The police killing in Columbus comes in the wake of the shooting two years ago of 12-year-old Tamir Rice in Cleveland. Police claimed they mistook a toy pistol carried by the child for a real gun. No warning was issued. Video of the event shows the police gunning down Rice within seconds of arriving on the scene. However, a grand jury refused to indict the cops involved.

According to a report in the *Washington Post*, police have shot and killed at least 60 people holding what later turned out to be toy guns since 2015. In 2014, police shot and killed 22-year-old John Crawford in a WalMart store located in Beavercreek, Ohio, just outside Dayton. Crawford had picked up a BB gun from an opened box in the store and was walking around with it while talking on a cell phone. A store video of the event shows an officer firing immediately on arrival without giving any verbal commands to drop the alleged weapon. A grand jury later refused to indict any of the cops involved.

The city of Columbus has seen more than 170 police shootings since 2004. Police officials have claimed virtually all were within policy guidelines. Earlier this

week, the City of Columbus agreed to a \$780,000 settlement in a case involving the accidental shooting of a 4-year-old girl by Columbus police. Ava Ellis was shot in the leg by an officer who was trying to shoot the family dog, which he claimed had threatened him. The girl suffered scarring and will require future surgeries.

While prosecutors routinely refuse to indict police involved in unjustified fatal shootings, a recent case in West Virginia sheds further light on the institutionalized violence employed by police. Stephen Mader, a police officer in Weirton was fired following an incident where he decided not to fire his gun at a mentally disturbed man and instead tried to de-escalate the situation.

Mader responded to a domestic incident and encountered an armed man. Rather than using his weapon, the officer attempted to calm the man. He noted that the suspect was not pointing a gun at him and was asking the officer to shoot him. “I thought I was going to be able to talk to him and de-escalate it,” the officer told the *Pittsburgh Gazette*. “I knew it was suicide by cop.”

Two additional officers arrived, and one fatally shot the man in the head after he allegedly waved his gun in the air. The weapon turned out to be unloaded.

After being placed on administrative leave and investigated, Mader was terminated from the department in June for failing to “eliminate a threat,” thereby putting other officers at risk.



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