

Balch Springs, Texas police kill unarmed 15-year-old boy

Matthew Taylor
3 May 2017

Police in Balch Springs, Texas, shot and killed an unarmed 15-year-old African American boy Saturday night.

Jordan Edwards was shot in the head through the driver's side window of the vehicle he was in as he and several other teens were driving away from a party the police had been called in to break up.

Edwards had been attending a party in the Balch Springs suburb of Dallas along with his older brother and several friends. As they were leaving the party, gunshots were heard from an unknown source. An unidentified police officer fired three shots from his rifle into their vehicle as it drove away.

The driver, Edward's 16-year-old brother, stopped a block away to flag down a police cruiser for help after he realized that his younger brother had been shot. None of the boys in the vehicle were charged with under-age drinking or any other crime.

In their initial report released to the media on Sunday, Balch Springs police lied about the cause of the shooting, claiming that the vehicle had been "backing down the street toward the officers in an aggressive manner" when the shooting occurred. By Monday afternoon, the police were forced to retract that report and admit that the vehicle had been driving away from the officer when the fatal shots were fired.

Balch Springs Police Chief Jonathan Haber claims that the revision in the official version of events was due to a subsequent viewing of body-cam footage. "I unintentionally [was] incorrect when I said the vehicle was backing down the road, in fact I can tell you that I do have questions in relation to my observation [of] the video," Haber told a news conference. "After reviewing the video, I don't believe that [the shooting] met our core values."

The police chief did not clarify the reason for the

initial deception. It is, however, highly unlikely that the chief had not viewed the body-cam footage before issuing the initial statement that sought to shift blame to the teens.

The revised police report reads: "Officers confronted a vehicle backing down the street and despite multiple verbal commands from the officer, the vehicle continued to reverse, backing into the main roadway. The vehicle then pulled forward as the Officer continued to approach the vehicle giving verbal commands. The vehicle continued [on] the main roadway driving away from the officer as an Officer shot into the vehicle striking the passenger."

The Dallas County medical examiner has declared Jordan Edwards's death a homicide. The officer responsible for killing Edwards has been placed on administrative leave, but no charges have yet been filed. The incident is being investigated by both the Dallas County Sheriff's Department and the Dallas County District Attorney's office.

Jordan Edwards is the youngest person to be killed by police thus far in 2017, according to a database maintained by the *Washington Post*. His murder brings the total number of police killings this year to 331.

Killer of Walter Scott pleads guilty to federal charges, avoids state murder charges

In Charleston, South Carolina, former police officer Michael Slager pled guilty Tuesday to federal civil rights charges related to the 2015 killing of Walter Scott. The guilty plea is part of an agreement Slager reached with federal prosecutors that will see two other federal charges as well as state murder charges dropped in exchange for the plea.

The charges stem from the April 2015 shooting of Scott, who was unarmed and fleeing at the time of his murder. Slager, who is white, had allegedly pulled over

Scott, who was African American, because of a broken tail light. According to the officer's initial statement to investigators, Scott took control of Slager's Taser and was charging him when the policeman shot and killed him.

A cellphone video of the incident shot by a bystander subsequently released to the media and viewed by millions revealed the truth. Scott was fleeing from the police officer and was approximately 20 feet away when Slager fired his weapon eight times, hitting Scott five times in the back and killing him.

Slager then casually walks over to the man's fallen body, and the video shows the officer handcuffing Scott's corpse, yelling the whole time to "show me your hands." Another officer arrives as Slager walks back to where he had fired the shots, picks up an object, and drops it next to Scott's lifeless body.

The attempted cover-up fell apart when the video was released. Slager was fired, and state prosecutors were forced to charge him with murder. In December 2016, a mistrial was declared when a lone juror released a statement during deliberations stating that he refused to consider a guilty verdict for the officer.

Though the maximum penalty is life imprisonment for the charges Slager pled guilty to, he is expected to be given a lesser sentence as part of the plea agreement.

Florida police arrest autistic child , charge him with a felony

Police in Okeechobee, Florida, handcuffed and arrested a 10-year-old autistic boy on April 12. The boy, John Benjamin Haygood, who is white, was enrolled in a special education program due to his disability and had been called to the school for testing. The police arrived to arrest the boy for an incident that occurred in October at the school.

Luane Haygood, the boy's mother, recorded the incident on video. The frightened boy can be seen sitting in a chair as two police officers stand over him. The mother asks the police why they are arresting him and if the boy has the same rights as an adult.

The police refuse to answer her as the boy pleads with police not to touch him. The police handcuff the crying boy and lead him out to their police cruiser as Haygood follows them, continuing to ask for information. The police refuse Haygood's request to ride in the police car with her son.

John Benjamin was cruelly and absurdly charged

with battery on a school board employee, a third-degree felony. The charges stemmed from an incident in October when he was removed from class by an educational assistant after allegedly being disruptive.

When the educator attempted to physically remove him from class the 10-year-old allegedly started "kicking, punching, and scratching" the teacher, who then admitted to restraining the boy physically. It was on this basis that a disabled child was charged with a felony and detained overnight by police.

Haygood's parents had not been informed about the outstanding warrant. State prosecutors have offered to move the boy's case into a "diversionary" program," an offer the boy's mother has refused, telling the *Washington Post*, "Frankly, I'm offended by that, that offends me, and it angers me. They're still viewing him as a criminal; they know he has a disability, and they're still treating him like a criminal.

"He does not need criminal diversion because he didn't do anything wrong!" she said. "I will not give up my right to a speedy trial. The criminal justice system needs to be educated; the school system needs to be educated. My child does not need to be diverted."



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)