

Milwaukee County sheriff's deputy fatally shoots 19-year-old after traffic violation

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A Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office deputy fatally shot a young African American man and one other person after they allegedly fled a traffic stop in their vehicle last Sunday.

The driver, identified as 19-year-old Terry Williams, was shot in the head and died two days later at the hospital after being taken off life support. Twenty-three-year-old Paula McEwen, who was a passenger in the vehicle, was shot twice by the sheriff's deputy and is still hospitalized.

The shooting occurred during a vehicular pursuit around 7:40 p.m. near Milwaukee's popular lakefront which began when Williams failed to obey a traffic sign. A sheriff's deputy driving a sheriff's vehicle began pursuit of Williams' car when he failed to pull over after the traffic infraction.

Video posted to Facebook taken by bystanders depicts Williams' vehicle being pursued by Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office deputies and then driving onto the median in an attempt to drive around another vehicle.

As Williams attempted to drive the car on the median, Sheriff's Deputy Michael Truax, who was on foot patrol in the area, fired multiple times into the driver's side of the vehicle from the median, shooting Williams in the head and McEwen twice in the shoulder.

Truax, a Milwaukee County sheriff's deputy since August 2016, has been placed on administrative leave as the neighboring Waukesha County Sheriff's Department has been assigned to investigate the shooting.

The eyewitness videos of the shooting do not provide any immediate evidence that the sheriff's deputies and bystanders were in immediate or serious risk of harm as Williams attempted to evade police pursuit. Bystanders on foot and in cars can be heard screaming in terror

however as Truax unloads multiple bullets into the vehicle.

Police investigators sought to justify the shooting on Monday, declaring that they had recovered a 9mm handgun from Williams' vehicle following the shooting, though there was no evidence that the gun had been used in the course of the brief pursuit.

Subsequently on Wednesday police released another statement claiming that Williams had been under investigation for threatening another person with a rifle and shooting at their vehicle earlier that weekend, though this is a detail that Truax and the other deputies involved could not have known.

At a news conference held on Monday, Milwaukee County's far-right Sheriff David Clarke, Jr. had already confirmed that prior to being shot by Truax, Williams was being pursued solely for failing to obey a traffic sign.

The Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office has so far declined media requests to provide documentation of its policies on use of force during vehicular pursuits.

The brutal killing of Williams at the hands of Milwaukee County sheriff's deputies is one of numerous acts of police terror and repression that have occurred under the direction of Sheriff Clarke.

An African American Democrat and one of the earliest and most ardent supporters of Donald Trump's presidential campaign, Clarke has established himself in his 15 years as sheriff of Milwaukee County as a fascistic figure who, more brazenly and crudely than most of his bourgeois contemporaries, advocates for the most authoritarian police-state measures.

Clarke has tweeted his support for a martial law response to popular anger over police shootings and called for the deployment of the National Guard to crack down on anti-Trump protests calling for a state of

emergency and the use of “all non-lethal force” to “quell” nationwide protests.

Milwaukee County Jail, which is overseen by Clarke, saw the deaths of four people over a six-month period in 2016, including a mentally ill man who was denied access to water for seven days and a baby which was born to a mentally ill woman in her jail cell after she was laughed at by corrections officers after going into labor and pleading for help.

Earlier in January, it came to light that Clarke had intimidated the Milwaukee County chief medical examiner with blustering threats after the examiner made public information on two of the four inmates who had died.

Also in January Clarke enrolled Milwaukee County law enforcement in Section 287(g), a program that deputizes local police officers to carry out raids on immigrants on behalf of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) as an extension of the Trump administration’s executive order to deport millions of immigrants and refugees. Clarke has also advocated for mayors of so-called sanctuary cities to be arrested for contempt of the Trump administration’s executive orders attacking immigrants and refugees.

Clarke has since accepted a high ranking position for the Trump administration in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), set to become assistant secretary in the DHS Office of Partnerships and Programs, an agency which coordinates the department’s partnerships and coordination with local law enforcement and establishes contacts and working relationships among private businesses and academia for advancing the far right law-and-order agenda of the Trump administration.

The fatal shooting of Williams only adds to heightened social tensions in Milwaukee, coming less than one year after the August 2016 police killing of 23-year-old African American Sylville Smith in Sherman Park, one of Milwaukee’s most impoverished neighborhoods.

Popular outrage over Smith’s killing sparked protests lasting three days which were met with dozens of arrests, the imposition of a strict curfew, and the activation the National Guard by Republican Governor Scott Walker for possible deployment to suppress the protests against police violence.

The criminal trial for Dominique Heaggan-Brown,

the Milwaukee police officer who fatally shot Smith, who is also African American, began on Monday. On Thursday jurors in the trial viewed footage of the killing from Heaggan-Brown and another officer’s bodycam, the first time the footage has been made available to the public.

The slowed down footage shows Smith, after slipping and falling while being held at gunpoint by Heaggan-Brown, grasping a nearby fence with his left hand and his right hand holding his gun by the barrel as he appears to be about to throw it over the fence while facing away from the officers, moments before being fatally shot.



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