

Protests continue in Sacramento as autopsy shows police shot Stephon Clark multiple times in the back

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On Friday, the results of an independent autopsy requested by Stephon Clark's family were released to the public, confirming that police shot the unarmed 22-year-old African-American man seven times in the back and side amid a volley of gunfire in his grandparents' backyard.

The incident began when two police officers responding to a report of someone breaking car windows confronted Clark on March 18. Body camera footage shows that, without identifying themselves, police demanded Clark put his hands up and chased him into his grandparents' backyard. At that point, one of the officers yelled "Gun!" and the two fired 20 shots at Clark, who was holding his cell phone in one hand.

The officers, identified as Terrence Mercadel and Jared Robinet, stood pointing their guns at Clark's corpse for several minutes until backup arrived, then handcuffed his body and made a perfunctory attempt to resuscitate Clark before pronouncing him dead. The officers then turned off their microphones for several minutes, presumably to get their stories straight off the record.

Autopsy results released by a private medical examiner hired by the family's attorney show that Mercadel and Robinet shot Clark a total of eight times. Dr. Bennet Omalu's analysis found that Clark was shot four times in the lower back, twice in the neck, once under an armpit, and once in the front of his thigh.

"You could reasonably conclude that he received seven gunshot wounds from his back," Dr. Omalu told a press conference Friday adding that any one of those would have been fatal on its own. The doctor described extensive damage to Clark's body from the torrent of bullets, which resulted in a collapsed lung and a

shattered vertebra.

Dr. Omalu also told reporters that Clark did not die immediately from his injuries but lived another three to 10 minutes after he was shot. He noted that, while it is impossible to say whether Clark would have survived had he received medical attention sooner, "every minute you wait decreases probability of survival." According to video released by the Sacramento Police Department, six minutes elapsed between the firing of the final bullet and the time CPR was administered to Clark's dead body.

The results further discredit the police narrative that Mercadel and Robinet believed Clark posed a danger to their safety and was moving in a menacing manner toward the officers when they gunned him down. In a statement, Clark family attorney Benjamin Crump wrote: "These findings from the independent autopsy contradict the police narrative that we've been told. This independent autopsy affirms that Stephon was not a threat to police and was slain in another senseless police killing under increasingly questionable circumstances."

A funeral service for Clark was held on Thursday, with protests resuming shortly thereafter and lasting into the evening. Thursday's demonstration began outside the office of Sacramento County District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert around 3:00 p.m. Demonstrators made their way through the city center, blocking traffic at some intersections and stopping light rail trains along the way. Protesters held signs carrying messages such as "Police the police" and "Convict killer cops."

Black Lives Matter (BLM) activists initially directed protesters to the federal courthouse, where they said

longtime Democratic Party functionary Al Sharpton, who spoke at Clark's funeral, would address the crowd. When Sharpton failed to appear, Stephon Clark's brother Stevante spoke instead.

Hundreds of people have joined the protests against police violence that have occurred nearly every day over the two weeks since Clark's murder. Protesters have held vigils and memorials, occupied City Hall, disrupted traffic, and blocked people from attending Sacramento Kings NBA basketball games.

Throughout the demonstrations, BLM and other activist groups aligned with the Democratic Party have sought to contain the protests while redirecting anger into the dead end of identity politics and sowing illusions the city's African-American police chief, Daniel Hahn. BLM activists had initially said that there would be no protests Thursday but when it became apparent that a demonstration would occur without their direction they scrambled to ensure the protests would not escape their control and take on an independent character.

Stephon Clark's family and many of those participating in the protests, meanwhile, have been far more outspoken about the class issues evident in the nationwide epidemic of police violence. In an interview with ABC News on Wednesday, Clark's aunt Kimmy Simone said: "You just keep looking at these kids over and over – it's not black. It's white. It's all colors," going on to connect Clark's murder with the Parkland massacre in Florida. Earlier in the week, Stevante Clark interrupted a City Council meeting to decry the corruption of city officials and their failure to address poverty and gang violence in the city.

The genuine desire of Stephon Clark's family and many protesters to end the epidemic of police killings and other forms of mass violence can find no expression in the identity politics of the Democratic Party or its various appendages, including Black Lives Matter. Workers and students must break free of these organizations to connect the struggles against police violence, mass shootings and social inequality in a unified movement against their root cause, the capitalist system, and for the socialist reorganization of society to meet human needs.

The author also recommends:

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