

East Pittsburgh police fatally shoot unarmed 17-year-old

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Antwon Rose, Jr., 17, was shot and killed by East Pittsburgh police Tuesday night in the borough just outside Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Rose was shot after he attempted to flee a traffic stop, according to police. The Allegheny County Police Department quickly confirmed that Rose, who was African American, was unarmed when he was killed.

According to officials, police were responding to reports of a shooting around 8:20 p.m., finding a wounded 22-year-old man who had been shot but was taken to the hospital and survived. Police put out a call for a vehicle that was reportedly seen fleeing the scene, and police pulled over a vehicle that matched the description. According to the police account, officers were detaining the driver of the car when two people jumped out of the car. An officer immediately and without warning opened fire, killing Rose.

Allegheny County police Superintendent Coleman McDonough said police found two guns on the floor of the vehicle in which Antwon Rose Jr. was riding in before he was killed. The driver of the vehicle, who is 20, was released after being interviewed by police Tuesday night.

Rose was a class of 2018 student at Woodland Hills Junior/Senior High School, assistant superintendent Licia Lentz told local media Wednesday. According to *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Rose is at least the fifth Woodland Hills student fatally shot over the past two years.

A bystander captured a video of the police shooting and posted it on Facebook. It shows two people running away from police cars, with their backs to the officers, as police open fire. In the video, officers were not heard issuing any commands to stop, and immediately began shooting.

“Why are they shooting?” the person who recorded

the video said. “All they did was run, and they’re shooting at them.”

The officer who shot Rose has not been named and is on paid leave while Allegheny County homicide detectives investigate the shooting. McDonough added that investigators have not yet been able to interview the officer. According to *TribLive*, the responsible officer had been sworn in that night and was less than two hours into his first shift with the department.

As in the vast majority of police shootings, the officer involved will most likely not be charged with any criminal offence.

The *Post-Gazette* noted that Pennsylvania law gives police officers great leeway in using deadly force to “prevent a suspect from escaping if the officer believes a person has committed a forcible felony, possesses a deadly weapon, or if the person has indicated he or she will endanger human life or inflict bodily injury if not arrested.”

Police officers who murder innocent people are rarely charged, and even fewer are ever convicted. The National Police Misconduct Reporting Project analyzed 3,238 criminal cases against police officers from April 2009 through December 2010. The study found that only 33 percent of officers were convicted, with only 36 percent of convicted officers serving prison sentences. According to the study, both percentages are approximately half the rate at which citizens are sentenced or imprisoned.

Legally, police in the US have free rein to shoot anyone as long as the officer attests to a “reasonable” belief that their own lives or others’ lives are in danger. Whether or not a person actually posed a threat is not taken into consideration.

A set of Supreme Court decisions in the 1980s—*Tennessee v. Garner* and *Graham v.*

Connor—set a broad framework for determining if deadly force by cops is legally reasonable. University of Missouri St. Louis professor David Klinger explained to *Vox* that constitutionally, police are given authority to shoot people “to protect their life or the life of another innocent party” or prevent a suspect deemed dangerous from escaping.

April’s Supreme Court decision in *Kisela v. Hughes* further protects officers by establishing the use of deadly force must be judged from the perspective of officers. As the watchdogs of the American ruling class, the police are granted almost every legal protection against excessive force cases.



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