

Hundreds rally in Pittsburgh to demand justice for unarmed teen killed by police

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22 June 2018

Hundreds of people rallied in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Thursday to demand that the police officer who shot and killed unarmed African American teenager Antwon Rose, Jr. during a traffic stop Tuesday evening be charged with murder.

Rose, a 17-year-old Woodland Hills High School honor student, was shot three times in the back as he ran from police after the car he was riding in was pulled over in the borough of East Pittsburgh.

A video of the shooting taken by a resident shows the police officer shooting Rose in the back as he ran away from the car. The officer never called out for the youth to stop or fired a warning shot.

A rally outside the Allegheny County Courthouse on Thursday took place one day after hundreds of people also rallied outside the East Pittsburgh Police department's headquarters. Late Thursday night dozens of protestors marched onto the Parkway East freeway, backing up traffic for miles.

Sarah Murphy, who lives near the shooting and heard the shots that killed Rose, spoke to the WSWs at the courthouse protest Thursday afternoon. Pointing to her son, Murphy explained, "I want you to show him. So many of our young people are being murdered in the streets and it is not right. We have Fifth Amendment and Fourteenth Amendment rights [due process of law]. We have rights which we should be able to use in the justice system, not just be gunned down in the streets. That 17-year old son was a citizen, but he was not treated as such.

"People of color, people who are poor, are the ones getting the worst treatment. It is sad that it takes a 17-year old getting shot in the back to get people out here and wake people up."

Speaking on the fact that those murdered by the police are being denied their constitutional rights when

they are summarily executed by the police, Murphy noted, "Maybe he made a mistake, and was in a wrong car but he still has to be entitled to a day in court, not just shot down in the back like he is some kind of animal. They definitely violated his rights that day.

"I live in the neighborhood and heard the gunshots. I witnessed the cops riding around erratically while there are little babies on the street. Speeding around at high speeds, not caring about the people on the streets. None of us broke the law that day and even if we did, we still deserve our day in court."

"Not another person should be shot," said Zoey who attended the rally with his six-month old daughter. "We live in a country where people are supposed to have justice and this is another terrible case where a young person was killed. I don't know what to say about it, it is just horrible.

"The police are being given the right to just kill anyone and they get off by saying that they feared for their life. He was running from them, he didn't have a gun."

The local media has focused on the allegation that the car Rose was riding in fit the description of a car which the police were looking for that was involved in a shooting in a nearby town. Police have also claimed that they found two guns in the car.

These two elements are being pushed to justify Rose's killing. However, the driver of the car was not arrested which he would have been if the guns were illegal or the car was the one for which police had been searching.

When police stop a car or randomly stop a person for no reason they routinely claim that the person or vehicle matched the description of someone they were looking for or that the car had made a minor infraction.

The Allegheny County Sheriff's Department, which

has taken over the investigation of the shooting, has not released the name of the officer who shot and killed Rose. As is routine, the officer has been placed on paid leave while the investigation takes place.

According to local press reports the officer had just been sworn in that day as a member of the East Pittsburgh Police department and had been a police officer working at three other nearby police departments including the University of Pittsburgh. There has been no explanation of why he moved from one department to another or what his record in those departments was.

The wave of police killings in the US continues at a rate of more than three every day despite the popular protests that first erupted nationwide after the 2014 murders of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri; Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Ohio; and Eric Garner in New York City. According to a database maintained by the *Washington Post*, 491 people have been shot and killed by police so far in 2018, on track to top last year's final death toll of 987.

These murders have been whitewashed by both Democrats and Republicans with few killer cops ever being criminally indicted; in the few cases where they are, most are found not guilty.

President Donald Trump has made clear that he supports the stepped-up violence of the police against workers, youth and the poor and that his Justice Department will not prosecute police officers or investigate police departments, no matter what their crimes. For its part, the Obama administration paid lip service to civil rights while siding with the police at the Supreme Court and arming police departments with military hardware including high-powered rifles and assault vehicles along with high-tech surveillance tools.



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