

Trader Joe's manager killed by Los Angeles police in shootout

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Melyda Corado, the 27-year-old manager of a popular Trader Joe's market located in Silver Lake, an upscale Los Angeles neighborhood, was killed Saturday afternoon by a police officer shooting at a suspect fleeing into the store.

The incident began earlier that afternoon in South Central Los Angeles, when Gene Atkins, a disturbed 28-year-old man, shot his grandmother several times. Remarkably, the woman survived.

Atkins fled with his girlfriend in his grandmother's Toyota Camry. LAPD officers located the car driving in Hollywood through its anti-theft device and initiated a reckless high-speed chase. Harrowing police videos from the police car and two body cameras captured what happened next.

As Atkins sped through traffic on crowded, busy streets he shot at the officers, shattering the back window of his own car. Shortly thereafter he crashed into a pole next to the Trader Joe's front door. Atkins jumped out of the car and fired more shots toward the police as he ran into the store.

The driver of the police car is heard saying to his partner, "Do not, do not shoot. Get distance. We are getting distance."

Rather than remain in a position of cover behind the vehicle engine block and ballistic door, as training mandates, however, the passenger officer, who has not yet been named, jumped out of the car and fired multiple shots at Atkins despite the presence of people all around him at the entrance to the crowded store.

Apparently, Melyda Corado was near the front door, responding to the sound of the crash, when she was hit by an LAPD bullet that perforated her arm before entering her body. She walked back into the store and collapsed in front of her co-employees and numerous customers, mortally wounded.

Dozens of military-clad LAPD SWAT officers were called and congregated for an hour outside the store, basically doing nothing, while breathless news reporters with video cameras descended to broadcast the "hostage situation." Eventually Atkins surrendered, sustaining gunshot wounds to one arm. He did not harm any of the people inside the store.

The Los Angeles County District Attorney filed 31 felony charges against Atkins, including for the murder of Corado, even though he did not fire the bullet which killed her. Atkins is being held in lieu of \$18.75 million bail.

The new LAPD Chief of Police, Michael Moore, wasted no time defending the shooting of Corado. "I believe it's what they needed to do in order to defend the people of Los Angeles, defend the people in that store, and to defend themselves."

To the contrary, the death of Corado was avoidable and occurred solely due to the reckless overreaction of both officers, especially the still unidentified shooter.

To start with, the high-speed chase was unnecessary and recklessly jeopardized numerous lives. With a tracking device on the car and multiple officers and a helicopter were responding from various directions Atkins was not going to get away.

After Atkins crashed, the driver of the police car parked at a safe distance according to police protocol and told the other officer to hold her fire.

Even though Atkins was firing at the officers, the only correct tactic was to take positions of cover and wait for back up because the "background" was full of people who could be injured by police bullets. Had the shooting officer done so, the store manager would have survived unscathed, as did everyone else inside the store.

Reports in the media make clear that there was never

a hostage situation in the store. Quoted in the *Los Angeles Times*, one of the customers, Mike D'Angelo, described Atkins as having "two bullet holes in his arm and he was bleeding badly. He kept saying he didn't want to hurt anybody."

"I got him whatever he needed," D'Angelo continued. "Some water, orange juice, Jack Daniels."

Sadly, Atkins tried to telephone his grandmother, who was not reachable as she was in the emergency room for trauma surgery. A customer let Atkins use her cell phone to speak with LAPD hostage negotiators, who eventually coaxed him out of the store.



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