

Protests continue at Yale University over police shooting

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Hundreds of protesters have demonstrated on the campus of Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut and its suburb of Hamden in the two weeks since two police officers, Hamden Officer Devin Eaton and Yale Officer Terrance Pollack, surrounded a car in New Haven's Newhallville neighborhood and fired 16 or more bullets at the unarmed young couple inside.

In the early morning of April 16, Eaton, in response to a 911 call from a gas station attendant who gave the car's license plate, alleging the driver had attempted an armed robbery, pursued the car across two town lines. Body camera footage released by the Connecticut State Police shows that Eaton opened fire as the driver, 21-year-old Paul Witherspoon, was exiting the car with his hands up.

In CCTV video of the incident Eaton can be seen leaping out of his car, raising his gun toward the vehicle and firing multiple shots at the couple as Witherspoon tried to get out of the vehicle. Eaton then ran away from the car to the end of the street.

For his part, Pollack jumped out of his vehicle while it was still in drive, leaving it to roll forward into Witherspoon's car. Video shows Pollack firing his gun and then quickly running away, having apparently been injured by a "projectile" from Eaton's gun.

Witherspoon was not injured, but his passenger, 22-year-old Stephanie Washington, was struck by a bullet and hospitalized for injuries to her face and torso. In a subsequent search, police found no gun in the car. In the aftermath of the shooting, Witherspoon and Washington were questioned by police and both released without being charged.

Eaton and Pollack have been placed on paid leave pending an investigation.

Over the past two weeks, protesters have held demonstrations at the site of the shooting and shut

down major intersections on Yale's campus chanting, "no justice, no peace" and "hands up, don't shoot." Yale students have demanded that the university be held accountable for the shooting and that Pollack be fired.

"Yale should be held accountable and have transparency for what's happened," said one protester, Ann Delauro.

One group, Black Students for Disarmament at Yale, has been formed to demand the complete disarmament of Yale police, as well as the restriction of YPD patrols to a reasonable definition of campus.

"Our tuition is paying for this department," sophomore Makayla LaRonde-King said at a rally Friday. "It's paying for the guns, it's paying for the bullets and I do not want to have my name attached to that kind of violence."

The group organized a "Deliverance March" to the YPD headquarters on Saturday, which concluded with the hand-delivery of over 1,000 complaint forms to police officials.

Since both victims are African American the media, student organizations and protest groups, including Black Lives Matter, have attempted to frame the shooting primarily as a racial issue, tying it to demands for faculty diversity and more funding for race and gender studies. Racial diversity, however, was no help to Witherspoon or Washington since both Eaton and Pollack are African American.

Witherspoon's uncle, Rodney Williams, told CBS News, "You need to look at what's really going on with the police ... really look at how the police look at residents, period. The police could be black, white, Puerto Rican ... it's just a police issue ... I think we need to be respected as human beings and I feel like they really don't."

While African Americans are disproportionately victims of police killings, the largest number of victims in the United States is white. Growing police violence is a threat to the entire working class as the ruling class prepares and implements increasingly authoritarian methods of rule.



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