Chicago police kill bipolar man inside his home

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On Wednesday, May 22, police officers in Chicago killed 22-year-old Myles Frazier after he barricaded himself in his home in the Woodlawn neighborhood on the city's south side.

Frazier, who suffered from bipolar disorder, had become disturbed and agitated. His father called the police out of fear that his son was becoming suicidal when the young man armed himself with a gun.

When police arrived at the home, they had been made aware that Frazier was armed and that he was in a suicidal bipolar episode.

Police claim that in the process of "negotiating" with Frazier he fired "5 or 6 shots" inside the home. CPD Officer Lt. Ozzie Valdez told reporters that the shots were fired, "in the house, some that we believe came out of the residence in the area where officers were."

From the information that has been made available it is unclear if Frazier fired directly at officers or if they were warning shots. No one was struck by any of Frazier's shots. The police responded to this by calling in the heavily armed SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) team to prepare a raid.

After Frazier still refused to leave his home, CPD SWAT officers forced their way into the building. Two officers found and confronted Frazier when they then opened fire multiple times killing him.

The officers involved have been placed on a 30-day administrative leave. The Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA) has opened an investigation into the killing. COPA was established by the city in the aftermath of the public outrage over the 2014 killing of 17-year-old Laquan McDonald in an attempt to improve public perceptions of police. Little information or substantial consequences can be expected from their investigation.

The killing of Frazier came just two days after Democrat Lori Lightfoot was sworn in as mayor of Chicago. Lightfoot, who was the head of the Chicago Police Board and of COPA, ran her campaign claiming she would be capable of reining in police misconduct. The killing of Frazier and Lightfoot's track record as head of COPA, which ruled on fewer cases of misconduct under her leadership than before and assisted in the coverup of McDonald's death, are evidence to the contrary.

In all likelihood, the killing will be ruled "justified" by investigators as is usually that case when a victim is armed. But in this case Frazier was only a danger to himself until the conflict was escalated by the police. The event demonstrates not just the brutality of the police but the dire conditions and often deadly consequences for individuals struggling with mental health issues.

In 2012, half of Chicago's mental healthcare centers were closed in an effort to cut costs. Only five such public centers remain in Chicago. The city employs just one full-time psychiatrist. Meanwhile, Chicago spends over $1.6 billion per year on the police force with a proposal to spend another $95 million on a new police academy. This evens out to more than $4 million per day while just $9.4 million is spent on mental health services for an entire year.

For workers who are struggling with their mental health there are simply no options to get treatment. When pressed to the breaking point due to unemployment, low pay and other poverty conditions, those with untreated conditions like bipolar disorder are most at risk for a breakdown or suicidal tendencies.

Instead of providing adequate options for assistance and treatment the state has responded to a growing mental health crisis by increasing arms and training for the police, so they can violently suppress anyone that

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disturbs the social order.

The *World Socialist Web Site* reported in December that mental illness plays an important role in police killings. Those with mental health conditions were more likely to confront police than to attempt fleeing. Out of the 228 people with mental illness killed by police in 2018, 85 percent did not run away. For police, who are trained that they can exercise deadly force should they feel threatened or unsafe in any way, an erratic person in the midst of a crisis is an easy target.

The house where Frazier was killed is located close to the University of Chicago, where he once held a part-time job. In April 2018 the University of Chicago police shot a student who was also experiencing a mental health crisis.

In a similar case in 2017 a woman in Olathe, Kansas was killed by police after her boyfriend called 911 warning that she was armed and having a mental breakdown. In video obtained from the body camera footage officers are heard debating if raiding the house is worth the risk since no one was in immediate danger. During the conversations one officer says, “word is going to get out if we walk away.” The police eventually raided the house, shooting the woman dead.

According to the *Washington Post’s* Police Shooting Database, 363 people have been shot and killed by police so far in 2019. Frazier is the seventh person to be killed in Illinois. California has the most police killings of any state, with 49 deaths as of May 23.

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