

Seventeen-year-old girl fatally shot by police on California freeway

Alan Gilman
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In the early evening of July 5, 17-year-old Hannah Williams was shot and killed by a Fullerton, California police officer after becoming involved in a minor accident with the officer's marked police vehicle. The shooting occurred on the 91 Freeway in the city of Anaheim.

According to a statement issued by the Orange County District Attorney's Office, the Fullerton officer, who has not been publicly identified, was driving in Anaheim to take his police dog to the veterinarian, when "He observed a 17-year-old female driver, who was also eastbound on the 91 Freeway at a high rate of speed, near Glassell Avenue. At some point, the two vehicles made physical contact. An officer-involved shooting occurred and a replica Beretta 92 FS handgun was recovered at the scene next to the female."

Williams was taken to the hospital, where she died shortly thereafter.

The family's attorney, civil rights lawyer Lee Merritt, said at least three witnesses were interviewed by police, two of whom reportedly said they saw the teen get out of the car with a cell phone in her hand after being involved in the accident with the officer. One witness, according to media reports, claimed Williams was holding the replica handgun when she was shot.

Merritt said he has not had access to the witnesses to question them. "Fortunately, there is a video," he said, "so we don't have to compete between testimonies when there's video evidence."

The attorney demanded that the officer's body camera footage be released, if not to the public then at least to the family. Although state law gives police 45 days to release the video, the Fullerton Police Department said it would release the footage and other information "in coming days."

Merritt said, "This officer needs to be thoroughly investigated the same way any other criminal suspect would be investigated. A 17-year-old girl is dead with no explanation."

During a press conference held by the family on Thursday, Williams' 19-year-old sister, Nyla, talked about her sister. She said, "She just started working as a lifeguard... she liked saving people and being there for people... I just knew that whatever she was going to do, she just wanted to help people."

Hannah Williams, who was white, was about to become a senior at Magnolia High School and had recently started a job as a lifeguard at Knott's Berry Farm. The day she died was her day off from work.

According to Merritt, the family described Hannah as being in a "particular joyous mood" that day. "She had made pancakes. She pulled pranks on her cousin and had plans to go sightseeing in Hollywood with relatives who came in from Texas."

The family believes that any erratic driving on Hannah's part, if it did occur, may have been the result of her inexperience. She had only recently begun driving, and they believe she may have gotten onto the wrong road and felt compelled to take the freeway, which she'd never driven on before.

"We just need to know what happened that night," Nyla said, "because they haven't told us anything, nothing. Everything I've learned is from media or on Twitter, like everything. No one has come to talk to us."

According to the *Washington Post*, which tracks only police shootings and does not include other types of police killings, such as tasings and beatings, US police this year have shot and killed 481 people. This means the pace of police killings so far this year is in line with the total of 996 such killings in 2018. When

non-shooting deaths are included, as documented by killedbypolice.net, the annual total over the last several years has averaged well over 1,100.

The killing of Hannah Williams has received little news coverage. Because she was white, her killing does not fit the racial narrative being promoted by the pseudo-left and groups like Black Lives Matter, which attribute the widespread killing of people by the police as a product solely of racism, ignoring the primary social category of class.

Although African-Americans are killed by police in numbers disproportionate to their share of the US population, reflecting in part the racism of the police, approximately 50 percent of the victims of police killings are white. What unites the vast majority of victims of police violence is not race, but class. Virtually all are working class, and for the most part members of its most oppressed and poorest sections.



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