

Video shows Dallas, Texas police joking as a 32-year-old man dies in their custody

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On August 10, 2016, a 32-year-old Dallas, Texas resident Tony Timpa called 9-11 emergency services to tell the police dispatcher he suffered from mental illness and required assistance. Dallas Officers Dustin Dillard, Danny Vasquez and Kevin Mansell responded to the scene.

Within twenty minutes of their arrival, he was pronounced dead by the paramedics who had transferred him from police custody into an ambulance. It would take a lawsuit filed by the victim's family and a three-year fight to get federal courts to release the body camera records of the incident.

In 2017, a grand jury investigation indicted the three officers of "misdemeanor deadly conduct." However, in March of this year, the Dallas County District Attorney, John Creuzot, dismissed the charges on medical examiner testimony that they "cannot, and will not, testify to the elements of the indictment beyond a reasonable doubt." It was their opinion that the officers had not acted recklessly. Finally, in April the three officers returned to active duty, and all charges were dropped.

The official police report noted that the officers used "necessary restraint" to prevent Mr. Timpa from "rolling into traffic" even though the video shows a police car blocking traffic. The autopsy report notes that cause of death was "cardiac death caused by the toxic effects of cocaine and the stress associated with physical restraint."

In stark opposition to the official report, the video obtained by the *Dallas Morning News* demonstrates that Timpa was in a state of panic, rolling on the grass while repeatedly screaming, "You're gonna kill me!" The police officers rolled him onto his stomach, and officer Dillard then used both knees to place his entire weight on to the small of Timpa's back. He was

handcuffed and his legs were zip-tied together.

In a few minutes, Timpa stopped speaking then soon stopped even grunting, eventually laying absolutely still and unresponsive. He lay motionless as the police continued to mock him about the upscale address found on his bracelet and his mental illness. Without once checking to see if he was doing well, they continued their slurs and dismissed his unresponsiveness as simply having fallen asleep and not wanting to wake up.

The officers held Timpa on the ground for over thirteen minutes before paramedics arrived and injected him in the left upper arm with a syringe full of sedatives. When he was turned over, it became clear that he was lifeless. Officer Dillard can be heard saying, "Did he die on me? I hope I didn't kill him." Then another officer retorts, "What's all this me shit?" Laughter breaks amongst all of them, and the third officer chuckles, "I love how this suddenly became a 'we.' 'We' in France. Yeah, we in France."

Once in the ambulance, the paramedics confirmed Timpa was not breathing, yet evinced no apparent urgency to begin administering CPR or oxygen. The paramedic then said that the victim's mother is on the phone. He then pointed to Timpa's lifeless body and simply stated, "He's dead."

Timpa suffocated to death while being restrained in a controversial face-down position. The cause of death was the utter negligence and complete disregard for the safety and well-being of the young man by the three Dallas Police officers. The murder was covered up by a conspiracy of the police and judicial bodies who went to work obscuring the facts and offering the usual excuses.

A convenient loophole in the Texas Public Information Act allows police departments to keep

footage obtained from body cameras secret when someone dies in police custody, unless it had been determined that a crime was committed.

Vicki Timpa, Tony's mother, was seeking records related to her son's death when she found out from the medical examiner's office that her son had been pinned to the ground for over thirteen minutes. This prompted her decision to bring a lawsuit against the Dallas Police Department.

According to Vicki Timpa, her son struggled with drug addiction and alcohol abuse. He was also battling schizophrenia and depression despite being a successful executive and loving parent.

This case speaks to the impunity with which the police are allowed to subject the general public to barbaric treatment. It highlights the absurdities of toeing racial lines in police killings, as Timpa was white and the officers involved were white or Hispanic.

A recent report by Reuters on a new study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences highlights the fact that race is not a significant factor in police killings. The study's authors demonstrate, through an examination of years' worth of police killings, that white officers are no more likely than black or Hispanic officers to shoot African Americans. The truth is that the police are lethal regardless of race, killing more than a thousand people every year.

However, mental illness is a significant factor in determining if someone in the United States will die at the hands of the police.

According to a recent study conducted by the Treatment Advocacy Center, people with untreated mental illness are sixteen times more likely to be killed during an encounter with the police. According to John Snook, executive director of the center and co-author of the study, "It should horrify but not surprise us that people with untreated mental illness are overrepresented in deadly encounters with law enforcement."



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