

Video shows Fresno police officer shooting unarmed 10th grade boy in the head

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A video made public yesterday shows police officer Ray Villalvazo shooting 16-year-old Isiah Murrietta-Golding in the head from behind as he was running away.

Described as a “small boy,” Isiah was 5 foot 4 inches tall and weighed 109 pounds. He was a good student at the Carter G. Woodson school in Fresno, where he was in the 10th grade. He liked sports and playing video games with his siblings.

He was shot in the head on April 14, 2017 in Fresno, California. He died in the hospital several days later.

Police chief Jerry Dyer subsequently maintained that the shooting was justified. He claimed that the unarmed boy “reached into his waistband several times,” and that the officer fired in self-defense because he was afraid for his life.

The video, taken from a surveillance camera, demonstrates that the official story is a complete fabrication. The boy is shown climbing over the fence of a preschool in broad daylight and then running a few steps onto a sunny green lawn.

He does not “reach into his waistband” once, let alone several times. While one police officer attempts to scale the fence in pursuit, another police officer is shown crouching and firing a single shot through the bars of the fence. The fleeing boy immediately collapses.

The video then shows an officer approaching the boy’s body, jerking it up by one arm like the carcass of a slaughtered animal, kicking it over, pulling the other limp arm out from under the body, and then putting the wrists in handcuffs.

The video was released by Fresno attorney Stuart Chandler, who represents the boy’s father. The boy’s parents have a pending civil rights and wrongful death lawsuit against the officer and the City of Fresno,

which is scheduled to proceed to trial next year.

Isiah Murrietta-Golding was apparently targeted in connection with an incident that had happened the previous day. On that day, according to the lawsuit, two teens had gotten into an escalating argument with four men at a pizza take-out in Fresno. Ultimately, one of the teens fired a gun at the car driven by the four men. None of the occupants were struck by the bullets, but the car crashed and the driver was killed. The police claim to have suspected that Isiah was one of the two teens.

When he was pulled over with two other teens the following day, Isiah initially complied with instructions but then attempted to run away. He did not display a weapon, make any threats, or attempt to injure anyone. He ran through a parking lot, “holding a hat in his right hand,” and climbed over a fence bordering the yard of a preschool.

It was a Saturday, so the preschool was closed. After falling clumsily over the other side of the fence, Isiah ran several steps into the yard before being shot from behind. The bullet tore through his occipital lobe, according to the lawsuit. On the video, another police officer can be heard reacting to the shooting by shouting “good shot.”

The lawsuit also alleges that several minutes elapsed before medical care was summoned for the critically injured boy. When paramedics arrived, the boy was in a coma and was breathing only weakly. However, the officers refused requests from the paramedics to remove the handcuffs.

Police shootings are an industry in the United States. Police department policies are carefully crafted and calibrated to embrace the broadest range of wanton violence. After each act of brutality, an “internal investigation,” conducted by the police themselves, is

convened to help perpetrators polish their story, to confiscate all of the available evidence, and to discredit the victim.

The internal investigation almost inevitably concludes that the officers' actions were "within policy." Meanwhile, specialized law firms are engaged to defend the officers in court. Investigators are dispatched to dig up dirt on the victim and the victim's family. "Police practices" experts are retained and paid hundreds of dollars an hour to bolster the officers' story.

On average, police in America kill more than a thousand people per year, maiming and disfiguring many more. This epidemic of police violence enjoys the full backing of the state, from local administrations all the way to the highest levels of the federal government.

At the request of lawyers from both Democratic and Republican administrations, the Supreme Court has repeatedly intervened in recent years to expand the authoritarian doctrine of "qualified immunity" for police officers.

President Trump has made the celebration of official brutality a centerpiece of his fascistic appeal to police officers. "When you see these towns and when you see these thugs being thrown into the back of a paddy wagon, you just see them thrown in, rough," Trump gloated in a 2017 speech. "I said, please don't be too nice."

At a recent rally, Trump appeared flanked by police officers wearing "Cops for Trump" shirts.

In the case of Isiah Murrietta-Golding, the results of the internal investigation were announced in March 2018: "Sgt. Villalvazo's actions were within department policy."

The *Fresno Bee* reports that despite the release of the video, the Fresno Police Officers Association "is in full support of the sergeant and says its members believe the shooting to be justified."



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