

Phoenix, Arizona police release incomplete footage of July 4 shooting

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Police in Phoenix, Arizona released incomplete body-cam footage this week of the shooting of James Garcia, 28, who was killed by police while sitting in his car on July 4 during a police investigation into a stabbing in the neighborhood. Garcia was under no suspicion of any crime at the time which he was killed.

What is significant about the footage released is not so much what it shows, but what it doesn't, as any footage that would show Garcia allegedly raising a gun, as police claimed in justifying shooting him, are noticeably absent.

Garcia's sister, Jacqueline Garcia demanded the release of all of the body-cam and dash cam footage from the police SUV parked behind Garcia's car, telling ABC15 the effort to "portray her brother as some sort of bad person, it's all false," and that the full release of the body-cam and dash-cam footage is "going to give us the truth."

"I've looked at that video, dissected it slowly, and nowhere did I see a gun," Garcia's mother, Denise Garcia, told ABC15. "What I did see my son doing was talking with his hands, holding a cigarette and then trying to defend himself, but at no point did I ever see a gun."

"As with other police shooting cases, our family and our community is unjustifiably left without answers," Garcia said in a separate interview with the *Arizona Republic*.

Two weeks ago, demonstrators took up Garcia's case, calling for the release of all police footage of the killing. Protests calling for an end to police violence in Phoenix have continued since late May in the wake of the murder of George Floyd by four police officers in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The video released this week shows police interviewing a man who had been stabbed telling them

about a man who tried to stab him the week before trying again at a house nearby. When police reached the house, they interviewed two bystander and one told the officer that the attacker had already left in a silver Toyota sedan. The officer asked if either of the people he was interviewing knew Eric, the suspected stabber. A bystander said they saw him but "did not know who he is." This footage proves Garcia was not sought after by police at the time of the shooting and police have since identified the stabbing suspect.

Footage from another police body-cam shows an officer approach and talk to Garcia, after having awakened him. Garcia is unable to produce his ID, and he gives a false name and date of birth. He then blurts out he has a misdemeanor warrant, and the officer tells him he does not care as he is investigating the stabbing.

Another body-cam shows an officer walked over to Garcia and told him he needed to get out of his car so that the police can "figure out who everyone is and whether or not you're involved in that [the stabbing]." Garcia replied, "I told him [inaudible], he said okay ... said I'd wait out in the car." The officer told Garcia to leave his car because there was a "stabbing in the house ... if this turns into some kind of shooting, I don't need you sitting here getting shot while we're shooting and then blaming us." Garcia refused, saying he did not think he would "get shot" and that he felt safe in his car.

The footage then skips to the end of the conversation between the two bystanders and the first officer. After briefly questioning a group of people who had exited the house earlier about the whereabouts of the suspected stabber, an officer near Garcia's car started yelling "drop the gun," and the officer drew his pistol and ran towards the car, which is also shown in viral cellphone video of the killing.

Police surrounded the vehicle and pointed their guns at Garcia. One officer, who repetitively motioned with his hand, his pistol against the driver side window pointed directly at Garcia head, shouting: “Stop f---ing moving, I will f---ing shoot you.” Another officer walked from the back of Garcia’s car to the passenger side window with what appears to be a crowbar and bashed the window in, immediately after which two officers rapidly fired 16 rounds point blank into the driver’s side window of the vehicle and into Garcia.

Not all of the officers’ body-cams have been released, but of those that have been shown to the public critical moments are left out. Based on the cellphone video and available police body-cams, there are multiple instances where police’s body-cams would have been filming into the vehicle pointing where the alleged gun would have been, and yet all of these instances have been omitted. The gun recovered by police after the shooting was never proven to have been wielded by Garcia during the shooting.

When they are not killing people—approximately 1,000 every year nationwide—American police routinely violate workers democratic rights and then seek to cover up and whitewash their actions.

Case in point, 23-year-old Mariah Valenzuela was charged with resisting arrest for “creating a substantial risk of physical injury” to a Phoenix officer during a traffic stop in January. She was also charged with a DUI even though her blood alcohol levels were under the legal limit.

Body camera footage shows that Valenzuela was slammed to the ground by officer Michael McGillis within seconds of telling him she did not have her ID on her. The young woman was left with a gash on her head, a bleeding hand, scratches and cuts on her face, and bruises on her legs from McGillis assault. On the video footage of the arrest an officer can be heard telling another officer “just to CYA[cover your ass]” in the paperwork after learning of the extensive injuries she had sustained.



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