

Video footage exposes police shooting of 13-year-old autistic boy in Salt Lake City

Niles Niemuth**23 September 2020**

Body camera footage released by the Salt Lake City (Utah) Police Department on Monday has shed more light on the horrific police shooting of 13-year-old Linden Cameron on September 4. Cameron remains in the hospital after somehow surviving being shot nearly a dozen times. He suffered broken bones and serious organ damage when bullets pierced his intestines, bladder, shoulder and ankles.

Cameron, who is white and has been diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, was shot 11 times as he ran from the police. They had been called to his home by his mother, who was seeking help getting him to the hospital for mental health treatment. She had alerted the 911 dispatcher that her son possibly had a toy gun and had a previous confrontation with police in the neighboring state of Nevada, but that he did not possess a real weapon. "My biggest fear is that, I don't know, I just don't want him to die," Golda Barton said on the call, asking specifically for the aid of a mental health worker.

Multiple videos show that Barton had met a team of four officers down the street from her house to warn them that Cameron was afraid of the police, but that she desperately needed help getting him safely to a hospital, as he was suffering a meltdown. "He sees the badge and automatically thinks you are going to kill him, he freaks out," she explained.

The four officers then discussed how they would approach and apprehend Cameron. One officer questioned why they would be entering the home of a boy suffering a "psych problem." She suggested they call their sergeant "and tell him the situation. Because I'm not about to get in a shooting because [Cameron's] upset."

A second officer, who shot the boy a short time later, presciently remarked, "Yeah, especially when he hates

cops, it's going to end in a shooting."

Despite these apparent misgivings, the group of officers proceeded to approach the home to confront Cameron under the assumption he was armed, despite Barton's assurances to the contrary. Having spotted the police, the boy took off running down an alley behind his home and the police pursued on foot.

As the officers caught up to Cameron, one of them screamed at him several times, ordering him to get on the ground, before opening fire in rapid succession. A second officer can be heard asking Cameron to pull his hands out of his pockets just as the first officer opens fire.

"I don't feel good," Cameron told the officers as he lay on the ground. "Tell my mom I love her."

While Cameron narrowly avoided being one of the more than 714 people killed by police thus far this year, his grandfather, Owen Barton, 66, was one of the first victims of 2020, having been shot and killed by sheriff's deputies in Lyon County, Nevada on January 16. As with most police killings, details are sparse, but the official account claims he had advanced on deputies with a handgun, forcing them to shoot and kill him.

Since George Floyd was murdered by police in Minneapolis, Minnesota on May 25, sparking multi-racial and multi-ethnic protests demanding an end to police violence and racism across the country and internationally, at least 300 people have been shot and killed by the police, according to the tally kept by killedbypolice.net. At the current rate, police in the US are on track to kill nearly 1,000 people, a grim toll that they have exacted every year since 2015.

African-Americans, along with Native Americans, are disproportionately killed by the police, but the largest share of victims continues to be white. The victims, regardless of race or ethnicity, are overwhelmingly

poor and working class. Like Cameron, many were dealing with some sort of mental illness. A significant proportion of those killed by the police were suffering a health emergency when they were shot.

Floyd's murder and that of Breonna Taylor, who was killed when police opened fire in her home during a no-knock warrant raid in Louisville, Kentucky, as well as the shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisconsin, have garnered attention from the Democratic Party and the Black Lives Matter organization. However, they have paid virtually no attention to white victims like Cameron, his grandfather, and 25-year-old Hannah Fizer, who was shot dead by police in Sedalia, Missouri last June.

Friends, family and community members have protested largely in isolation to demand justice for Fizer, a convenience store clerk who was killed by a deputy during a traffic stop. Last week, a special prosecutor ruled that the shooting was justifiable and that there would no criminal charges. In July, a protest was held in rural Wilson, Oklahoma to demand criminal charges in the killing of 28-year-old Jared Lakey, who was tased more than 50 times and choked to death by police in 2019.

Even as they feign sympathy for the black victims of police violence and proclaim their commitment to confronting "white supremacy," the Democrats have slapped down demands for defunding the police and other mild reforms. Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden has repeatedly rejected the notion that police budgets should be cut, instead highlighting his plan to give local police \$300 million in additional federal funding. The former vice president launched a massive "law and order" ad campaign earlier this month denouncing "violent protesters" against police brutality as anarchists and arsonists.

Meanwhile, President Donald Trump is waging a fascistic reelection campaign, appealing to the police and whipping up the far-right elements of his base. Trump has defended the 17-year-old militia member, Kyle Rittenhouse, who killed two anti-police-violence protesters in Kenosha, Wisconsin, while also praising the federal police squad assassination of Portland protester Michael Reinoehl as "retribution."

Despite months of protests, police violence is not abating. Rather, the repressive arm of the state is being built up further in an effort to suppress all signs of

opposition from the working class. The Department of Justice on Monday targeted New York City, Portland, Oregon and Seattle, Washington as "anarchist jurisdictions," paving the way for them to lose federal funding.

A state of emergency was declared in Louisville, Kentucky yesterday in anticipation of protests over an imminent decision by the state's attorney general on whether to bring charges in the Breonna Taylor case. Police began erecting concrete barricades around the downtown business district Monday, and the federal courthouse has been boarded up. One of the officers involved in shooting Taylor, Sergeant John Mattingly, sent an email to his colleagues early Tuesday morning defending his actions and encouraging them to confront protesters and to "be the Warriors you are."



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