

Texas police officer charged with murder after shooting and killing unarmed black man

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A Texas police officer has been arrested and charged with murder after shooting and killing Jonathan Price, a 31-year-old unarmed black man, in Wolfe City, a small town of 1,500 people 70 miles northeast of Dallas, last weekend.

The officer, 22-year-old Shaun Lucas, who is white, faces 5 to 99 years in prison if convicted, and has had his bail set at \$1 million.

This marks a rare case in which a police officer has been charged over a shooting. On average 1,000 people are killed by police every year in the US, with criminal charges being brought less than 2 percent of the time, according to data compiled by Mapping Police Violence.

Lucas was responding to a possible fight in progress outside of a Kwik Chek convenience store on Saturday around 8:24 p.m. According to witnesses, Price had intervened in a possible domestic assault as another man allegedly attempted to assault a woman inside the store.

Price's intervention created a dispute between him and the other man, but the situation had calmed down and was resolved by the time Lucas arrived on the scene.

According to civil rights attorney Lee Merritt, Price put his hands up and attempted to explain the situation to the officers. Lucas then attempted to detain Price. Price reportedly refused to be arrested and "resisted in a non-threatening posture and began walking away," according to a statement by the Texas Department of Public Safety.

Lucas then drew his Taser and discharged it into Price, who was then standing eight yards from the officer and moving away. As Price convulsed from the electric shock, Lucas "perceived a threat" and drew his service weapon, firing three rounds into Price's chest.

He then handcuffed Price as he lay bleeding on the ground. Price was taken to Hunt Regional Hospital where he was pronounced dead later that night.

Merritt has stated that there is body and security camera footage that "likely caught what happened" but it has not been released to the public yet. However, the testimony gathered from witnesses appears to have been deemed satisfactory for the Texas Rangers to charge Lucas with murder. Whether or not this will be enough to convict Lucas remains to be seen. Cases in which police officers have been convicted for murder while on the job are exceedingly rare.

By all accounts, Price was a valued and respected member of the small community who will be dearly missed. He was an employee of the Wolfe City public works department and was described as a "pillar of the community." Price's mother, Marcella Louis, told reporters from local news station WFAA that she was not surprised when she heard her son was attempting to break up a fight, adding "that's what he always did, tried to help others. I taught him that all the years."

Price is another victim of police murder in a year that has seen three people killed every day. According to KilledByPolice.net there have been at least 742 victims of police shootings as of Oct. 1.

This year has also been marked by mass multiracial and multiethnic protests across the US and internationally demanding an end to police violence and racism. Triggered by the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, at the end of May, protests have spread even to small towns and rural areas of the US.

In some places like Portland, Oregon, and Louisville, Kentucky, protests have continued for months, where protesters have been assaulted by riot police with rubber bullets, tear gas and pepper spray. In Portland,

demonstrators determined to end police violence have been detained by unmarked federal agents.

Merritt described the latest killing as “beyond comprehension,” but police brutality is a reality which workers in towns and cities across the country confront under conditions of unprecedented social inequality. The police are the armed appendage to the capitalist state, created and utilized for the purpose of repressing the working class and any sign of social opposition.

The militarization of the American police has been developing for decades, accelerated by the Obama administration’s sale of surplus military equipment to police departments. Now President Donald Trump is working overtime to develop the police and right-wing militias as his private army as he plots a coup against the US Constitution.

Trump’s calls during the presidential debate for the fascist Proud Boys militias to “stand back and stand by” have clearly resonated with certain sections of society. At least one man openly armed with a semi-automatic rifle tried to intimidate protesters at a vigil for Price Monday night, causing a confrontation that eventually ended with the man leaving after a conversation with police.



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