

Brevard County sheriff's deputy kills two Florida teenagers

Matthew Taylor
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Two teenagers were shot and killed by a Brevard County sheriff's deputy in Cocoa, Florida, last Friday after a brief pursuit by police. The deputy fired multiple rounds into the vehicle after the teens attempted to flee from them.

The two young victims were identified as Angelo Crooms, age 16, who was the driver of the car and Sincere Pierce, age 18. A third teenage passenger was unharmed.

Brevard County officials claimed that the officers had initiated a traffic stop because they believed the car may have been stolen and involved in an earlier incident. It has not been confirmed at this time if that was in fact the case.

A 56-second clip from dash camera video was released by the Sheriff's Department on Wednesday in an attempt to exonerate the officers involved, who have been placed on paid administrative leave pending the outcome of the investigation, per usual police procedure.

The video begins mid-pursuit and is from the second police cruiser, driven by deputy Jafet Santiago-Miranda, following the lead patrol car. It shows the victims' car take a left turn on a residential street followed by the first deputy. Neither deputy's vehicle appears to have the lights on top of their cars flashing. It is unknown if their sirens were on, as audio from the video does not begin until near the end of the clip.

The video shows that Crooms drove to the end of the block before stopping at an intersection, where there is a stop sign, and then making a left turn. He then immediately pulled into a driveway on the right, while the two deputies blocked the end of the street behind them and got out of their cars, drawing their weapons.

Crooms then slowly backed out of the driveway, facing the officers. It is at this point in the video where

the audio recording begins, as the officers shouted commands to get out of the vehicle. Crooms attempted to drive around the officers on their left, up the sidewalk and across the lawn of the opposite house. As the car drove past deputy Santiago-Miranda and out of the dashboard camera's frame, the deputy fired his gun into the windshield and driver's side of the vehicle.

In a statement to the media, Brevard County Sheriff Wayne Ivey claimed that, "You can actually see the tires of the vehicle turn sharply as the car accelerates towards Deputy Santiago-Miranda who is now in immediate danger of being struck by the vehicle," and that the deputy was "forced to fire his service weapon in attempt to stop the deadly threat of the car from crashing into him."

The video, in fact, shows the opposite. The car carrying the teenagers was stopped, and then Crooms attempted to flee after the deputies approached with guns drawn. The deputy who fired the fatal shots does not appear to be in danger of being struck by the vehicle.

The footage from the other police vehicle's dashcam has not been released. The Sheriff's Department has also not explained the missing audio portion of the footage or provided the remaining video recording from the clip that was released.

The three passengers, all African American youth, likely feared for their lives, given the fact that young black men consistently make up a disproportionate share of those killed by the police every year.

Cynthia Byrd Green, the aunt of 18-year-old Pierce, told local media her nephew had been picked up by his friends around 10:30 a.m., shortly before the shooting occurred. She stated that the police vehicle pulled up behind the car as soon as it turned the corner, and she witnessed the shooting.

“‘Get out of the fuckin car’, I said no, don’t shoot them. Please don’t shoot them. My baby is in that car. He hadn’t even been in there two minutes. Not even a good hot minute.”

The families of the slain teenagers are being represented by civil rights attorney Benjamin Crump, who has also represented the families of Breonna Taylor, who was slain by Louisville police last March, and George Floyd, whose death at the hands of Minneapolis police last May sparked global protests.

In a statement released Wednesday Crump said, “After reviewing the limited footage released by Brevard County Sheriff’s Office, it is painfully troubling to us that this teen driver and the teen backseat passenger were terrified and drove around deputies who approached the vehicle with guns drawn. Believe your own eyes. The video shows the deputy was still shooting as the car cleared him and posed no threat.

“Claiming that this deputy discharged 10 shots to get himself out of harm’s way is a clear attempt to justify the killing of these teens. If anything, the deputy appears to have moved closer to the vehicle to get a better shot. The video shows that the deputy continued to fire shots into the side of the vehicle as it was passing him, after he was out of harm’s way. This disturbing incident, which cost the lives of two Black teens, again documents the dangers of driving or even riding while Black—since the deputy also shot into the backseat, killing a passenger.”

According to a database maintained by the *Washington Post*, more than 850 people—of every race, ethnicity and gender—have been shot and killed by police in the US so far this year, placing deaths on track to once again hit 1,000 by year’s end.



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