

Video shows Modesto, California police officer gunned down unarmed man with hands up

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Recently released body camera video shows the shooting and killing of Trevor Seever, 29, by Modesto, California, police officer Joseph Lamantia at the end of December. The final shots were fired while Seever had his hands raised in surrender. He was unarmed.

Both the officer and victim were white.

On December 29, Allison Seever, the victim's sister, called 911 to report that her brother had purchased a gun and sent a threatening text to their mother. She said, "He's walking over here," and asked the Modesto Police Department to send someone "just to watch what happens to us."

The video shows that Lamantia jumped out of his squad car, rounded the corner of a building and saw Seever standing outside the Church of the Brethren. There was no one nearby and no weapon visible. Without identifying himself as an officer, Lamantia yelled, "Get on the ground, get on the ground," and fired four shots from about 50 yards. It is not clear whether any of these shots hit Seever, but he dropped to the ground. That sequence took only five seconds.

Lamantia approached Seever, yelling "Show me your hands! Show me your hands! Put your hands up! Show me your hands! Put your hands up!" Seever put both his hands up, although he seemed to have problems doing so, perhaps because he was already wounded. About a second after the last command, while both of Seever's hands were up, Officer Lamantia fired three more rounds. Seever can be heard crying out in pain and yelling, "I don't have a weapon."

Almost three-and-a-half minutes passed before Seever received any first aid. Apparently, he was struck by two of the seven bullets Lamantia fired. Seever was transported to a hospital where he died. No weapon was

recovered.

Lamantia may well have had a motive to murder Seever. On December 8, a post appeared on Seever's Instagram account declaring that "a good cop is a dead cop" and "all I want for Christmas is another dead MPD officer." The MPD Officer Safety Bulletin included a picture of Seever and the vehicle he drove, along with information regarding his prior interactions with police. The bulletin was reissued at the time of the 911 call.

Seever's family insists that they called 911 so Seever could receive help. His mother, Darlene Ruiz, explained that Seever had explained to an MPD detective that a friend had used his phone to post the comments. Seever was never charged with any crime in relation to the Instagram posts.

Lamantia has an extraordinary record of violence. He was involved in a 2010 shooting that left Francisco Moran, 45, dead after it was reported to police that he was intoxicated and armed with a knife. No knife was found, but Moran was found to be carrying a spatula.

Lamantia was also involved in a June 2016 fatal shooting in nearby Turlock, California, of Omar Villagomez, 21, supposedly because he rammed an undercover police vehicle while trying to escape a drug bust.

In October 2016, Lamantia was involved in the fatal shooting of Kim Jackson, 53, who officers said charged them with knives. In another 2016 incident, Lamantia was involved in the arrest of a man subdued with beanbag guns and a Taser. The man died a few days later.

Just two months before, in October 2020, Lamantia was involved in the shooting of David Cummings Jr.,

27, who survived the incident.

Lamantia was not found to have acted improperly in any of the previous shootings.

Seever was the 994th person to be fatally shot by the police in 2020, according to a *Washington Post* database. At least six more were shot before New Year's Day, bringing the total to an even 1,000, a rate greater than one person being killed by the police every nine hours somewhere in the United States.



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