Family of woman killed by Arlington, Texas police in 2019 sue city, officer for wrongful death

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The family of Margarita "Maggie" Brooks filed a wrongful death lawsuit last Thursday seeking $1 million in damages and for medical and funeral costs against the city of Arlington, Texas. They are also suing former police officer Ravinder Singh, who killed 30-year-old Brooks on August 1, 2019 while ostensibly attempting to shoot her dog, which ran to him during a welfare check on the woman.

Brooks, who was homeless, was asleep in the grass when Singh approached her and shouted for her to restrain her dog, then preceded to recklessly fire three rounds at the approaching dog. Brooks can be heard exclaiming on bodycam footage after having been shot once in the chest, "Oh my God! Police shot me!" After shooting her, Singh ordered Brooks: "ma'am get a hold of your dog." She later died in the hospital.

The lawsuit states that "Ms. Brooks was lying peacefully in the grass and posed no threat" and that "Officer Singh disregarded the risk to Ms. Brooks and fired his gun repeatedly in the direction that he knew she was lying. Ms. Brooks was struck in the chest and died an agonizing death."

Singh resigned three months after the killing, in November 2019, after having been with the Arlington Police Department (APD) for seven years, effectively ending the internal investigation into his conduct by APD. A police spokesman told the *Dallas News* at the time of the resignation that Singh had been shifted to working on a non-public assignment before his resignation, showing APD was more than fine with keeping killers on their payroll, just as long as they did not cause image issues.

In stark contrast to the racialist narrative of "black and brown" people being the only targets of police, as is incessantly repeated by the pseudo-left and Democratic Party politicians, Brooks was white, while Singh is of South Asian descent.

In addition to the lawsuit, Singh is facing a charge of criminally negligent homicide, a state jail felony with a sentence of 180 days to two years in jail with a maximum fine of $10,000 if convicted. A state jail felony is the lowest level of felony in Texas, in the same classification as forgery of a check or credit card abuse. In contrast to this, aggravated assault against a public servant is a first-degree felony carrying a *minimum* five year sentence with a 99 year maximum sentence.

Brooks' father, Troy Brooks, an Arlington fire captain, stated at the time of Singh's indictment by a grand jury in September 2020 to a local Fox News affiliate, "It's a puppy. This is a grown man afraid of a puppy. Who is the paid professional in this encounter? Every child, every mailman, every runner, jogger, bicyclist has dealt with a dog running at them and no one ends up dead. Why do you go to deadly force immediately?"

Brooks' grandfather stated, "Rule number one, don't kill the citizens."

More likely than a slap on the wrist is no punishment at all, as only 1.7 percent of the killings by police have resulted in officers being charged with a crime between 2013 and 2020, which encompasses the Obama and Trump years, according to mappingpoliceviolence.org. Even fewer have been convicted.

Brooks' family is being represented by Lee Merritt, a civil rights attorney who has risen to prominence for representing predominantly black police violence victims, including serving as co-counsel to the family

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of George Floyd. Merritt is a Democrat currently running for Texas Attorney General.

Merritt's representation of Brooks' family comes at the same time that attorney Benjamin Crump and Democratic Party operative Al Sharpton have taken up the case of Hunter Brittain, a white 17-year-old who was killed by police in Arkansas during a traffic stop for trying to stop his truck from rolling away with an antifreeze container.

Crump and Sharpton are seeking to use Brittain's case to keep widespread opposition to police violence to the confines of the Democratic Party, the graveyard of social movements. The murder of George Floyd sparked mass multiracial and multiethnic protests across the US and internationally. An estimated 15 million to 26 million people demonstrated at some point in the US, making it one of the largest protest movements in the country's history.

Despite repeated waves of protest and ensuing promises of reform and accountability, over 1,000 people have been killed every year since 2013 by police. The current number of police killings, according to mappingpoliceviolence.org, is once again well on the way to this morbid toll with 564 victims so far this year.

According to its own 2019 Use of Force Annual Report, APD recorded 1,131 use-of-force incidents and three incidents of firearms being discharged at people. Three deadly force incidents were recorded in the same period, including Brooks' murder. While there were no police killings recorded in 2020, there were two incidents of firearms being discharged at people and 930 use-of-force incidents.

Three months after Brooks was killed, the Arlington Police Department was given an International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Leadership in Human and Civil Rights Award. The award was given to recognize the department's eight-hour training courses on hate crimes.

The IACP is backed by billion-dollar foundations and the state, with supporters including billionaire and former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, the Joyce Family Foundation, the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, Michael Jordan, the Motorola Foundation, Target Corporation, the United States Department of Justice, the United States Department of State, and the United States Department of Transportation.

That the award was given in the wake of Brooks' killing is a tacit endorsement of the brutalization and killing of poor and working class people.

The struggle to end racism and to end police violence is bound up with the fight for socialism. Police violence cannot be explained solely as a racial phenomenon. The class nature of police violence is summed up by Leon Trotsky: "The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state is a bourgeois cop, not a worker," i.e., an enforcer of the state, a protector of bourgeois rule and law.

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