

Robert Huber of Canton, Ohio police department identified as officer who killed James Williams

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Anger is building in Canton, Ohio more than two weeks after police officer Robert Huber of the Canton Police Department shot and killed 46-year-old James Williams in his fenced-in backyard as Williams was ringing in the New Year with celebratory gunfire with his family.

Williams was shot multiple times by Huber roughly six minutes into the New Year. In police body camera footage released last week, it is obvious that James posed no threat to the officer, and that Huber did nothing to make his presence known prior to shooting and killing James.

While police and local media have refused to name the killer cop, this reporter was able to cross-reference publicly available police reports and body camera footage released by the police to confirm the killer cop's identity using his vehicle tag, K9-60.

In discovering the officer's identity, it has also come to light that this latest tragic and criminal incident is not the first time Huber has been accused of "excessive force." Huber was one of seven officers named in a 2018 lawsuit filed by Stephen Richburg II. While the lawsuit was dismissed, in it, Richburg claimed that despite following officers' orders he was "met by a barrage of overreacting officers," among them Huber, sending him to the hospital.

Such brutality is common across police departments in the US and internationally. In addition to fostering racist and other backwards attitudes, police are trained to view the working class as the "enemy" and are given enormous leeway by the judicial system to enforce bourgeois class rule in the most violent ways with virtually no fear of repercussions.

While the police have refused to name the killer cop, Ohio state attorney general David Yost has sought to blame the latest victim of wanton police murder as "stupid" for doing something, according to Williams

family lawyer, Joseph M. Gourrier, that was a "perfectly legal" activity in his own backyard.

As part of the ongoing attempted cover-up, a so-called "independent" investigation into James' killing has been launched by the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI). Exemplifying the futility of workers appealing to the state for redress or reform, the BCI reports to attorney general Yost, the same person that slandered Williams as "stupid" less than five days after he was murdered.

Williams, a devoted husband to Marquette Williams for the last 14 years, was set to turn 47 on January 13. Instead, the stay-at-home father to four daughters and two stepdaughters was laid to rest that day in Detroit, Michigan. In a recent conversation with the *World Socialist Web Site*, Marquette described James as a "wonderful, husband, father, friend and brother."

"He didn't have to know you to help you," said Williams. While a disability prevented James from working, Marquette knew their children were well taken care of while she was at work. "He loved to cook, loved taking care of the kids."

Williams, in a "typical New Year's tradition," recounted Marquette, would go outside and shoot his rifle into the air. "It was tradition; about three of our neighbors were out shooting as well."

"It was at about 8 o'clock that night it started in our neighborhood. None of our neighbors had a problem, no one came up to us."

The routine nature of celebratory gunfire on holidays such as New Year's and the Fourth of July was even noted by Canton Police Chief Jack Angelo, who admitted after the shooting to local press that emergency calls reporting celebratory gunfire are most frequent during New Year's Eve and the Fourth of July.

In fact, this reporter was able to find a Canton police

incident report for “firing/discharging” a weapon within city limits the same day Williams was shot and killed by Huber. Despite the “reporting party” stating that the “suspect did repeatedly discharge a shotgun within city limits as celebratory fire for New Years,” that person was not killed, nor was a citation issued.

Questioning why the police never made their presence known before shooting James, Marquette confirmed that Huber drove up to their house without his sirens or lights flashing. In fact, Marquette said, “he didn’t even have his headlights turned on.”

Reviewing the body camera footage, it is clear that Huber had multiple chances to make himself known to James, prior to shooting him. “There were three different instances where the cop could have deescalated the situation or made himself known,” said Marquette.

“First he didn’t flash his lights or use his siren. Then he was on our porch and admitted on camera to seeing James put down the gun, yet he never knocked on our door. Finally, before he shot James, he never said a word, only announcing himself afterwards.”

While local media, such as the *Canton Repository*, have attempted to blame James for his own death, citing the alleged criminality of shooting a legally owned firearm into the air within city limits, Gourrier, the Williams family lawyer, speaking to the WSWs, pointed out that under the Ohio Revised Code 2923.162(B), Williams was not violating any laws.

“We feel like the *Canton Repository*, they are telling the city’s side of the story, in order to escape liability,” Gourrier explained to the WSWs. He explained that in the last two decades, laws have been passed on the state level which undercut “local governments’ ability to regulate the use of firearms.” According to Gourrier, this means that under the current codes, Williams, who “was on his own property, was not violating any laws.”

In any case, Gourrier correctly observed, “the officer used excessive force; even if Williams was violating a city ordinance, it is a misdemeanor, not a death sentence.”

Marquette recounted the plethora of indignities the Williams family has suffered at the indifferent hands of the Canton Police Department since the beginning of the year.

Immediately after Huber shot James, Marquette recounted how police did nothing to ensure his survival, refusing to offer medical aid.

“No, they did not offer aid, they did not try and help James after they shot him.” Instead, James waited for

some ten minutes for an ambulance to arrive while Marquette was told she could not ride with him to the hospital because she had to “answer questions” from the police.

“I was not allowed to get in the ambulance and go with James to the hospital. They had me stand for over an hour, closer to two... finally I went to hospital, by that time James was already dead.”

“At 5:30 a.m. I was still speaking with investigators,” recounted Marquette.

The family has devised a ten-point plan of action. Among the items, they are calling for the release of all the body camera, audio and telephone recordings; that the police officer responsible for killing James to be fired; and that he be charged with murder. Since the killing of Williams, his family, friends and community members have held rallies every Saturday outside the Canton Police Department headquarters, with plans for further demonstrations.

Marquette drew attention to the racist attitudes that permeate police departments throughout the US: “Police officers tend to view African-Americans as criminals, tend to approach them, that they are all dangerous, ‘I fear for my life.’ These cops are always afraid. If you are afraid of every person you meet, every black person you meet, you need to get a different job.”

Speaking on the global character of police violence, including worldwide protests following the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery in 2020, Marquette agreed that a mass movement is necessary and that there should be “solidarity for all victims” of police violence.

“This is a bigger problem than just racist cops; black cops can be racist as well,” noted Marquette.

All those who wish to support the Williams’ family GoFundMe are encouraged to do so here. Those who want to fight to build a mass movement of workers, students and youth against the capitalist system, the source of unending police violence, should join the Socialist Equality Party.



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