Columbus, Ohio, cop fatally shot Donovan Lewis as he was sitting up in bed

Kevin Reed
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Early Tuesday morning, 20-year-old Donovan Lewis was shot in his apartment bedroom by a Columbus, Ohio police officer who was attempting to serve the 20-year-old with a warrant. Lewis died of his wounds less than one hour later at nearby OhioHealth Grant Medical Center.

According to Columbus Division of Police (CDP) and city officials, a group of officers including a K-9 unit arrived at an apartment on Sullivan Avenue in the Columbus neighborhood of Hilltop at 2:30 a.m. to serve several "active warrants" against Lewis.

As is clear from the police bodycam video that was released later in the morning by city officials, the young African-American man was awakened by officers and raised his right hand as he was sitting up in his bed in the dark while CDP K-9 Officer Ricky Anderson shot him once.

The police and local news media have been quick to maintain that Lewis "appeared to raise a hand with something in it." However, he was unarmed, and CDP Chief Elaine Bryant said at a media briefing later on Tuesday morning, "There was, like, a vape pen that was found on the bed right next to him."

The city government was quick to call the press conference and release bodycam footage to curtail an angry response by the public to yet another Columbus police shooting. Along with Chief Bryant, Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther addressed the press, and both said that citizens needed to allow an official investigation into the shooting to be completed.

Chief Bryant, who is African-American, feigned sympathy for Lewis's family and called on city residents to "trust the process," and "know you have a leadership team in place to be transparent and do the right thing."

The Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation is in charge of the investigation based on a standing agreement between the agencies when there is a police officer involved in a shooting. Anderson, a 30-year CDP veteran, has been placed on leave pending an investigation.

The released video shows two officers knocking on the door on the third floor of an apartment building on the 3200 block of Sullivan Avenue with their guns drawn. They knock for nearly ten minutes yelling, "Open the door!" before one man, who came to the door, and another, who stood inside the door, were taken into police custody. When police asked the men if anyone else was inside, they did not respond.

The police then yelled that they were releasing a K-9 dog to search the apartment. The video shows the dog move through the kitchen and then start barking at a back bedroom door. All three officers are seen entering the apartment with their guns drawn.

Officer Anderson calls the K-9 over, holsters his gun and holds the dog by the collar with his left hand. From outside the bedroom door, he yells, "We're gonna send the dog in," then opens the door to the bedroom with his right and within a second redraws his weapon with the same hand and shoots.

One of the officers then yells, "Hands" as Lewis can be seen rolling around on the bed in agony. He then tells Lewis to "crawl out here," but he remains in the bed. The officers enter the bedroom and repeatedly tell Lewis to put his hands behind his back. One of the officers begins pulling Lewis's arms behind his back to cuff him as the young man lets out a moan. The cop yells, "Put your hands behind your back now," followed by "stop resisting."

The bodycam video shows Lewis being carried from the apartment with his hands cuffed behind his back. The officers then render medical attention including application of a trauma bandage and CPR.

The killing of Donovan Lewis is the third police shooting in the past eight days by the CDP. The other two instances, which were not fatal, took place on Monday,

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August 22 and Saturday, August 27. The first of these was in the Hilltop neighborhood and involved an officer discharging his weapon during “some sort of altercation” with several armed residents, according to a CDP sergeant. No one was injured.

The second took place on the Columbus Near East Side when a CDP officer shot a 17-year-old during a traffic stop. The police claimed the officer fired because two men, including the teen, exited their vehicle “displaying firearms.”

The police brutality and violence in the Hilltop neighborhood, a 12.5 square mile section on the west side of Columbus, is rooted in the poverty and economic devastation in the area. Like many cities in the industrial Midwest, Columbus has been ravaged by decades of plant closings and deindustrialization.

In 2007, General Motors shut down its Delphi parts plant, which once employed over 5,000 workers. The Hilltop neighborhood, formerly the home of many workers at the GM plant and a shuttered Westinghouse refrigerator plant, is now one of the poorest in the city.

Also, like most major US cities, Columbus has been run by the Democratic Party for more than two decades, including four terms under the administration of Michael B. Coleman, the first African-American mayor of the city, from 2000 to 2016. Economic devastation and police violence have continued to impact black and white residents in working class neighborhoods throughout the city while Democrats have been in office.

In a speech delivered on Tuesday in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, President Joe Biden unveiled his so-called “Safer America Plan,” in which he ignored the epidemic of police violence in America and promised to increase funding for police departments across the country. Biden said that his plan is a “simple solution” aimed at reducing “gun violence.” However, he never uttered the words “police shootings” during his long, rambling remarks, even though the number of fatal police shootings in 2022 is on pace to exceed 1,000.

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