

Notes on police violence

Texas jury acquits police officer who fatally shot unarmed man

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Shaun Lucas, a former Texas police officer, was acquitted Thursday of murder charges in the shooting death of 31-year old Jonathan Price on October 3, 2020.

Lucas, then 24-years old and with less than six months of experience, responded to a call about a possible fight at a gas station in Wolfe City, Texas. After attempting to detain Price, Lucas used his taser on him before firing his service weapon four times.

According to Lt. Lonny Haschel of the Texas Department of Public Safety, Price, who was African American, was leaving the gas station when a “pushing match” began between him another person. The confrontation lasted for only five seconds before then-officer Lucas, who is white, arrived at the scene. Price reportedly attempted to shake Lucas’ hands.

Lucas claimed he believed Price to be drunk and attempted to detain him. Price “resisted in a non-threatening posture” and attempted to walk away but Lucas pursued, grabbing Price’s arm before escalating to the use of his taser and gun.

Lucas’ use of deadly force resulted in his arrest two days after the incident and he was fired on October 8, 2020 for his “egregious violation” of departmental policies. Despite this, and what Price family attorney Lee Merritt called evidence “overwhelmingly in favor of guilty,” the all white jury found Lucas not guilty.

Merritt continued that “Every law enforcement professional that reviewed the facts concluded Lucas’ use of force was unjustified. The jury’s verdict goes against the weight of the evidence and leaves black Texans exposed to state sanctioned violence.”

He further attributed the acquittal to an “inherent bias” towards law enforcement.

Meanwhile, in Philadelphia a white officer was convicted of manslaughter for killing an African American man despite a push by prosecutors for a ruling of third degree murder.

Officer Eric Ruch fatally shot 25-year old Dennis Plowden just six seconds after exiting his vehicle. Ruch was one of several officers who had pursued Plowden in a high-speed chase until he crashed his car. Plowden then sat on the side walk with his left hand in the air and his right hand concealed at his side. Ruch claimed he feared for his life and that Plowden had a weapon, which later turned out to be heroin.

While other officers took cover and held their fire, Ruch’s quick trigger finger sent a bullet through Plowden’s raised hand and into his head. He was fired from the police force ten months later for his actions.

Plowden’s wife, Tonia Bond, won a \$1.2 million wrongful death settlement from city.

The manslaughter charge could carry a sentence of up to twenty years in prison. Ruch’s sentencing is set for November 17.

Significantly, the prosecution was barred from presenting evidence of ten years of complaints of misconduct against Ruch because he had mostly been cleared of wrongdoing by internal affairs.

This past week police officers in Phoenix, Arizona, killed a man for throwing stones.

According to police statements, officers were leaving the scene of an unrelated incident when Ali Osman began throwing rocks at police vehicles. The officers left without interaction with Osman, but returned to the scene later that evening where Osman remained. He reportedly threw one rock at the officers as they exited their vehicle. As he prepared to throw another he was

shot four times.

Ron Dalawtzai, who witnessed the shooting, told Fox10 Phoenix, “Heart started racing. I was worried about the guy that was shot because we had just seen him. He looked like a normal guy, wasn't doing anything crazy, just had some rock, and was throwing them, and they had a shotgun pointed at him, had weapons pulled on him, and he had no weapons that I could see.”

No officers were harmed by Osman before he was killed.

In another act of police brutality, officers in northeast Colorado left a detained woman in a police cruiser on an active train track, which was then hit by a passing train on September 17. Recently released body camera footage shows that the officers left Yareni Rios-Gonzalez, 20, in the police vehicle as they discussed whether she had thrown something out of her car before the traffic stop. The sound of the train horn is audible in the footage but officers only respond to the train seconds before it hits the vehicle. Rios-Gonzalez survived the crash with multiple injuries.

While the video does not show officers actively discussing parking the vehicle on the train tracks, it is difficult to believe that all three officers were oblivious to both the tracks and the danger of an oncoming train. No rational person would park a vehicle on train tracks, let alone leave a person in a vehicle on such tracks. It is also questionable as to how the officers failed to notice an oncoming train despite the horn being audible in the body cam footage for an extended time.

As of this writing no charges have been filed against the officers.

All of these events demonstrate the complete disregard for human life that exists within the American police. For them, the working class are not people but a collection of criminal threats that must be met with force. This is not the result of poor training, but of the degradation of American capitalism and turn towards police state measures.

Congressional Democrats have turned their rejection of calls to “defund the police” which emerged out of the mass protests triggered by the murder of George Floyd in 2020 into efforts to significantly expand police funding. This includes DSA politicians like Representative Ilhan Omar, who worked to promote a series of police funding bills this week. Four bills

offering millions of dollars to local police departments and up to \$250 million for mental health resources and training were passed by the Democrats last week.

This latest round of funding, in a country where tens of billions of dollars are spent on the police every year, will not resolve the core issue causing police violence. The police are an instrument of the state, created to enforce private property rights and suppress the working class. No amount of money put into additional training will change this fundamental fact.

Already this year the police have shot and killed at least 770 people according to the *Washington Post*. The number of deaths at the hands of the police is on track to exceed 1,000, on par with every year for the past decade.



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