

Video shows California police kill double amputee in hail of gunfire

Jacob Crosse
2 February 2023

There is mounting outrage in southern California over a particularly gruesome act of police violence, the killing of a double amputee on January 26 in the Los Angeles suburb of Huntington Park. At least two police officers with the Huntington Park police department shot and killed 36-year-old Anthony Lowe Jr., an African-American man, after he left his wheelchair and hobbled away on the stumps of his legs.

Video shared on social media showing the moments leading up to the killing have been viewed over 4.3 million times as of this writing. The images of the handicapped man fleeing police, only to be murdered, were taken by bystanders. The police videos, if they exist, have not been made public.

At no point in the footage is Lowe observed to be a threat to police. In the video he was shown attempting to flee from officers on the nubs of his legs when the cops shot and killed him in a hail of gunfire.

The heinous shooting is one of over 81 police-involved killings in the United States that occurred in January 2023, according to media reports and a police killings tracker maintained by the *Washington Post*.

Huntington Park, where the shooting occurred, is a densely populated working class community located in Los Angeles County. According to US Census figures, over 97 percent of the residents of the community identify as Hispanic. The median household income in Huntington Park is just over \$51,000, while the poverty rate stands at 19.9 percent, nearly double the 11.6 percent national average.

The video begins with Lowe Jr. in a wheelchair holding a large knife as two cops approach him. As the cops come nearer, Lowe hops down from the wheelchair with the knife in his hand and attempts to hobble away. At least two police officers are shown calmly walking after Lowe, first with their tasers drawn, before quickly switching to their pistols.

As Lowe continues to move up the sidewalk on the nubs of his legs, a third cop arrives on the scene, quickly exits his police cruiser, and shortly thereafter several shots ring out. While the video is captured from a distance, it does not appear at any point during the incident that Lowe gestured towards the police with the knife, swung it in their direction, or attempted to hurl the blade at them.

However, in a lying police statement released over 11 hours later, the

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Information Bureau claimed that Huntington Park police were forced to shoot the "suspect" because he had repeatedly "attempted to throw the butcher knife."

The police claim that prior to the shooting, at around 3:40 p.m., they received a call from a person who said he had been stabbed by a "black male in a wheelchair." The police statement asserts that cops made contact with the alleged stabbing victim, who, they say, is still in the hospital. The police claim that the injured person directed them to the location where the alleged stabbing occurred, at which point police made contact with Lowe.

Police claim that when they attempted to detain Lowe he "threatened them by attempting to throw the knife at the officers," prompting the police to deploy a taser against Lowe "at least twice." Despite sending 50,000 volts through the man, the taser was, according to the police statement, "ineffective," and the "suspect attempted to throw the butcher knife at the officers again," prompting the police to execute him.

The release of the eyewitness video on Saturday, which refuted lying police claims that Lowe was a threat to the police or attempted to "throw" the knife at them, provoked mass outrage on social media and from the members of Lowe's family.

On January 30, community members, family and friends of Lowe held a protest and press conference outside the Huntington Park Police Department, demanding the officers involved in the shooting be charged with murder and that security camera footage from local businesses seized by the police in the investigation be publicly released.

Speaking outside the police station Monday, Dorothy Lowe, Anthony's mother, said the family wanted "the truth" and "justice for my son."

"My son was murdered," the grieving mother said. Dorothy explained that her son was not homeless and that he had been staying with her for the past several months after his legs were amputated following a separate encounter with police in Texas last year. She said that while her son lived in South Central Los Angeles, he loved visiting Huntington Park because he had many Latino friends.

Ellakenyada Gorum, Lowe's cousin, passionately questioned police

claims that they “feared for their life” and therefore had no choice but to shoot Lowe multiple times. “You guys knew your lives wasn’t in danger,” she said. “He’s running on his limbs. How cold-hearted could they be?”

Speaking on Monday, Yatoya Toy, Lowe’s sister, said Anthony was “a man, a father, a son and a brother, who was gunned down by the police.”

Yatoya confirmed that her brother’s legs had been amputated last year and that losing his mobility had been psychologically traumatizing for Anthony. The family believes that he was suffering a mental health crisis at the time of the shooting.

In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, Toy recalled that the Lowe family would gather every Sunday at their mother’s house to watch football games together.

“This is the first [Sunday] where he ain’t watching the game with us. It’s what he loves to do,” Toy told the newspaper. Reflecting on her brother, she said, “He’s the life of the family. He brings happiness, joy; he loves to dance. He’s very respectable, he loves his mother. He’s the favorite uncle. The kids all love him.”

While the Huntington Park Police do not use body-worn cameras, the family of Lowe told reporters on Monday that they know local businesses’ security cameras captured the shooting and that police have already seized the footage. The family of Lowe assert that the footage will substantiate their claims that Lowe was shot in the back.

Huntington Park police Lieutenant Hugo Reynaga confirmed to the newspaper that the Huntington Park police do not wear body cameras and that the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department had seized security video from local businesses. However, Reynaga said, the police had no intention of releasing the footage.

Reynaga claimed that two police officers fired “around 10 times” at Lowe. He also confirmed that the police involved in the killing of the crippled man would be on paid administrative leave for “a few days” before “returning to duty,” where they will be assigned “administrative” tasks.

Reynaga said that there are no pending charges against the police who killed Lowe. On Wednesday, CNN reported that the California Attorney General’s office was not investigating the police killing “at this point in time.”

The killing of Lowe, an African-American man, has been picked up by major news outlets, primarily because it can be used to support the racist narrative of police violence advanced by the Democratic Party. The tragedy was initially overshadowed in the media by the national publicity surrounding the beating death of Tyre Nichols in Memphis, Tennessee. Video of that death was released the day after Lowe was murdered.

The selective and racially motivated presentation of police killings is proven by the media silence on the police killing of Jackson Lieber, a high school valedictorian and 21-year-old unarmed white college student, on January 18 in Texas. This has failed to elicit a mention on CNN, or in the pages of the *New York Times* or *Washington Post*.

The deliberate censorship of the deaths of white workers and youth at the hands and gun-barrels of the police is part of the ruling class strategy of dividing the working class to cover up the fact that the police target workers and youth of all races, with whites making up the largest number of the over 1,100 police killings every year.

While racism is a factor in some police killings, when economic and social demographics are taken into account the racial disparities in such killings, endlessly harped on in the media, disappear. Poor white men are killed by police at the same rate as poor black men, but in different areas: rural counties rather than urban centers.

In the case of Lieber, according to police, after crashing his vehicle near a home in Liberty Hill, outside Austin, Texas, on January 18, the young man went to a nearby house. The purposely vague police statement claims that Lieber’s crash prompted a trespassing call. Police claim that when Liberty Hill police officer Esteban Gomez-Sanchez arrived at the scene of accident, he got into an “altercation” with Lieber and shot him dead.

In interviews with Fox 7 in Austin, the attorney for the Lieber family, Robert Ranco, said the police have refused to answer questions about the shooting more than two weeks after the incident.

Speaking of Lieber’s family, Ranco added, “They want to know what happened to their son, they want to know why this happened to their son, they want to know what happened at the scene, they want to know why it took more than seven hours to be notified after the police officer killed their son, they want to know where their son’s cell phone is because it’s nowhere to be found.”

The Texas Rangers (state police) are currently “investigating” the shooting and, according to Ranco, have already told the family that they may not see pictures or videos of the incident “for months.”

At Lieber’s funeral service, held on January 26, the same day Lowe was gunned down by Huntington Park cops, Lieber’s sister recalled that her brother “could make a friend out of everyone, he truly believed that the human family is your family.”



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact