

Notes on police violence

California cop shoots and kills autistic teen; Ohio grandma dead after brief stint in jail; FBI raids California prison dubbed “the rape club”

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29 March 2024

Every day in the United States, a police officer, or a jailer, kills or abuses someone. Less than four months into the year, *MappingPoliceViolence.us*, an organization that has tracked police killings for over a decade, reported that 256 people have already been killed in the US in 2024.

MPV noted this is a “similar rate” to 2023, in which MPV tracked 1,247 people killed by police, the most ever since the organization began recording.

California cop shoots and kills 15-year-old autistic teenager

One of the 256 victims so far this year was Ryan Gainer, a 15-year-old African-American teenager who was diagnosed as autistic as a toddler. Ryan lived with his family in San Bernardino, California.

On March 9, a member of the Gainer family called for police assistance because Ryan was experiencing a mental health episode. According to heavily edited audio and video footage released by the police, the family member was concerned that Gainer was breaking things in the house and going to “run away.” Prior to the arrival of San Bernardino sheriff deputies Wyatt Eisenbrey and Brandon Clancy, Gainer’s cousin, who was present at the scene, called the police again to notify them that the situation was under control. Nonetheless, within seconds of arriving on the scene, one of the deputies, gun drawn, went to the front door of the residence where they were confronted by Gainer who was approaching the cop with a garden hoe.

The cop yelled, “Hey, get back. Get back. You’re going to get shot,” and retreating away from the front door of the residence with his gun still in hand. As the one cop was retreating, body camera footage from the second officer who arrived on scene showed him calmly, and silently, raise his pistol and begin shooting the teenager, striking him multiple times. After being shot Gainer immediately collapses on the ground. As Gainer’s family members scream in agony, police repeatedly yelled at them to “Get back!” even as

Ryan’s breath became increasingly labored. One member of the Gainer family is heard asking police, “Why didn’t you use a taser?” Ryan was declared dead later that day.

In a March 13 press conference held four days after the shooting, San Bernardino County Sheriff Shannon Dicus featured heavily edited and obscured body camera and audio footage to defend the deputies’ homicidal actions. Dicus claimed, “The use of a taser in this situation, with the amount of time, or the use of pepper spray would not have been something we would have been able to react to quick enough.”

However, DeWitt Lacy, the lawyer for the bereaved family, disclosed that police had previously responded to five similar incidents involving Ryan Gainer since January. In all five of these encounters Gainer was taken to receive mental health treatment either by police or by paramedics without any use of lethal force.

“The deputy immediately drew his weapon at the teen,” Lacy said. “The deputy presented as a threat and definitely escalated (the) situation.”

“Ryan was not a demon or monster that could run through bullets or overpower two deputies with hulkish strength, he was a 15-year-old autistic teen having a bad day.” In an interview with the *Guardian*, Rachel, Ryan’s older sister, remembered her brother as a “funny, talented, goofy kid—just a beautiful soul. He saw the good in everyone.” “We want accountability,” she added.

Ohio grandma dead after being denied oxygen while jailed over unfinished “community service”

While over 1,000 people are killed every year in the US by police, many hundreds more die every year due to conditions imposed on them while in police custody. These deaths are difficult to track and are rarely reported on in any detail.

On the same day of Gainer’s death, 61-year-old Tangi Johnson of Canton, Ohio, was arrested by Canton police over 10 hours of unfinished “community service” stemming from a misdemeanor 2018 traffic stop over a broken headlight. While in custody at the Stark County Jail, Johnson was denied medical attention, leading to her death two weeks later. Johnson’s final weeks were spent in a hospital bed in vegetative state after her condition rapidly deteriorated while in police custody.

Johnson had completed some of the “community service” imposed

on her by the courts, but due to her health conditions was unable to perform manual labor and complete the sentence. According to Canton police, on March 9 when they were responding to a call for a domestic disturbance, Johnson, who was not involved in the incident, notified the cops that she had a warrant for her arrest due to the unfinished community service.

For years, local police had hounded the grandma over her “failure” to complete her sentence, arresting her five times for not completing the remaining 10 hours. “I have a warrant for 10 hours of community service,” Johnson volunteered to Canton police the morning of March 9. “You wanna take me to jail for 10 hours of community service, then do it.”

Police proceeded to arrest and then berate the grandmother, in what would end up being the last day she was conscious. “You don’t wanna go to jail, probably should’ve just gone to your community service, sounds like a you problem,” the arresting officer scolded Johnson. “I’m sick,” Johnson responded. “I have COPD and I have a bad heart.”

Tina Frideman, Johnson’s sister, told Cleveland19 News her sister was her “best friend” and that she had been on oxygen for the last four years. “Tangi was in and out of the hospital all the time,” Friedman said. “She was on oxygen 70 percent of the day.” Johnson’s son, Justin Johnson, told the outlet his mother would have quickly alerted police to her condition. “She’s very vocal about this,” he said.

The TV station reported that in their analysis of “hours of body camera and jail surveillance” footage provided by the Stark County Sheriff’s Office, which operates the jail, “there are some important parts missing.” While police contend Johnson did not alert them to her medical needs for several hours, as body camera from the arrest shows, Johnson immediately told police she had COPD, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, an inflammatory lung disease that restricts airflow from the lungs.

19 Investigates was unable to locate any footage to corroborate police accounts of when Johnson told them she need oxygen or that she was having difficulty breathing.

According to the footage reviewed by the station, after hours of complaining of difficulty breathing at about 5:15 p.m., about 12 hours after Johnson was arrested, she was brought to the jail clinic for breathing treatment. At 5:20 p.m. Johnson’s condition rapidly deteriorated, forcing nurses to begin CPR for 14 minutes.

On footage reviewed by 19 Investigates, one of the paramedics is heard demanding emergency medical services. “Where the f**k’s Canton at?” Another person is heard asking, “Are they here?” “No,” a voice replied. “Well they need to step it up!,” the paramedic yelled. Johnson was taken by ambulance to the local hospital from the Stark County Jail at about 5:43 p.m. While she was in the hospital, in a vegetative state, Canton police served the grandmother another warrant for her arrest for failing to appear in court. On March 22, she passed away.

FBI agents raid California prison after over 60 lawsuits alleging widespread sexual abuse filed

On March 11, FBI agents raided the Dublin Federal Correctional Institution in Dublin, California, amidst an ongoing investigation of widespread sexual abuse against prison inmates perpetrated by prison staff and personnel. The extensive investigation includes over 63 different lawsuits involving allegations of various acts of sexual abuse against women inmates dating as far back as 2014.

The charges range from forcible rapes, coerced sexual activity, inappropriate sexual touching, sexual harassment, voyeurism,

drugging, targeted abuse against immigrant inmates and retaliation against those who reported, or were suspected of reporting, on such abuse.

According to the class action lawsuits filed by advocacy groups on behalf of a dozen inmates who were formerly incarcerated at the Dublin Federal Correctional Institute:

Women described being held down by two officers while being forcibly raped by a third; waking to find an officer on top of them removing their clothes; being forced to masturbate, perform strip shows or commit sex acts on other incarcerated people while officers watched; or being threatened with solitary confinement, loss of “good time” (time off their sentence for completion of programs) or harm to their families if they did not submit to sexual activity.

The rampant sexual abuse at the Dublin facility has infamously earned it the nickname, “the rape club,” by inmates and staff alike.

Despite the warden and other employees being found guilty of sexually abusing inmates in 2022, several employees named in the lawsuits continue to be employed at the facility. As of today, the Federal Bureau of Prisons has refused to state who has been placed on administrative leave pending investigation and who is still working on site. T

he inhumanity and disregard for human life exhibited by police forces in the US, and around the world is a common feature of capitalist society.

In the US, decades of pouring billions of dollars into police departments, prisons and jails have not made workers and their families any safer. Police violence and killings have only risen, the vast majority of victims among the working class, the poor, and those suffering from mental health crisis.

The truth is, the US government is not a neutral arbiter, floating above society blindly and fairly dispensing “justice.” The military, police, courts, jails and prisons exist to advance the interest of the ruling financial oligarchy. In order to protect the unearned wealth stolen from the working class, the financial oligarchy uses the police and their guns, fists and truncheons as a last line of defense, to suppress workers’ democratic rights and demands for equality. These institutions cannot be reformed, they must be abolished through a mass movement organized against the capitalist system, the source of inequality, war and fascism.



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