

Prosecutor seeks death penalty in case of Cincinnati father accused of killing deputy one day after police shot and killed his son

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On Thursday, a grand jury in Ohio's Hamilton County indicted Rodney Hinton Jr., a 38-year-old father, on all five charges related to the death of Hamilton County Sheriff's Deputy Larry Henderson. Hinton is accused of deliberately running down and killing Henderson with his vehicle. At the time of the incident on May 2, Henderson was performing traffic duties at the University of Cincinnati.

Hinton Jr. is alleged to have struck the Ohio deputy just hours after viewing body camera footage from the previous day, May 1, which showed his son, Ryan Hinton, being shot and killed by a Cincinnati police officer while fleeing. Deputy Henderson was not involved in that attack.

Hinton Jr. is facing five charges in connection with Henderson's death, including two counts of aggravated murder, which under Ohio law carry the possibility of the death penalty. He is also charged with two counts of felonious assault and one count of murder.

In an interview Thursday with WKRC, the Cincinnati CBS affiliate, Hamilton County Prosecutor Connie Pillich made clear the state is pursuing the death penalty against Hinton Jr.

"This case is absolutely one of the more tragic I have seen in my short tenure. The facts of this case meet the law as it is written in Ohio, that does include the death penalty. And that's why we are seeking it, apparently the grand jury agrees."

The *World Socialist Web Site* denounces the frenzied political campaign for the execution of Rodney Hinton, who is being denied bail. This grieving father should be granted bail and provided the medical and mental healthcare he needs.

While the state is moving might and main to prosecute Hinton Jr., the Cincinnati police officer who shot and killed his son has yet to be publicly identified—let alone charged with a crime—more than a week later.

Unlike the ongoing criminal proceedings against Hinton Jr., Pillich told WKRC the state has no timeline for

completing its investigation into the police killing of Ryan Hinton. This is despite video evidence released by police appearing to show that the 18-year-old posed no threat to police when he was shot multiple times in the side and back.

In the May 1 police body camera footage, the young man later identified as Hinton is seen running between two dumpsters and away from officers after exiting a vehicle in a parking lot near a wooded area. He briefly stumbles and is shot as he enters the woods. Just six seconds pass between the officers' initial interaction with Hinton and the moment they shoot and kill him.

Police claim they recovered two pistols from the scene—one inside a Kia that Hinton and three others were allegedly involved in stealing, and the other found outside in the wooded area, reportedly after falling from Hinton's grasp when he was shot by officers.

Justifying the shooting of a fleeing suspect, Cincinnati Police Chief Teresa A. Theetge stated during a May 2 press conference, "Let me be very direct. We cannot allow individuals to flee from officers with a loaded firearm aimed at them. When this happens, the outcome is almost always tragic."

In the blurry, edited footage released by police, it is unclear whether Hinton was even armed. When asked by a reporter at the press conference if there was any additional footage or evidence to corroborate the claim, Chief Theetge responded, "based on the officers' interviews, the officer who did discharge his firearm said that when the individual came out between the dumpsters he had the firearm in front of him. It was in like a bladed position and it was pointed at the officer. And he felt threatened for his life and that's why he discharged his firearm."

Theetge confirmed there was "no indication" that any of the firearms recovered had been fired. "But I would like to add a caveat," she said. "We do not expect the officers to wait until they are fired upon before they feel the necessity to fire."

After viewing the body camera footage on May 2, Hinton Jr.'s lawyers say he was distraught for several hours before crashing his vehicle into Henderson.

More than a week after one of her officers shot and killed Hinton, Theetge has refused to identify the officer, citing Ohio's Marsy's Law. Passed in 2017 as a constitutional amendment, the law was promoted as a set of protections for crime victims. Since its adoption, Ohio police departments have routinely claimed that officers who shoot civilians are "victims," allowing them to withhold the officers' identities.

"Technically under Marsy's Law, there's no provision that allows us to release it at all," Theetge told radio host Lincoln Ware in a Monday interview.

While not corroborated at this time, social media users have provided evidence that the policeman who killed Hinton is Cincinnati cop Cian McGrath.

In February 2023, the Cincinnati Police Department released findings from an internal investigation that accused Officer McGrath and several others of excessive force, improper search and discourtesy. The allegation that McGrath was "discourteous," during an incident in which he and other officers assaulted a man with a prosthetic eye while serving a search warrant, was sustained.

After arresting the man, who was staying in an apartment with his daughter and grandchildren, McGrath threatened the remaining family members: "We'll work on getting you put out on the street, alright? Next time, answer the door for the fucking police."

The report noted that, "Officer McGrath did not need to add to the trauma and stress of the situation by using profane language, especially in the presence of children who were already in tears over the incident."

So far this year, there have already been six officer-involved shootings in the greater-Cincinnati area.

The police shooting of young Ryan Hinton, followed by the killing of Deputy Henderson by Hinton's father, is a tragic situation—and a damning indictment of the entire capitalist system.

The police—an instrument of class rule—are virtually untouchable and unaccountable in capitalist America.

According to *Mapping Police Violence*, over the past decade more than 98 percent of officers involved in shootings have not been charged with a crime. Just this week, three officers involved in the brutal police murder of Tyre Nichols were found "not guilty" in a state trial, despite video evidence clearly showing them beating Nichols to death and refusing to provide aid for over 20 minutes.

While one can sympathize with Hinton Jr.'s desire for justice, vigilante violence will not resolve the crisis of unaccountable police brutality—a product of the capitalist system. His response personalizes a systemic problem that

can only be addressed through mass social struggle. The killing of Deputy Henderson does nothing to alleviate police violence, and now Hinton Jr. faces the possibility of a death sentence.

The fight against police violence requires a struggle against the capitalist system they defend, along with the parties and social forces that uphold it.

Under Democratic Mayors John Cranley (2013–2022) and Aftab Pureval (2022–present), the Cincinnati Police Department (CPD) has seen a steady increase in yearly budget allocations. In 2020, CPD received \$151.7 million—over 36 percent of the city's operating budget. Five years later, the current budget stands at \$183.5 million.

The defense and enrichment of the police in defense of capitalist property rights is bipartisan. On April 28 fascist President Donald Trump signed an executive order titled: "Strengthening and Unleashing America's Law Enforcement to Pursue Criminals and Protect Innocent Citizens."

The order called for state and local officials to "unleash high-impact police forces; protect and defend law enforcement officers wrongly accused and abused by State or local officials; and surge resources to officers in need."

As police budgets grow in Cincinnati, so does inequality. As of 2025, nearly a quarter of Cincinnati's residents live in poverty. In 2023, this included over 40 percent of the city's Black residents.

Furthermore, a 2023 study from the Cincinnati Futures Commission found the city had "the highest level of income inequality" among similarly sized cities. It found that households "in the top quintile earn 29 times more than those in the bottom quintile. Additionally, Cincinnati has the largest gap between the top 20% and bottom 20% of income earners..."

To fight back against this system requires more than individual actions. The fight to end inequality and police violence demands a turn to the working class and the building of a revolutionary movement based on socialist principles. Not individual revenge, but international revolution.



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