Reign of police violence continues with killing of unarmed teen in Cleveland

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Cleveland police shot and killed an unarmed eighteen-year-old on Thursday. Brandon Jones had allegedly broken into a grocery store and was carrying out a few boxes of cigarettes and some coins when police cornered him and eventually shot him.

According to police, two officers confronted Jones when he was walking out of the store just after 2:00 am on Thursday. A struggle ensued, and one officer shot Jones at close range. While the cops involved have not been identified, they are both African-American, as was Jones.

Jones's mother, Tanya Brown, exclaimed after the shooting: "If he's unarmed, and there's two of you all and one of him, why is my baby dead?"

Calthonia Pearl, Brandon Jones's grandmother, told a crowd at a vigil Saturday night, "I'm upset because my grandson was killed on the ground. They wrestled him to the ground. They could have tased him. We're paying them to kill us."

An unnamed witness who spoke to WKYC News, said, "They did not have to shoot that man. They probably could have tackled him or tasered him."

The Cleveland Police Department has reportedly opened an investigation into the shooting, and the officers involved have been placed on administrative leave.

Police in Cleveland have a long and bloody record of abuse and killings. It was in Cleveland that police shot 12-year-old Tamir Rice on November 22 of last year, as the boy was playing with a toy gun.

A report from the Justice Department last year found that Cleveland police frequently employ force "as punishment for the person's earlier verbal or physical resistance to an officer's command" that is "not based on a current threat posed by the person." The report, which found a litany of chronic abuses of power, has not led to any criminal charges.

The killing of Jones is part of an unending reign of police violence in the United States. Since Thursday alone, at least 19 people were shot and killed by police officers in the United States—a staggering rate of 4.75 per day, or 1,733 per year.

Among the victims:

• March 19, Shane Watkins, a 39-year-old working-class white man in Lawrence County, Alabama. Suffering from schizophrenia, Watkins called police to tell them that his mother was trying to kill him. He allegedly confronted police with a box cutter and refused to drop it. He was shot four times.

• March 19, Brandon Rapp, a 31-year-old working-class white man was killed at his house in Middleton, Idaho when police responded to a domestic disturbance call. Police saw Rapp come outside with a pistol and decided to release several rounds, killing him. There is no report of Rapp firing or making gestures to do so.

• March 19, Garland Lee Wingo I, a 64-year-old white man in Tallahassee, Florida was shot and killed by a police officer for walking in the street with a weapon. Police have not explained what caused them to fire on Wingo. Wingo never fired the gun.

• March 19, an unidentified person in Washington State was shot and killed after struggling with a US Border Patrol agent. The man, who the US Customs and Border Protection agency said was a suspected "illegal border crosser," was unarmed.

By all available measures, the number of people killed by police is increasing. The Bureau of Justice Statistics recently estimated that on average 928 people died at the hands of law enforcement between the years 2003 and 2011—about double what is officially reported by the FBI or the Justice Department.

In recent years the violence has escalated. In 2014

there were 1,101 deaths at the hands of police, according to killedbypolice.net. If the average of roughly 3.2 police killings per day since the beginning of this year keeps up, 2015 will set a record of 1,168 deaths. In this scenario, the years 2014-2015 would represent a 22 percent increase in the amount of police homicides per year compared to the previous average.

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