Moral Case Narrative Calaquian, Myke

Cruz, Raymond JNC

Death of Kelly Thomas

On July 5, 2011, the Fullerton Police Department received a call from the management of The Slidebar Kitchen, a restaurant in Fullerton, California. The caller mentioned that someone was vandalizing cars near the Fullerton Transportation Center, a rail and bus station. Upon arriving, the police officers encountered Kelly Thomas who was shirtless and disordered. According to the police officers, Thomas was very uncooperative when they attempted to search him, he resisted. “Now you see my fists?”, asks one of the police officers. “Yes”, answered Thomas, “What about them?”. The police officer responded, “They are getting ready to fuck you up.”

A total of six police officers assaulted Thomas, who was unarmed and had a history of mental illness. During the altercation, Thomas could be heard screaming “I can’t breathe” and “Dad! Dad!” The assault lasted for ten minutes, during which Thomas was combatively resisting. After the beating, Thomas was taken to a hospital and it was discovered that he had received extensive injuries to his face, head, and neck. One of the paramedics stated that Thomas was unconscious, lying in a pool of blood. Thomas was comatosed, and after five days, he was taken off life support and died.

Following Thomas’s death, protests broke out against the Fullerton Police Department and City Council. A public comment session was held with the City Council in which the victim’s father, Ron Thomas, and the victim’s stepmother spoke about the incident. The officers involved were arrested afterwards, and held on trial for murder charges. The officers, however, were found not guilty. The protests resumed following the acquittal. The officers were released from employment in the Fullerton Police Department soon afterwards.

In initial reports, there were claims that Kelly Thomas fought with the police officers and managed to seriously injure two of them. However, the Fullerton Police Department later claimed that none of the officers suffered any serious injuries. It was revealed that it was only Thomas that suffered multiple serious injuries and the story was soon picked up by several news outlets.

In this situation, the police officers did what was assigned to them, to stop the vandal that was Thomas. The police officers might have assaulted Thomas because some of his actions might have suggested that he was going to assault the police officers and in turn, provoked them to take action against him. However, the fact that they covered up the incident after it happened suggests that they knew that what they did was wrong and they were trying to escape from the consequences of their actions. In the video footage, it was seen that Thomas was begging for his life yet the officers continued to assault him which led to him having a lot of serious injuries and slipping into coma.

Sources:

* http://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/Timeline-The-Kelly-Thomas-Case-in-Fullerton-126851443.html
* http://blogs.ocweekly.com/navelgazing/2011/08/slidebar\_kelly\_thomas\_call\_police.php
* http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/07/27/police-beat-homeless-full\_n\_911419.html
* http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/officers-acquitted-in-death-of-kelly-thomas/2014/01/14/3e660b24-7d24-11e3-95c6-0a7aa80874bc\_story.html