

# Black Man Killed by Officer in Alabama Mall Shooting Was Not the Gunman, Police Now Say

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## ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

The police said the man, Emantic Fitzgerald Bradford Jr., 21, was likely not the gunman who shot at least one person. His death drew criticism from his family and protesters on Saturday.

## FULL TEXT

An Alabama police officer fatally shot a 21-year-old black man on Thursday night who the police initially said shot at least one person at a mall near Birmingham, turning a Thanksgiving holiday shopping scene into chaos.

But on Friday the police said evidence suggests that the man actually was not the gunman and that the true gunman remained at large.

The Hoover Police Department said on Twitter that the man who was killed, Emantic Fitzgerald Bradford Jr., “may have been involved in some aspect” of an altercation at the mall, the Riverchase Galleria in Hoover, Ala., that preceded the shooting.

But, they said, he “likely did not fire the rounds” that struck an 18-year-old man as they had originally indicated. Another victim, a 12-year-old girl, was an “innocent bystander,” the police said. Both were hospitalized but their conditions on Saturday were unavailable.

“We regret that our initial media release was not totally accurate, but new evidence indicates that it was not,” the police said, adding that the conclusion was based on interviews with witnesses and “critical evidentiary items.”

**[A lawyer for Mr. Bradford’s family described him as a “good guy with a gun.” ]**

In their initial statement on Friday , the police said uniformed officers who were providing security at the mall “encountered a suspect brandishing a pistol and shot him.” It was not clear whether the officers believed Mr. Bradford fired or intended to fire before he was killed.

Mr. Bradford’s mother, April Pipkins, said in an interview on Saturday that Mr. Bradford was living with her near Birmingham where he had been raised. Mr. Bradford, who was better known as E.J., would not have been involved in the shooting, and might have been trying to protect other people in the mall, she said.

“That was not his character at all,” she said. “He loved life, and he loved people.”

He was licensed to carry a firearm, she said. Alabama generally does not prohibit people from carrying firearms in public, according to the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence .

At an emotional news conference held by Mr. Bradford’s relatives on Sunday —one collapsed in tears partway through —his family members said they were not notified of his death by the Hoover Police Department, but instead learned of it through social media.

Mr. Bradford’s father, Emantic Bradford Sr., said that he called the police Thursday night upon hearing of his son’s shooting, and that he was told he would get a call back in 10 minutes. But he never did, he said, and it was several hours before he called again and was able to talk to someone from the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office at the scene.

“It hurts me to the core, my son is gone,” the elder Mr. Bradford said at the news conference.

Anthony Thomas, Mr. Bradford’s uncle, said he wanted the police to release all the videos from the mall that day.

“He was an honorable young man who was assassinated,” Mr. Thomas said.

Ms. Pipkins is being represented by Benjamin L. Crump, a Tallahassee, Fla., lawyer, who has in the past represented the families of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown and Tamir Rice.

Mr. Crump said the Hoover police had tarnished Mr. Bradford's character by "jumping to conclusions" that he was a criminal because he was a black man with a gun.

"He was trying to be somebody who helped save people, yet he was killed," Mr. Crump said.

Mr. Bradford received a general discharge from the United States Army in August. An Army spokesman said Mr. Bradford had not completed his training but would not elaborate.

Capt. Gregg Rector, a spokesman for the Hoover Police Department, said on Saturday that it would be inappropriate to answer questions about the circumstances around Mr. Bradford's death because the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency was leading the investigation.

The Hoover Police Department is, however, conducting an internal investigation into Mr. Bradford's killing by the officer. That officer, who has not been identified, has been put on administrative leave until the investigation is complete. Captain Rector did not answer other questions about the officer on Saturday.

The Alabama Law Enforcement Agency declined to comment on Saturday and said that it would issue a statement on Sunday.

On Saturday, a group of protesters gathered at the mall, saying the police shot the wrong person. One carried a sign that said "Emantic's Life Matters." Others carried a large blue banner reading "No police gun violence."

The episode on Thursday sent crowds of people running through the Riverchase Galleria, about 10 miles south of Birmingham, according to videos posted on Twitter.

One shopper told the television station WBRC that she was buying jewelry at a kiosk when she heard three bangs and people started screaming and running for the exits as officers ran toward the gunfire.

The police said they now believe that more than two people were involved in the altercation that preceded the shooting and that at least one gunman remains at large. The police did not release a description of the person they were seeking.

The mall, whose website boasts that it is "the largest enclosed shopping center in Alabama," had advertised special hours for the night of Thanksgiving: 6 p.m. to midnight. The Brookfield Properties Retail Group, which owns the mall, did not respond to requests for comment on Saturday.

Credit: Mihir Zaveri

## DETAILS

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<b>People:</b>	Martin, Trayvon Rice, Tamir Brown, Michael
<b>Company / organization:</b>	Name: Retail Group; NAICS: 541613; Name: Department of the Army; NAICS: 928110; Name: Twitter Inc; NAICS: 519130
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