

Tense confrontations after man is shot and killed by police in Bronzeville

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FULL TEXT

June 07--A Chicago police officer shot and killed a man in Bronzeville on Wednesday night after he refused to stop running away and pulled a gun, authorities said.

"An armed encounter between the offender and police ensued," the Police Department said in a statement. "An officer discharged his weapon, fatally striking the offender."

The department released no other details, including whether there was an exchange of gunfire and how many shots were fired. It said a weapon was recovered at the scene in the 4700 block of South Prairie Avenue..

The shooting around 8:10 p.m. sparked tense confrontations between police and neighbors on the block and between police and family at the University of Chicago Medical Center, where Maurice Granton Jr., 24, was pronounced dead.

His family said they doubted the police version of how the father of two young daughters was killed.

"Since when does running validate somebody getting shot?" said Granton's sister, Joanna Varnado. "I don't understand that. You're not being offensive, you're being defensive."

She didn't believe the gun police said they found was his.

"I just want to know what the real story is," Varnado said. "If it was misconduct, I want justice. My brother was 24 years old. He loved his girls. That's all he lived for, was his kids."

Tension between police and family

Granton was pronounced dead at 8:41 p.m., about a half hour after he was shot, but relatives at the hospital were not told for several hours as tensions steadily grew.

Family and friends first gathered in the waiting room, then were told to move outside, where a hospital official addressed the growing crowd. He told them there were three gunshot victims in the emergency room and they were waiting for identification.

Around 10:30 p.m., family and hospital officials began loudly arguing about where they could wait. Authorities tried to usher the crowd into another lobby nearby, but they insisted on staying outside the emergency room lobby.

"(Expletive) that. (Expletive) trying to make us move. (Expletive) the police. They shot him," one man said. "We waiting, bro. We waiting this out. Our family here is shot. Fighting for his life."

Security outside the emergency room grew to more than a dozen officers, from both the Chicago and University of Chicago police departments. The officers formed a line in front of the entrance and said the area was on lockdown. Police eventually let Varnado and a few other family members inside. Around 11:45 p.m., Varnado walked back out. She stood next to Tayshia Shaw, who has two daughters with Granton, a 1-year-old and another who has not yet had her first birthday.

"No, he's not," Shaw said. "No ..."

Shaw dropped to the sidewalk, lying on her left side. Varnado sat cross-legged with Shaw's head in her lap, and the women tried to comfort each other as they cried.

Several others in the group yelled at police and hospital staff as the line of officers continued to guard the entrance to the hospital's new trauma center, which opened on May 2. The center treated 274 trauma patients in its first four weeks, many of them gunshot victims.

Back at the scene of the shooting, near the 47th Street Green Line "L" stop, crowds of people gathered at the liquor store just outside the crime tape.

Some remained in the area while officers updated members of the media. They shouted questions, asking police where Granton's wounds were. Others yelled at officers who walked by, asking them how they justified the shooting.

Frederick Hill, who lives in the area, said he was walking to the liquor store at 47th Street and Indiana Avenue when he saw paramedics loading a man into an ambulance.

Hill said all four corners were crowded with people who were upset and yelling. "People were crying. They wanted to fight."

'But then this happened'

Shaw was a freshman and Granton was a sophomore when the two met at Walter Henri Dyett High School for the Arts in Washington Park. They became friends and, about five years later, started dating, Shaw said. Her favorite things about him were his personality and his smile.

Even though they were no longer a couple, they saw each other often and were both involved in their daughters' lives, Shaw said.

Varnado said she and Granton grew up with different foster parents, and there were years when they saw each other only occasionally, at court-supervised appointments. Varnado said the two reconnected as adults. She described her brother as silly and playful, crazy about his kids and impossible to stay mad at.

"He's not a bad person," she said. "He always plays. ... He could turn any bad situation into a good one. He's a family man. That's all he wanted, because he never had one."

In the summer, Granton could be found playing basketball at a number of neighborhood courts. He was a particular fan of the Golden State Warriors' Stephen Curry, Shaw said. He didn't listen to much rap, favoring older R&B such as Gladys Knight and Luther Vandross. He sang to his kids all the time. His older daughter liked a Drake song, "God's Plan," so he'd dance around with her and sing along, Shaw said.

Cheese pizza was his favorite food, typically Home Run Inn bought frozen from Aldi. Shaw said she picked one up for him Wednesday and was supposed to cook it that night. "But then this happened."

Records show Granton has an arrest history, but his family said that was all in the past.

"We all grew up in the system," Varnado said. "We didn't have our parents. You are a product of your environment. When he was lashing out, he didn't know who he was, but he turned it around when he had those girls.

"It's still unbelievable," she said. "We're still just trying to intake all this, process it, deal with it, our emotions (are) all over the place. We are talking about him, we are laughing."

The Civilian Office of Police Accountability is investigating the shooting, and the officer will be placed on administrative leave, as is routine.

COPA chief Sydney Roberts issued a statement on social media early Thursday morning, stating COPA investigators were talking to witnesses on the scene.

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DETAILS

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