

## 1 Suspect Dead, 22 Injured After Shooting At Art - NPR: Web Edition Articles - June 18, 2018

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Updated at 6:30 a.m.

Law enforcement officials have identified the gunman who was shot and killed by police after a shooting that left one dead and 22 people injured during an all-night art event in Trenton, N.J. on Sunday morning.

During a news conference Sunday evening, Mercer County Prosecutor Angelo Onofri named the suspect as **Tahaji Wells**, a 33-year-old man with a violent past. Wells allegedly exchanged fire with at least two other suspects in what appears to be a gang-related dispute, according to NJ.com.

Apparently, the killing Sunday night was not Wells' first. In 2004 he was sentenced to 18 years in state prison after pleading guilty to aggravated manslaughter he had committed two years earlier. That fatal incident was sparked by an argument "over who should drive a car Wells had driven from a local bar," according to the news outlet.

Six years into his sentence, Wells pleaded guilty to a second-degree racketeering charge adding another six years to his prison time.

According to records reviewed by NJ.com, Wells was released from prison in February.

Onofri said that 17 of those who were injured Sunday night sustained gunshot wounds, and four people were in critical condition, including a 13-year-old boy.

Prior to the shooting, fights broke out inside and outside Roebling Wire Works, where the annual event was held. Police attempted to disperse the crowd and urged the organizers to shut down the festival, Onofri said.

"Those individuals continued to loiter and additional fights broke out, and then the shooting occurred," Onofri said, noting the suspects first shot at each other before police opened fire.

Gunfire broke out just before 3 a.m. Sunday at the city's Art All Night festival that was advertised as featuring more than 1,500 pieces of art. A second suspect is in police custody.

According to authorities, the individuals who opened fire on the crowd were attending the event at the historic Roebling Wire Works building, and multiple weapons were recovered from the venue.

Angelo Nicolo, a Trenton resident, told 6ABC TV that he and his brother heard gunfire and then saw crowds running down the street, including at least one person who Nicolo says had a gunshot wound in the leg.

"I saw two police officers escort a guy that got shot in the leg; they bandaged him up and whisked him away before the ambulance came here. It was pretty gnarly," he said.

An estimated 1,000 people were in the building at the time of the shooting. Trenton Mayor Eric Jackson said in past years the event has drawn in 10,000 people over the 24-hour period.

Organizers for the event, scheduled to last from 3 p.m. Saturday to 3 p.m. Sunday, said it will not reopen. In a post shared to their Facebook page, organizers said they are still processing the event, but that it appears that all of the staff, volunteers, artists and musicians were accounted for and healthy.

"We're very shocked. We're deeply saddened," the post reads. "Our hearts ache and our eyes are blurry but our dedication and resolve to building a better Trenton through community, creativity and inspiration will never fade. Not tonight. Not ever." [Copyright 2018 NPR]

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