

Dad of man killed by police in Alabama mall gets apology but few answers

McLaughlin, Elliott C . CNN Wire Service ; Atlanta [Atlanta]06 Dec 2018.

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FULL TEXT

Emantic Bradford Sr. has received an apology from Hoover, Alabama, officials, he said Thursday, but he remains disappointed they did not extend him the courtesy of promptly letting him know police killed his son Thanksgiving night.

"They apologized, but that still doesn't erase the fact that we were not notified that night, so what was your reason and rationale?" asked Bradford, who spent 25 years as a correctional officer.

Bradford has repeatedly expressed his displeasure with Hoover officials for not reaching out to him or answering basic questions in the hours after a police officer killed Emantic Bradford Jr., aka EJ, at the Riverchase Galleria mall. He did not learn his son was dead until hours afterward, and his mother learned of his death the next day, from one of the 21-year-old's friends, he said.

Family lawyer Ben Crump said officials tried to pass the buck when they met with the father.

"They said the coroner should've done it. This is five days later, after they put out across worldwide media that their son was a mass shooter," the civil rights attorney said.

Confusion from the outset

Hoover police initially said Bradford Jr. shot a 12- and an 18-year-old in the suburban Birmingham mall and that an officer killed him as he fled. Police later changed the story, saying witnesses and forensic tests indicated that while Bradford may have been involved in an altercation, he likely did not fire the rounds that injured the victims. The family has said that Bradford Jr. was not at the mall with any of the victims or the suspect. He went there with his cousin and two friends, and possessing a permit to carry a weapon, pulled out his gun after the shooting began. He was helping people escape danger when he was killed, the family says.

Police later issued another statement saying Bradford Jr. had brandished a weapon, only to recant those remarks as well, saying Bradford Jr. "had a gun in his hand" when police shot him.

Erron Brown, 20, was arrested last week in Georgia and charged with attempted murder in the shooting of 18-year-old Brian Xavier Wilson. Brown's attorney has said video will clear his client of any crimes. No charges have been filed in the shooting of 12-year-old bystander Molly Davis.

The officer, who was working as mall security Thanksgiving night, has not been publicly identified. The officer is on paid administrative leave pending a state investigation. Bradford Jr.'s official autopsy report hasn't been released to the public.

Dad brands officer a 'coward'

On Monday, Crump said that an independent medical review commissioned by the family showed Bradford Jr. had been shot three times in the back. The bullets struck him beneath his ear, at the base of his neck and just above his buttocks, Crump told CNN on Thursday.

"For whatever reason, the police shot him as he was running away like everybody else, and it's just inexplicable to EJ's parents and family," he said.

"(President Donald Trump) says to stop these bad guys with guns and prevent these mass shootings, we need to have good guys with guns. EJ was a good guy with a gun. He happened to be a black man, and -- for whatever reason -- the police, when they see good guys with guns who happen to be black ... they label them criminals, just

like Jemel Roberson in Chicago and now with Emantic Bradford Jr. here in Alabama."

A Midlothian, Illinois, police officer killed Roberson, a security guard, after the 26-year-old stopped a gunman who had opened fire last month in a bar.

"We have to stop this pattern and practice of just seeing black and shoot first, ask questions later," Crump said.

Asked his reaction to learning his son was shot in the back, Bradford Sr. repeated his assertion that it was a gutless move by the officer.

"My son was murdered, and the officer that shot him was a coward, and it hurt me because my son was moving away from gunfire. He was running like everybody else, and you shot my son three times in the back. That's murder any way you look at it, and the facts speak for themselves," he said.

Police plead, 'Avoid expressions of anger'

CNN has repeatedly asked Hoover police to clarify its statements on Bradford Jr.'s involvement in the Thanksgiving night altercation. It doesn't appear clarity is imminent, as Hoover police and the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency, which is leading the investigation, have said they won't release any evidence in the near future.

"While we maintain our commitment to be fully transparent during this process, we must respect the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency's request for full cooperation and continue to have faith in the judicial process. We want the whole truth, unimpeded and not delayed," Hoover police Chief Nick Derzis said in a statement Monday.

The Bradford family and residents in the Birmingham area have called for police to release all body camera and surveillance footage.

Protests have sporadically erupted since the shooting, most notably Tuesday night when demonstrators reportedly faced off with police at a shopping center and shut down a portion of Interstate 459.

Hoover police said Wednesday that while they respect freedom of expression and will allow peaceful protests, they will not permit any protests on city school property.

"Most cities experiencing protests have found that the best practice, in general, is to allow them to be conducted as long as they are nonviolent," a statement said. "We also advise citizens to take every measure to avoid expressions of anger and frustration during protests and to not make retaliatory or hostile comments on social media or other communications."

DETAILS

Subject:	Thanksgiving; Law enforcement; Criminal investigations; Mass murders; Murders &murder attempts; State laws; Apologies
Location:	Chicago Illinois Illinois Georgia Alabama
People:	Trump, Donald J Roberson, Jemel
Company / organization:	Name: CNN; NAICS: 515210
Identifier / keyword:	Alabama Business and industry sectors Business, economy and trade Continents and regions Crime, law enforcement and corrections Crimes against persons Criminal offenses Deaths and fatalities Emantic Bradford Jr. Firearms Investigations Law and legal system Law enforcement Misc people North America Policing and police forces Retail and wholesale trade Shootings Shopping centers Society Southeastern United States The Americas United States Weapons and arms Apologies Civil disobedience Protests and demonstrations

Publication title:	CNN Wire Service; Atlanta
Publication year:	2018
Publication date:	Dec 6, 2018
Section:	National
Publisher:	CNN Newsource Sales, Inc.
Place of publication:	Atlanta
Country of publication:	United States, Atlanta
Publication subject:	General Interest Periodicals--United States
Source type:	Wire Feeds
Language of publication:	English
Document type:	News
ProQuest document ID:	2150598964
Document URL:	https://search.proquest.com/docview/2150598964?accountid=14026
Copyright:	Copyright 2018 Cable News Network. Turner Broadcasting System, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
Last updated:	2019-01-05
Database:	Global Newsstream

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