

Video, narrative leaves extended family with - Danville Register & Bee (VA) - April 10, 2018

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Juan Markee Jones died in a police altercation early Sunday morning.

Two days later, protests have taken place at the SOVAH Health-Danville hospital and on the steps to the Municipal Building, asking for the truth and justice.

The hospital protest took place after Jones died inside Sunday. Pittsylvania County Sheriff's Office deputies were called in to help with crowd control, authorities confirmed.

Both protests were peaceful and no arrests were made.

Family members and friends gathered on the lawn and in the living room of the family's Fuller Street home Tuesday afternoon.

All were talking about the incident that took Jones' life, and the person they'd known for years. Inside the home, a young niece and nephew watched the cartoon "Steven Universe" on the living room television.

Jones' mother and two of his cousins said they had viewed the body-camera footage of the incident twice, but did not wish to speak to the media yet. They did not give their full names.

"He was really respectful," family friend Swanya Trotter said. "He really was. My son got killed a year ago. He's always been there for us. I cannot believe this."

She said her son, Quahoun Trotter, was shot and killed in a homicide in Greensboro, North Carolina, on April 27, 2017.

Two terms used to describe Jones were brought up by every family member willing to talk to the Register & Bee — his helpfulness, and his respectfulness.

"He wasn't a nasty person," cousin Kevin Myers said. "If you needed anything, he would help you. If you needed a ride, he'd give you one. That's my cousin. He was a loving person."

Danville Mayor John Gilstrap and Vice Mayor Alonzo Jones stopped by the family home Tuesday to speak with them and offer any support they could give.

"We're just here to support the family," Alonzo Jones said. "As a community, we have to come together."

From the white, floral condolences book by the front door, dozens of other people have come by

to offer their support to the family.

Those condolences haven't answered the family's questions, though.

Why did someone call the police saying he was armed and dangerous? Why did police have to shoot him at all? Why couldn't they have waited him out?

Police use of lethal force has been seen throughout the country, particularly when it comes to young black men.

"How many people have to die?" local activist Azriel LeBeau asked. "Whose brother, whose sister, whose father, whose son's have to die before we stand up and do something? It's enough. We in Danville need to make a stand."

Family and friends alike questioned the need for police to shoot Jones in the chest.

"They didn't have to kill that boy," Trotter said. "They really didn't. He didn't have no gun, I'm sure."

Police provided footage from one of the officer's body cameras to local media Tuesday afternoon. The family has requested that there not be any more protests, and that they be allowed to grieve and find out the truth.

"We just want justice," Myers said. "We want justice for our family."

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