

Man in fatal cop shooting was hit days earlier

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FULL TEXT

Maurice Granton walked out of a hospital last weekend with a graze wound near his right eye, refusing to cooperate with police who found him lying in an alley in Chatham on the South Side, authorities said. Days later, barely 4 miles away in Bronzeville, police say Granton started running from plainclothes officers working a drug investigation Thursday night. He ignored their orders to stop, pulled a gun and was shot by one of the officers, according to a statement from the Police Department.

Granton, 24, was pronounced dead at the University of Chicago Medical Center, the same hospital that treated his graze wound last Saturday. He had been shot in the back, according to the Cook County medical examiner's office. The Police Department released a video it said shows Granton holding a gun sometime before he was shot by the officer in the 4700 block of South Prairie Avenue. The department also tweeted out a photo of a 9 mm handgun it said was recovered. The department did not say whether there was an exchange of gunfire between the officer and Granton.

Officers in one of the department's Strategic Decision Support Centers had spotted Granton in a drug transaction while watching a police surveillance camera, according to police spokesman Anthony Guglielmi. The officers alerted others on patrol, and they responded to 47th Street and Prairie Avenue to confront Granton, he said. It's unusual for the department to release video related to a police shooting investigation in its early stages. "This video is ... being released in response to claims that offender was unarmed and the weapon was planted by CPD officers," Guglielmi said.

Granton's sister, Joanna Varnado, is among those who don't believe he had a gun. "I just want to know what the real story is," she said of her brother, who has two young daughters. "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."

Granton has two convictions on his record for robbery and theft, and several arrests for trespassing and drug possession. But his family said Granton was not a violent man. "Since when does running validate somebody getting shot?" Varnado said. "I don't understand that. You're not being offensive, you're being defensive."

The shooting around 8:10 p.m. sparked tense confrontations between police and family at the hospital. Granton was pronounced dead there about half an hour after he was shot, but relatives said they were not told for several hours.

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.

The hospital released a statement Thursday defending its handling of the crowd, saying it "always has been committed to and focused on the safety and privacy of patients and their families. Like other hospitals across the country, UChicago Medicine has well-established and comprehensive policies and procedures in place designed to protect patients, their families and staff."

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. 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."

Shaw was a freshman and Granton was a sophomore when the two met at Dyett High School for the Arts in Washington Park. Even though they were no longer a couple, they saw each other often and were both involved in their daughters' lives, she 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 crazy about his kids and impossible to stay mad at.

"He's not a bad person," she said. "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."

His family said Granton's criminal behavior was in the past with the birth of his two daughters. His last arrest was in 2016, records show.

"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."

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

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CAPTION: Photo: Emily Mallory, left, hugs Fermilla Whatley before a Thursday vigil for Maurice Granton, who was fatally shot by Chicago police during a foot pursuit Wednesday night. ; Photo: Precious Richardson lights candles Thursday for Granton, who was her uncle. ; JOHN J. KIM/CHICAGO TRIBUNE PHOTOS ; Photo: (Maurice) Granton
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