

ACTIVISTS QUESTION SHOOTING DEATH BY POLICE

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FULL TEXT

PITTSBURG >>The organizers of a rally Saturday to protest the police shooting death of a man earlier this year are asking people to choose a side in the dispute over what happened.

Terry Amons Jr., 43, died Jan. 12 after being shot by officers while inside his car in the parking lot of a Nation's Giant Hamburgers in the 3700 block of Railroad Avenue. Police said he was reaching for a gun.

The Oscar Grant Committee Against Police Brutality and State Repression, which is hosting the protest from 2-4 p.m. at the eatery, vehemently disagrees. They offer a challenge in a flier promoting the rally.

"WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON," asks a headline on the flier distributed by the group. Underneath that broad headline is a smaller sub-headline: "Pittsburg Police or the People of Pittsburg?"

Grant became a focal point for police brutality after being fatally shot by BART police Officer Johannes Mehserle on a Fruitvale station platform on New Year's Day 2009.

"The police claim that Terry was reaching for a gun," the flier says. "But body cam video does not support this claim."

Body cam footage revealed at a June inquest hearing revealed Amons sitting in his car at Nation's and that he was shot by police within 30 seconds of the officers approaching.

The two officers involved, Dillon Tindall and Jesus Arellano, testified at the inquest hearing. During his testimony, Tindall said "there was no doubt in my mind" that Amons was "gearing up for something" and "reaching at the firearm."

The body cam footage showed Amons sticking one foot out of the car, gripping the steering wheel. He then briefly lowered his hand to his right leg. As Amons raised his hand back up, holding a white glove, Tindall fired shots. The video showed several muzzle flashes, and as it was played, there were audible gasps from a group of Amons' loved ones who attended the hearing.

Attorney John Burris attended the inquest and has said he is considering filing a claim against the department. At the inquest hearing, he called the officers' testimony "very-well orchestrated."

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