

MINNEAPOLIS - There was something bad going on in the alleyway behind the house she told her fiancé on the phone, someone who sounded as if she was in distress, maybe a rape. It was past 11 p.m., and most people on Washburn Avenue were tucked in their beds.

Except Justine Damond, alone at home with the noises, her anxiety creeping into the loud Las Vegas casino where her fiancé had answered the phone.

They had met five years ago, when they lived 9,000 miles apart, beginning a courtship at first halting and then headlong. Now the wedding dress was ordered, the suit bought, the invitations sent, the ceremony set for an August weekend in Hawaii. But last Saturday night they were separated again.

Her fiancé, Don Damond, told her to call 911. They stayed on the phone until she said the police had arrived. Stay put, he told her. Call me back, he told her.

"I have played this over in my head over and over," Mr. Damond said on Friday in his first interview since that night. "Why didn't I stay on the phone with her?"

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The events of the next few minutes will be anatomized and argued over and, maybe at some point, contested in court. But this much is established: As the squad car she had summoned slid down the alley, Justine Damond went up to the police officers inside, one of whom, for reasons still unknown, fired his gun, hit her in the abdomen and killed her.

Even to Americans now used to dis

sectioning police shootings, the circumstances were an odd jolt: a black Somali-American cop, firing at a white Australian woman among the garages and green compost bins of an unremarkable strip of Midwestern concrete.

In Australia where Ms. Damond, 40, grew up, there was agony and disbelief, the prime minister voicing bafflement, the tabloids in full cry. In the United States, there were questions about the officer's failure to turn on his body camera, about firearms procedures, and about the role race has played in how officials responded. On Friday, the Minneapolis police chief was forced to resign.

And in interviews this past week in Sydney and Minneapolis, Ms. Damond's friends and her fiancé were trying to fill in the blanks of her final night.

A week has passed. A cardboard sign at the end of the alleyway, propped amid the flowers laid there by friends and neighbors, asks the still-unanswered question: Why?

From Silence to 'Yes'