

According to the police Union, officers following their training in the Rochester case

The Bethlehem Gadfly Jacob Blake, Police September 6, 2020

🔗 Latest in a series of posts responding to the Jacob Blake shooting 🔗

Gadfly continues his self-inflicted tutorial in police/community relations, taking you along with him. Trying to wrap his mind around all aspects of the subject before us.



Daniel Prude, a Black man, died March 30 in Rochester, NY, after an encounter with police March 23. Prude had mental health episodes traveling by train to Rochester. He had an episode in Rochester March 22. On March 23 he left his brother's house suffering another episode. His brother, seeking help, called the police, identifying his brother's problem as a mental health episode. Police located the naked Prude in the middle of a street, handcuffed him, and in attempting to control him, applied a "spit hood." Officers held his face down on the street. Eventually he was given CPR and taken to the hospital, where he died a week later. The case blew up just a few days ago when video was released. Gadfly feels the best version of the footage is below in the *Democrat & Chronicle* article. The seven officers involved have just been suspended, and a Grand Jury has been empaneled. The police union says the officers followed their training.

Now ponder this. This was clearly a mental health call. The officers are responding to a mental health call. It was identified as such by the caller. And the officers do not seem at first look by this viewer of the video to engage in any of the obviously bad behavior that we see in the Floyd, Brooks, and Blake incidents. The "spit hood" certainly looks bad, very

bad. It evokes lynching images immediately. But it may well be true that the officers were following their training. And that the training failed. Gadfly heard CNN Talking Head Charles Ramsay (chief of police in Philadelphia, Washington, and another big city, I believe) say that he did not particularly see any egregious violation of training in the video. So, you might be naturally led to wonder if training is at fault here. And also you might naturally wonder — given calls to defund the police and divert funds to mental health response teams — if the outcome would have been different if the Prude call were answered by a joint police/mental health team or by a mental health team by itself. For now The City of Rochester's response was not to defund the police but to add funding to mental health agencies.

Gadfly likes the complete and thorough walk-through of the events and the clean video in this *Democrat & Chronicle* article:

selections from Steve Orr, "How Daniel Prude suffocated as Rochester police restrained him." Democrat & Chronicle, September 2, 2020.

A Black man died of asphyxiation earlier this year after Rochester police officers trying to take him into protective custody pinned him to the ground while restraining him. The curtain was lifted on the death of 41-year-old Daniel T. Prude at a late-morning news conference Wednesday at which Prude's family and local activists called his death a murder and demanded that the officers involved be fired and charged in his homicide. "We are in need of accountability for the wrongful death and murder of Daniel Prude. He was treated inhumanely and without dignity," said Ashley Gantt, a community organizer from Free the People Roc and the New York Civil Liberties Union. "These officers killed someone and are still patrolling in our community."

The case also brought calls from activists for changes to policing, including an end to the practice of having police officers respond to mental health calls. "The Rochester Police Department has shown time and again that they are not trained to deal with mental health crises," Gantt said. "These officers are trained to kill and not to de-escalate. Daniel's case is the epitome of what is wrong with this system and today we stand firmly seeking justice for Daniel and his family, and for all the victims who have been murdered and terrorized by the Rochester Police

Department.” Unlike that and some other recent police-death videos, the one compiled about the Prude case is not a graphic depiction of officers shooting or beating a suspect. Rather, it depicts at least three officers holding Prude prone and forcing his head and chest into the pavement for several minutes until, apparently unnoticed by the officers, he stops breathing.

The events are indicative of how the rules of engagement that police use can result in harm to a suspect or a person in the throes of a mental-health episode.

selections from “Rochester Officers in Daniel Prude arrest followed training, police union president says,” CBS News, September 4, 2020.

The officers involved in the suffocation death of Daniel Prude in Rochester, New York, were following their training when they put a “spit hood” over his head and pinned him to the ground before noticing that he was no longer breathing, according to the president of the police officers’ union.

[The officers were following their training], “raising serious questions about whether police are best equipped to deal with people suffering from mental illness.”

Prude’s family believes that he was suffering from a mental health crisis.

People with untreated mental illness are 16 x more likely to be killed during a police encounter than other civilians approached by law enforcement.

“There needs to be an engaged mental health team that goes out for mental health calls.”

The officers were following their training.

“I absolutely believe that we need more help. . . . I don’t have all the answers, I didn’t think anybody does.”

The city has committed more money to mental health partnerships and law enforcement. . . . the first steps toward addressing a long-neglected issue.