

# Incident in Philadelphia (7): the subject's father and mother

The Bethlehem Gadfly George Floyd killing, Walter Wallace November 9, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts about the death of Walter Wallace* 

The subject's name was Walter Wallace.

We continue to fill in the picture around the death of Walter Wallace.

The subject's father asks for respect. "They're" labeling us — drunks and alcoholics. (2 1/2 mins.)

*Selections from Bill Hutchinson, "They didn't give a damn': Mother of slain Walter Wallace says police knew her son was in a mental crisis." October 28, 2020.*

Police responded to the family's home three times on the day of the shooting.

The mother of the 27-year-old Philadelphia man who was gunned down by officers Monday in front of his family's home said police knew he was having a mental crisis because she told them and begged them not to shoot him.

The killing of Walter Wallace Jr. has sparked protests as well as rioting and looting in Philadelphia and beyond, and mirrors what experts say is an ongoing problem nationwide of law enforcement officers using deadly force on mentally ill people.

Wallace's mother, Cathy Wallace, said police were called to her home three times on Monday but were not able to help her and her family deal with the mental-health emergency her son was experiencing. She said that when officers returned to her home the third time, they ended up shooting her son multiple times when he broke free of her and appeared to step toward two officers with a knife.

"I was telling the police to stop, 'Don't shoot my son, please, don't shoot my son,'" Cathy Wallace said at a news conference Tuesday night. "They paid me no mind and they just shot him."

She said the first two times the police came to her home on Monday, they only irritated her son, the father of nine children, instead of helping him.

"They weren't trying to help us, they didn't give a damn about us," Cathy Wallace alleged. "My son said, 'Look at them, they standing there laughing at us.' So I took my son and I and walked down the street and left the cops standing out there."

The shooting erupted around 4 p.m. on Monday after Wallace's brother called 911 and requested an ambulance and medical intervention for Wallace. The police showed up again, Cathy Wallace said, even though the family had only asked for an ambulance.

Regarding her son's history of mental health issues, Cathy Wallace said "they already knew about it; it's already on his record," due to the dozens of times the police had been called to her home in the past.

The shooting erupted around 4 p.m. on Monday after Wallace's brother called 911 and requested an ambulance and medical intervention for Wallace. The police showed up again, Cathy Wallace said, even though the family had only asked for an ambulance.

“Officers who are properly trained should notice certain things when they arrive at a scene,” Johnson said. “Especially when his wife tells you, ‘Stand down officers, he’s manic bipolar.’”

Philadelphia Police Commissioner Danielle Outlaw said at a news conference on Tuesday that the two officers involved in the shooting did not have less-lethal tools, like stun guns, due to a department-wide lack of resources.

“We have to adapt our training,” said Outlaw, who was appointed Philadelphia’s police commissioner in February after serving as chief of the Portland, Oregon, Police Bureau.

In 2017, the U.S. Department of Justice recommended that all Philadelphia officers be issued stun guns to carry at all times. Outlaw said that while the department has equipped many officers with stun guns, it is still working to ensure all 6,300 officers have them.

She said they still need another 2,000 stun guns to equip the entire police force.

Outlaw said during a Zoom news conference on Wednesday afternoon that she has requested a review of the department’s training in handling mentally ill people and is exploring other models to address the problem.

“It’s a plethora of things; it’s not just how we respond to someone with a weapon, it’s how we respond to someone in crisis,” Outlaw said. “And that’s not just at the patrol level. We also need to look at what we’re dispatching, how we’re dispatching, the types of questions that we’re asking, what information is relayed to responding officers to help us determine response, and then shall we require a supervisor to be in route as well to assist with scene coordination?”

A study published this year in *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law* found that of the nearly 1,000 people shot by police officers in 2018, a quarter of them had a mental illness.

Although officers are trained to handle tense situations, foiling a robbery or assault is not the same as someone who is in deep mental distress.

“Police officers who are trained as paramilitary may not recognize a mental health crisis and treat it as something else,” Akhu said.