

Have you done your Christian Hall homework yet?

The Bethlehem Gadfly Christian Hall, George Floyd killing April 1, 2021

 *Latest post in a series on Christian Hall* 

ref: **Case Study of police shooting of Christian Hall ripe for good discussion**

So Gadfly has asked you to dig into the Christian Hall case as part of our almost year-long discussion of policing in the wake of the killing of George Floyd.

Hall was killed by police December 30. Law enforcement ruled the killing justified March 30. The Hall family is suing.

Gadfly has asked you to hold off on the family news conference yesterday.

Gadfly wants you to focus first on the Monroe County D.A. press conference March 30 and the 30-minute video of the 90-minute interaction between Hall and the police produced by the D.A.'s office.

The article below has links to 1) a cell phone video by a bystander of the final seconds of the interaction as well as 2) a video of the hour+long D.A. press conference during which the 30-minute video was played.

Here again is a breakdown of the D.A. press conference video:

1:13:46 mins. (contains the 30-min. video)

Start at min. 5:07

D.A. introduction mins. 5:07-12:30

The 30-min. video runs from mins. 12:30-45:30

D.A. presentation mins. 45:30-1:00:15

Q & A with reporters mins. 1:00:15-1:13:46

Go to the primary source.

You can watch the whole episode play out and then listen to the D.A.'s "reading" of the episode.

Good stuff.

Let's talk tomorrow.

selections from Peter Hall and Molly Bilinski, "Monroe County DA announces deadly force was justified in fatal state police shooting of man with pellet gun on I-80 overpass." Morning Call, March 30, 2021.

Monroe County law enforcement officials on Tuesday presented findings of an investigation of the December fatal shooting of 19-year-old Christian Hall by state police, concluding their use of deadly force was justified.

In a news conference Tuesday morning, First Assistant District Attorney Michael Mancuso said Hall carried a replica of a handgun that could fire plastic pellets as he stood atop the Route 33 overpass at Interstate 80 on Dec. 30. Police fired at Hall, striking him three times after he walked slowly toward troopers and ignored commands to put down the pellet gun.

Mancuso called it a classic suicide-by-cop scenario, "fueled by Mr. Hall's mental state and his desire to end his life." The troopers reasonably believed that they were at risk of death or serious bodily harm and there was no evidence of ill intent in the officers' actions, he said.

"At no time did the troopers believe anything but the firearm Mr. Hall was brandishing, holding and putting in and out of his waistband, and ultimately lifted up was nothing but a real firearm," Mancuso said. "Why was he acting like this gun was real? What did he want to do? What did he want to have the troopers do to him? That's the mindset that we started to see."

Lawyers for Hall's family said they would respond to the investigation's findings in a virtual news conference Wednesday morning. They have argued that Hall was standing with his hands up when officers shot him, and his killing "should never have happened."

A presentation of video and audio from two state police vehicle cameras showed the nearly 1 ½-hour effort by troopers to defuse the situation from two different angles.

According to the video, a state police corporal and four state troopers responded, including one trooper with a background in psychological health and another who is a 25-year veteran, trained crisis negotiator and member of the state police Special Emergency Response Team.

The video shows Hall standing atop the overpass wall as traffic passes below on I-80 when the first two troopers arrive. Hall is smoking in the video and the video narrator says a glass marijuana pipe was found at the scene. The troopers approach Hall with hands raised and try to coax him off the barrier.

“We can talk, c’mon off the bridge,” one says. A second trooper warns the other to watch for an object in Hall’s left hand, and as Hall stumbles and steps down to the deck of the bridge, they see it appears to be a gun, according to narration in the video.

Throughout the encounter, officials tell Hall to put down the gun “upwards of 100 times,” Mancuso said.

At one point, Hall placed the pellet gun atop the concrete barrier and troopers attempted to position themselves between Hall and the gun, but were unable to do so before he picked it up again, narration in the video says.

The troopers continued attempts to persuade Hall, whom they addressed as CJ, to put down the pellet gun and walk toward them, the video shows. Instead, Hall slowly took several steps toward troopers with the pellet gun in his left hand next to his left leg. One trooper fired several shots at Hall, but struck the barrier behind Hall.

As Hall continued moving toward the troopers with the pellet gun in his left hand above his head, troopers fired again, striking Hall three times. He was treated on the scene and rushed to Lehigh Valley Hospital-Pocono, but died there that afternoon.

Mancuso said the evidence was “relatively unambiguous” and that an analysis of Hall’s cellphone records showed his suicidal intent. Hall had taken photos from the overpass a week before the shooting, which he paired with suicidal messages. Hall sent suicidal text messages to his former girlfriend during the crisis, Mancuso said.

The investigation also touched on Hall’s juvenile court record because he said to the trooper that he didn’t want to go back to jail. However, neither charges nor convictions were revealed.

A non-law enforcement mental health professional wouldn’t have helped the situation, Mancuso said, noting that he was speculating.

“There isn’t a provision in the law for that or resources for that,” he said, noting the state has to stop cutting back on mental health treatment facilities, as he’s seen an uptick in mental health-based crime. “In this case, I don’t think it would matter only because he was still under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court and had been provided all of the treatment for several years ... That’s the best our system has to offer.”

There are safety issues involved, too, he said.

“I have never met a mental health professional that would want to be in that situation,” he said. “They wouldn’t mind doing an evaluation, therapy — but not under that setting.”

A number of communities across the country have developed systems in which mental health professionals are at the ready to respond in situations where it is safe to do so. Bensalem Township, in Bucks County, launched such a program last year in conjunction with the county government. Two social workers employed by the county and embedded with the police department are available to respond when police determine a call involves mental health issues, said public safety director Fred Harran.

Since the social workers began responding to calls in January, the number of people who call police regularly for mental-health-related problems has declined, Harran said. That’s because the social workers are able to identify people who need social services and ensure that they

follow through. The goal, Harran said, is to address mental health issues in the community before they escalate to threats or violence.

Asked what he would tell Hall's family, Mancuso said, "We're sorry for your loss. We can't imagine the impact that has had on you. We don't believe you should blame yourself for anything. CJ had a lot of mental health issues and in the end, they were too much for him."