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Travis Jordan

On November 9, 2018, Travis Jordan was shot seven times and killed by Minneapolis police officers Neal Walsh and Ryan Keyes. Walsh and Keyes were responding to a call requesting a welfare check for Travis who was suffering from depression, anxiety, and possible suicidal ideations. The call was made by Travis' girlfriend, Taren Vang, who first called 311 to connect with services to help Travis. 311 connected Taren with 911 dispatch. Taren clearly told dispatch Travis was coping with depression and anxiety with alcohol, and Travis told Taren he wanted to kill himself.

No charges were brought against the officers in the aftermath of this incident. Travis Jordan's family, loved ones, and community deserve a complete explanation of this incident and the mistakes made by authorities throughout.

Travis Jordan did not pose an immediate threat to Neal Walsh and Ryan Keyes. Travis had an ordinary kitchen knife and stayed far enough from the police officers to allow them to slow down the situation and de-escalate. In fact, there were several times when Walsh and Keyes chose to escalate the situation by using antagonistic language. Further, the incident began in Travis' home and he did not leave the house until the officers told him to do so.

Letting Travis stay in the house would have been one of the many ways that Walsh and Keyes could have slowed down the situation and brought in a mental health professional to address Mr. Jordan's mental health crisis.

“Travis Jordan’s family, loved ones, and community deserve a complete explanation of this incident and the mistakes made by authorities throughout.”

What do the family members of stolen lives experience?

A look at the lawsuit settlement brought by Travis' friends and family.

Paul and Taren's Story

By Paul Bosman, CUAPB Attorney

Back in 2018 Minneapolis Police shot and killed Travis Jordan during a wellness check. This is not Travis' story.

This is the story of Travis' roommate, Paul Johnson, and Travis' girlfriend, Taren Vang. They both came to Johnson's house, where Travis was living when he was shot on the lawn by MPD officers. MPD officers got them in the back of a squad car and held them there despite their shouted requests to be let out. They were held until the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (Minnesota's FBI) let them out and asked them to come make a statement. They made statements to the BCA, who only afterwards told them that their friend had died at the hospital.

The City of Minneapolis settled their case for a sum of money, but more importantly with a promise to train every officer and investigator this year that you can't hold someone who has not committed any crime against their will. The City Council read and passed their settlement.

There has been no accounting for the death of Travis Jordan yet, and no justice for his mother, Flo. Paul Johnson has risen to the challenge to do something about police violence, and ran for Mayor of Minneapolis this past election. I last saw Paul and Taren in Uptown, protesting the shooting of Winston Smith. They show that stopping police misconduct is about more than just what happened to them. Proud to represent them.

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A Word from Taren Vang

Not many people know that on the same day the police murdered TJ (11/9/18), Paul Johnson and I were put in the back of a squad car. The officer would not let us out or give any updates on TJ.

I want to say a big THANK YOU to our lawyer Paul J. Bosman for representing us in this case against the city of Minneapolis! You were very easy to work with and really FOUGHT for changes that will help make a difference in the community. Thank you for caring! A part of the settlement included training for Mpls officers and investigators to not hold anyone who has not committed a crime against their will!



Above: Artwork by Anthea Yur.

Left: Photo by KingDemetriusPendleton. Taren Vang holds a poster of her late boyfriend, Travis Jordan.



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What are “Stolen Lives?”

We use the term Stolen Lives to refer to people who died at the hands of police or in the course of law enforcement activities.

Reinvestigation Workgroup

For every police killing, there is a conventional narrative that’s spread by police and the County Attorney to avoid holding law enforcement officers accountable. The Reinvestigation Workgroup researches all of the available evidence to find disparities in that narrative. We disseminate the authentic narrative to the families, to their attorneys, and to the media and community.

Data Practices Workgroup

Data requests are how we collect government information to find training documents, policies, and other information for our investigations. The Data Practices Workgroup works with the Reinvestigation Workgroup to request data for cases and family members.

Travis' Law

Despite comprising only 4% of the U.S. population, people who suffer from untreated severe mental illnesses (SMI) are 16 times more likely to be killed during a police incident than other civilians when approached or stopped by an officer (Fuller et al., 2015). Reducing encounters between people with SMI and police is incredibly important, especially given that 1 in 10 calls for police service are generated by persons with SMI (Fuller et al., 2015).

Most police encounters begin with one thing - a 911 call. 911 operators play a decisive role in the relationship between people with SMI and police. Instead of sending a police response, 911 operators should redirect mental health crisis calls directly to mental health professionals. Here in Minnesota, those services already exist. Yet the 34 county mobile crisis teams statewide have been underfunded and underutilized.

In order to push our state towards creating non police-only responses to mental health crises, Travis Jordan's family and CUAPB lobbied for a change in state law in spring 2021. Named, "Travis' Law," Minnesota Statute 403.03, subd. 1 now requires that 911 systems shall make a referral to mental health crisis teams where available.

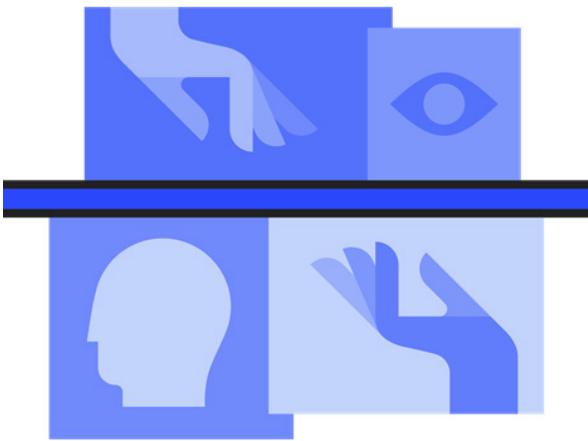
Flo Ching, the mother of Travis Jordan wrote about the bill, "If anything can come from the death of my son, this bill will help to make sure that no other family has to go through the pain our family has experienced and that people in mental health crisis will get the care they need."

403.03 911 Services to Be Provided.

Emergency response services.

(a) Services available through a 911 system must include police, firefighting, and emergency medical and ambulance services. Other emergency and civil defense services may be incorporated into the 911 system at the discretion of the public agency operating the public safety answering point.

(b) In addition to ensuring an appropriate response under paragraph (a), the 911 system shall include a referral to mental health crisis teams, where available.



Ending Police-Only Responses to Mental Health 911 Calls

911 systems will always receive some mental health-related calls, and some police contacts are unavoidable. However, a mental health crisis is a medical emergency deserving a medical response – even if the response is initiated through 911 emergency systems. The goal should be to minimize the use of police-only responses to emergency calls involving a mental health crisis.

For over three years, CUAPB’s mental health working group has been devoted to finding solutions to police encounters with people experiencing mental health issues. We asked ourselves: Why are police officers responding to mental health crisis calls despite not having the appropriate training and education to do so? Why do we have a police-only response? Why aren’t police collaborating on-scene with mental health professionals more often? Mostly importantly, what other solutions are available to us beyond the status quo to prevent people in crisis from being killed by police?

Through an extensive review of the current research on alternative responses to mental health, we found three clear paths forward:

1. Utilize robust dispatch triage to deflect calls away from police contact whenever possible
2. Provide rapid on-scene alternative responder options that utilize highly skilled mental health professionals and,
3. Implement co-response options to get mental health professionals on-scene in circumstances where a police presence cannot be avoided.

Dispatch triage involves the training and practices needed to enable 911 dispatchers to deflect calls to alternative mobile mental crisis responders. Where there is no law enforcement function or public safety concern, these calls should be deflected to non-police mobile mental crisis responders.

The passage and implementation of Travis’ Law is a small step towards building robust dispatch triage and co-response options in Minnesota. Click [here](#) to read the full 165 white paper on Dispatch Triage, Alternative Responders and Co-Response: Ending Police-Only Responses to Mental Health 911 calls or find it on the home page of [cuapb.org](#).

“Why are police officers responding to mental health crisis calls despite not having the appropriate training and education to do so?”

The 21-Foot-Rule: Dispelling Law Enforcement Training Myths

The 21-foot-rule is a pervasive myth that shapes when and at what distance police officers are trained to use deadly force against a suspect with a knife or other type of edged weapon. Encounters with knives are dangerous. Yes, dangerous to the police. But more so, dangerous for community members when they encounter police officers who have been trained using the 21-foot-rule.

Whenever a police officer uses force, particularly deadly force, in the United States, his actions are judged by whether they are objectively reasonable. The Supreme Court held in *Tennessee v. Garner* (1985) that a police shooting is considered a seizure under the Fourth Amendment. The Court later added in *Graham v. Connor* (1989) that any force used by law enforcement must be “objectively reasonable” based upon the facts and circumstances known to the officer at the time. In other words, deadly force by a police officer is justified only when the force used would have been viewed as objectively reasonable by another officer in light of the same facts and circumstances.

The 21 Foot Rule was created in 1983 by a former police officer and firearms instructor, Dennis Tueller. Also known as the “Tueller drill”, the rule states that in the time it takes an officer to unholster and draw his weapon, a person with a knife or edged weapon can close a distance of 21 feet to attack you. Despite having little empirical support, the 21-foot rule (or variations of it) is a common training practice in law enforcement education (Martinelli, 2014). Many officers have altered the 21 foot rule to be the “safe distance” to maintain between themselves and someone with a knife (Sandel et al, 2020). Others have taken the rule to mean that shooting someone with an edged weapon within 21-feet of you is an objectively reasonable use of deadly force.

The 21-foot-rule is proposed as a tool to keep officers safe. Yet, knife attacks on police officers are extremely rare. Between 2015 and 2020, only 1 out of the 304 officers killed were killed by a knife or cutting instrument (LEOKA, 2015 - 2019). Assaults with knives on officers are equally rare - comprising only 1.96% of assaults on officers between 1987 and 2018 (LEOKA, 2015 - 2019). This suggests that officers overestimate the risks presented by civilians with knives.

The rule may also leave a “training scar” on officers. As described by Sandel et al., “a training scar occurs when something done in the training environment causes the trainee to perform poorly in real-life situations,” (2020). Most firearms training is done in a sterile environment, not in dynamic, ever-changing situations like in the real world. In this way, officers are not taught to deescalate, work efficiently with a partner, or create the time and distance necessary to prevent unreasonable killings.

While encounters with people with knives are rarely fatal for police officers, they are very dangerous for community members. Between 2015 and 2021, 6,728 people have been killed by police in the United States. 16.5% of those killed were civilians armed with knives (Washington Post, 2021). These statistics tell us this: when a police officer encounters a person with a knife, it is very unlikely he’ll be killed or harmed. But when a community member, such as Travis Jordan, has a knife and encounters a police officer, the chance of being harmed may be much greater.

The 21-foot myth is not a bright line rule that justifies deadly force. Yet, many officers rely on it to justify their decision to kill. Myths like this, combined with their warrior mindset and focus on self over mission, contribute to needless deaths like those of Travis Jordan.

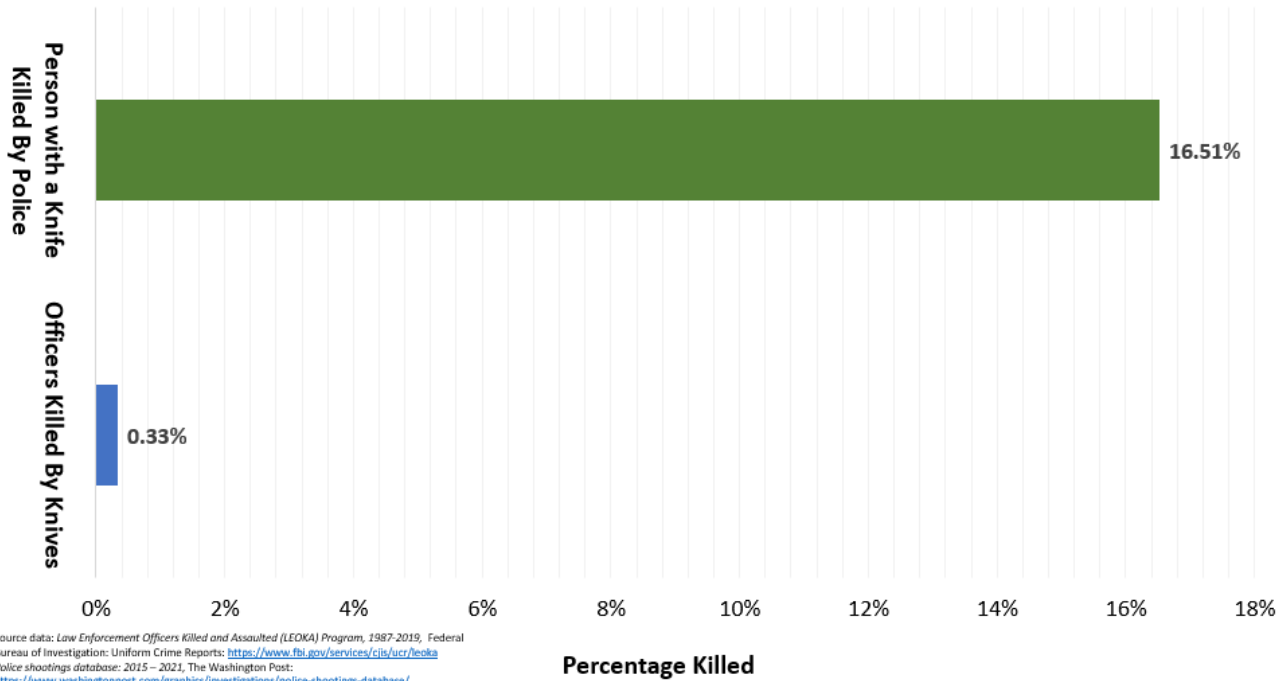
The consequences of deadly force are devastating to the family and friends of the victim and to the entire community. Families of people killed by police face overwhelming obstacles. In Minnesota, families only have three years to file civil lawsuits against the officers, police departments, and cities responsible for the death of their loved ones. Often, the police investigation of these deaths takes at least six months to a year.

It may take even longer for the investigative agency to release the evidence. The costs of a lawsuit are even more stiff: filing fees, fees for documents and transcripts, deposition costs for stenographers, hundreds of dollars an hour for expert witnesses on crime scene, reconstruction, on police procedure, on the pathology of bullet wounds, and thousands of dollars for their reports. But nothing can measure up to the cost of losing a loved one.

It is imperative, then, that how we train officers to respond to calls does not put the community at a greater risk of being killed. Yet, the current pervasiveness of the so-called “21-foot rule” in law enforcement training puts community members at risk of being unreasonably killed by police officers.



16.5% of People Killed by Police Had Edged Weapons,
While Only 0.33% of Police Officers Have Been Killed by Knives, 2015-2021





How Much Justice Can You Afford?

When a member of our community dies at the hands of law enforcement, there are giant hurdles in the way of justice for their families and the community. The investigation of the killing is handled by law enforcement itself, and then handed off to prosecutors whose daily work depends on the support of law enforcement. No wonder that only two police officers have ever been convicted in the killing of a citizen in Minnesota, and that one of those has had his charges downgraded from murder to manslaughter. This leaves lawsuits in civil court as the only kind of justice available to families of stolen lives. It can't bring back the stolen, or fire the cops, but it may be the only chance for families to tell the stories of the theft of their loved one's life. But even this justice does not come easy.

The killing of a community member at the hands of law enforcement leaves a scar on whole community, but for the families of these stolen lives, the question comes down to "How much Justice can you afford?" While Communities United Against Police Brutality helps by re-investigating the law enforcement narratives, and often helps families find an attorney, that is only the beginning of bringing a lawsuit against the police. That's where the Stolen Lives Justice Fund comes in. The costs of a lawsuit against the police are stiff: filing fees, fees for documents, deposition costs for stenographers, videographers, and rented conference rooms, fees for transcripts, hundreds of dollars an hour for expert witnesses on crime scene reconstruction, on police procedure, on the pathology of bullet wounds, and thousands of dollars for their reports.

**Who will
protect your
rights if you
won't protect
Travis Jordan's?**



The thing is that cities and states don't have to worry about these costs to defend killer cops, because you are paying them through the taxes that are taken from your paycheck or added to your lunch tab, and you can't do much about that. But you can choose to help the families of stolen lives; you can even the odds for the community through your donation to the Stolen Lives Justice Fund. So how much justice can You afford?

Can you give \$5 per month to pay for an hour of stenographer time at the deposition of a killer cop?

Can you give \$15 per month to pay for the filing of a lawsuit that lets the story finally be told at the courthouse?

Can you give \$25 per month to pay for an hour of expert witness time, so that someone can tell the cops that they are wrong?

Choose an amount and help us get justice for the families of stolen lives.

SUBSCRIBE TO THE SLJF

The Stolen Lives Justice Fund pays for court filing fees, independent autopsies and investigations, and other needs of families of people killed by police. Because we have no paid staff, 100% of your contribution goes to direct aid for families of stolen lives.

\$5 \$15 \$25 Other

Communities United Against Police Brutality is a Twin-Cities based non-profit organization that was created to deal with police brutality on an ongoing basis.

24/7 Police Brutality
Hotline: 612-874-7867



Please give any amount. Or please consider joining a monthly subscription to the SLJF today:



Scan the QR code or click to [donate through PayPal](#) or find us on Venmo @cuapb!

Looking Forward on the 3rd Year Anniversary...

By Paul Bosman, CUAPB Attorney

So this is the third anniversary of the death of Travis Jordan at the hands of two Minneapolis police officers. First, I send my love to his mother Flo today, as well as to Taren Vang, his girlfriend, and Paul Johnson his friend and roommate. There are no words for how their lives were changed.

Second, I filed a lawsuit against the two officers and the City of Minneapolis yesterday on behalf of Flo, because what happened was tragic and wrong. We don't try cases in the media though, not even social media, so I will leave that there. But...

Third, a plea to cops. If you respond to a call with a possibly suicidal person who throws a note out before walking toward you with a knife at his side, that person is probably not trying to kill you, but trying to get you to kill him. Don't let him win. Find a way to get him help instead.

Fourth, we need to address firearms technology in law and policing. In the 80's when cops carried revolvers 75% of the time a single shot to the torso would stop the person shot, but 75% of the time a person shot by the police would live after getting to the hospital. We train police to keep shooting until the threat stops, but nowadays when a cop shoots a modern automatic, you can't fall down in less than three shots, and the cop may not register that you aren't a threat until he fires four more shots. If you get hit with seven shots to the torso, it is likely fatal.

Is there a point where deadly force is just too much deadly force? (Hitting someone in the head with a stick is deadly force, as is shooting someone with an AR-15. If you have to choose between those alternatives, do you have a preference? Police training and statute don't.)

Fifth, in my mind, a good cop is the one who can talk to people and get them to talk with him or her. A really good cop could convince you to put the cuffs on yourself, and have to loosen them up because he convinced you to put them on tight. A great cop could do that and make you want to buy her a drink when you get out of jail. Can we start giving medals to the best negotiators in the face of life?

We should all think about these issues. I can't help it. Thanks for listening.

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