



*To educate on the history of the intersectionality of law enforcement and the Black community.
To advocate for social justice, equity, and effective police reform to raise the quality of life for vulnerable populations.*

Statement from The Black Police Experience on the Shooting Deaths of A.J. Crooms and Sincere Pierce

The Black Police Experience (BPX) demands justice in the shooting and killing of 16-year-old A.J. Crooms and 18-year-old Sincere Pierce—both Black—by a deputy of the Brevard County Sheriff's Office (BCSO) in Florida.

On November 13, BCSO deputies were following a Volkswagen sedan which they believed was stolen. Dashcam video shows that, as the vehicle reverses out of a driveway to head back in the direction it came, deputies exit their vehicles and order the driver of the Volkswagen to stop. The driver seemingly attempts to evade the deputies. The video shows one deputy, identified as Jafet Santiago-Miranda, fire several rounds into the vehicle. Both A.J. and Sincere were killed.

Sheriff Wayne Ivey—who has made news before for controversial decisions regarding BCSO in-custody death—stated that the deputy was “forced to fire.” BCSO also indicated that two guns were found in the Volkswagen—of course the deputy did not know that as he was firing shots into the vehicle, as no one in the vehicle brandished the weapons at the deputies. BCSO's policy states that deadly force can be used, “when a deputy has an objectively reasonable belief a subject is trying to drive a vehicle into a deputy or another person, which could cause great bodily injury or death.”

This scenario is a recurring one in the United States and part of the conversation by police reform advocates, who are recommending national use of force standards. Law enforcement experts have weighed in on the subject. The highly regarded International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) has issued policy suggestions for incidents involving use of force as it pertains to moving vehicles. The IACP's National Consensus Policy and Discussion Paper on Use of Force, Deadly Force Restrictions, states, “Firearms shall not be discharged at a moving vehicle unless 1) a person in the vehicle is threatening the officer or another person with deadly force by means other than the vehicle; or 2) the vehicle is operated in a manner deliberately intended to strike an officer or another person, and all other reasonable means of defense have been exhausted (or are not present or practical), *which includes moving out of the path of the vehicle.*

The human response when danger is approaching in the form of a 4,000-pound vehicle is to move out of the way. Law enforcement's response to these encounters is always that the officer was in “fear”—yet citizens are not allowed to act out of fear of the police. A reasonable action for a frightened teenager is to flee, and we contend that a reasonable action for a police officer in this case would be to place themselves away from a moving vehicle, not go near it.

It is the opinion of BPX that the deaths of the teens were unnecessary and the action of the deputy grossly negligent. We stand strongly against the continued unnecessary use of deadly force when law enforcement officers engage subjects who are driving vehicles that are suspected to be involved in a criminal matter. Be clear—driving a presumed stolen vehicle is not enough to justify death. The video shows that not all life-saving options were utilized. It will take more than training to reinforce that protection of life—including that of a suspect—is paramount; not just the protection of officers' lives. It will also take a shift in cultural mindset, reinforced by policy and law. Arguing non-compliance as an easy justification for taking lives is not acceptable. The issue is urgent and requires that law enforcement be a vested and accountable part of the solution.

BPX joins police reform advocates to push for use of force policy that mirrors the suggestions put forth by IACP and police reform advocates. We ask that federal, state, and local lawmakers bolster these policies with the weight of the law. We demand that the BCSO release all video footage obtained by the agency. Finally, as always, we expect that Brevard County hold the involved deputies accountable for their actions, and that justice is served for A.J. Crooms, Sincere Pierce and their loved ones.

THE BLACK POLICE EXPERIENCE

110 University Boulevard W, #742, Silver Spring, MD 20918-0742

Phone: 240-876-7358

www.therealbpx.com