

# Good guys, bad guys and confusion

Despite best intentions, people with guns at shooting scenes can wind up dead



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When police officers converge on a scene that's being terrorized by an active shooter and find a nonuniformed person with a drawn gun, the cops might shoot that armed person to death even if he's a good guy.

That's apparently what happened at a shopping mall in Hoover, Alabama, on Thanksgiving, when officers responding to shots fired found Emantic Bradford Jr. holding a handgun.

Bradford, 21, was shot in the back three times by police. The Hoover Police Department originally said Bradford was the shooter terrorizing the mall and called the officer who killed him a "hero." But Erron Martez Dequan Brown, 20, was arrested last week and charged with shooting an 18-year-old who was injured at the mall.

Bradford, it turns out, was a licensed gun owner trying to

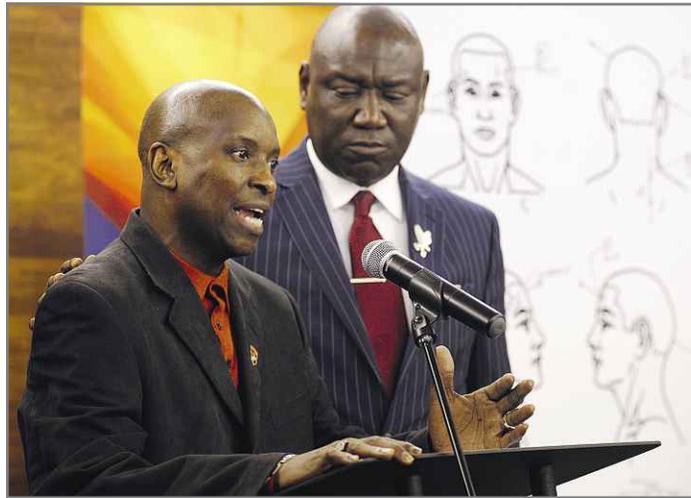
help. Local police and state investigators refuse to release officer video and other evidence. And the fact that Bradford was a young black man has injected race into the issue, fairly or not.

Of course, sometimes a good guy with a gun helps. In April 2009, a 12-step meeting I had attended years before in Columbia, South Carolina, was interrupted by an armed robber demanding money. One of the attendees had a legal handgun and, heroically, killed the robber.

There is no single truth about the good guy with a gun. But it's clear that no matter how well-trained the armed Samaritan on the scene is, his or her presence can add confusion for police who respond.

It was that confusion that got Nassau County Police Officer Geoffrey Breitkopf killed in Massapequa Park on March 12, 2011.

On that day, Anthony DiGeronimo was seen walking on Front Street, wearing a white mask and carrying two knives, behaving erratically. Residents called 911, and a call went out for officers to respond that also was heard by



AP / JAY REEVES

Emantic Bradford Sr., left, discusses forensic exam results on the Thanksgiving shooting death of his son Emantic Bradford Jr.

off-duty and retired officers.

When Breitkopf, a member of Nassau's elite special operations unit, arrived on scene in plain clothes and carrying a rifle, DiGeronimo had already been killed after lurching toward officers with his knives. But Breitkopf was shot to death by Metropolitan Transportation Authority Officer Glen Gentile, who heard the call at the Massapequa train station and responded. Once on the scene, Gentile heard John Ca-

farella, a retired NYPD sergeant who also had responded and tried to organize the response, yell, "Gun!" upon seeing Breitkopf. When Gentile struggled with Breitkopf, then killed him, dispatchers had put out a call to slow the response because DiGeronimo was dead.

Knowing this, I'd guess that police are terrified of even legally armed good Samaritans, but Nassau County Police Commissioner Patrick Ryder disagrees.

"When I look at protecting the

1.3 million people of Nassau County, I can't protect them all with a bodyguard," he said. "In the chaos of an active shooter on the loose, an armed Good Samaritan can help a lot."

But Ryder acknowledges he feels that way because in Nassau, 90 percent of the people licensed to carry in public are current or former cops, which is not the case everywhere. And while his department trains to react to such scenes, human error is possible.

Ryder says Nassau police are working with the recently approved armed guards in the Massapequa schools. In Northport-East Northport, the district just voted against armed guards. Adding guns to a scene in the hope of cutting down on shootings is a tough call.

And anyone who has a gun drawn and isn't wearing a uniform when police arrive at an active shooting scene, whether they are teachers or off-duty cops or just citizens, is in serious danger, from the cops responding and the criminal ram-paging. And they might endanger others, too.

Lane Filler is a member of Newsday's editorial board.



AP / WILLIAM D. LEWIS

Venus Walker, a 12-year employee, prays at a vigil outside GM's Lordstown, Ohio, plant Nov. 29. It is one of five plants GM will close.

executives fall off the cliff like lemmings. MAGA: making America groan again.

Edward B. "Woody" Ryder IV, Greenlawn

I was surprised that GM foresees 14,000 layoffs and is reducing production of sedans.

To have only trucks and SUVs on the road is ridiculous. They make more money for the company, but that rationale leaves many folks with fewer options. Sedan cars have been around for a long time and proved invaluable. Imagine even more trucks and SUVs going to the train sta-

tion or just for errands. They use more gas, occupy extra space and are often unnecessary for single people, small families or seniors.

As a Chevy Cruze owner, I am a big fan of GM. I hope all sedans will not disappear. If anything, downsizing to smaller vehicles makes more sense, though less money for the company. I hope GM changes its mind.

Julie L. Newman, West Babylon

## Deliveries to work? Consider your courier.

Your Nov. 30 news story "Tips to keep parcels safe" quoted Nassau County officials as recommending that people avoid theft by having online purchases delivered to their workplaces.

I'm a courier for the Suffolk County Water Authority, where our mailroom accepts deliveries. I, in turn, have to fill out a

form for each package, deliver it and get a signature.

So before you have a Barbie DreamHouse delivered to your job, think about the poor courier. Shipping online isn't so easy for everyone.

George Ghossn, East Islip

## Albany lawmakers don't deserve raises

It is unconscionable that a salary increase would be considered for the New York State Legislature when it already is one of the nation's highest-paid part-time government bodies. It is in session 60 days out of six months of the year, for which the average salary is \$92,000 when adding stipends ["Pay raise panel must get tough," Editorial, Dec. 4].

The lawmakers' legislative productivity is negligible. If our legislators were to pass unblemished and comprehensive measures for ethics reform, govern-

ment accountability and easier access to the ballot, with full transparency and demonstrated fiscal responsibility, perhaps than we could entertain salary increases.

The first order of business seems to be not the people's business, but their own — tapping the treasury, soaking the taxpayer and enriching themselves. Why should we incentivize more of the same? If legislators are unable to survive on what we pay them, perhaps they should leave office.

It is not a question of how long they have gone without an increase, but rather what value have they brought to the state and the taxpayer.

Michael Berman, Wantagh

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