

The Evening Sun

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Shooters still at large following mass killing in Sacramento

By ADAM BEAM and
KATHLEEN ROHAYNE
Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — A suspect believed connected to the mass shooting in Sacramento was arrested, but the multiple shooters police believe fatally shot six people and wounded 12 on a crowded street in California's capital are still on the loose.

More than 100 shots were fired early Sunday in downtown Sacramento, creating a chaotic scene with hundreds of people trying desperately to get to safety. A day later police announced the arrest of Dandrea Martin, 26, as a "related suspect" on charges of assault with a deadly weapon and being a convict carrying a loaded gun. A court appearance was set for Tuesday.

Detectives and SWAT team members found one handgun during searches of three area homes.

The arrest came as the three women and three men killed were identified. The shooting occurred at about 2 a.m. Sunday as bars were closing and patrons filled the streets near the state Capitol. The fallen included a father of four, a young woman who wanted to be a social worker, a man described as the life of the party, and a woman

who lived on the streets nearby and was looking for housing.

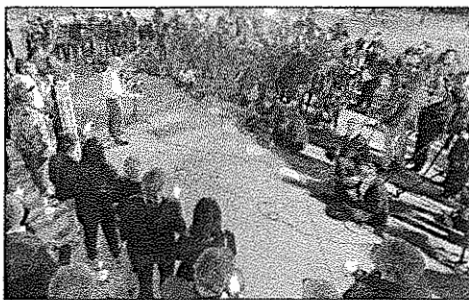
The Sacramento County coroner identified the women killed as Jontaya Alexander, 21; Melinda Davis, 57; and Yamile Martinez-Andrade, 21. The three men were Sergio Harris, 38; Joshua Hoye-Luchesi, 32; and Devaiza Turner, 29.

Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg read their names during a vigil Monday evening attended by grieving relatives, friends and community members.

"So we gather here to remember the victims and to commit ourselves to doing all we can to ending the stain of violence, not only in our community but throughout the state, throughout the country, and throughout the world," Steinberg said.

Turner, who had three daughters and a son, was a "protector" who worked as the night manager at an inventory company, his mother, Ponchipe Scott, told The Associated Press. He rarely went out, and she had no reason to believe he would be in harm's way when he left her house after he visited Saturday night.

"My son was walking down the street and somebody started shooting, and he got shot. Why is that to



Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg reads the names of the shooting victims during a candlelight vigil held at Ali Youssefi Square in Sacramento, Calif., late Monday, April 4, 2022. Multiple people were killed and injured after a shooting that occurred early Sunday. (Jose Carlos Fajardo/Bay Area News Group via AP)

happen?" Scott said. "I feel like I've got a hole in my heart."

The burst of gunshots sent people running in terror in the neighborhood just a few blocks from the arena where the NBA's Sacramento Kings play.

Police were investigating whether the shooting was connected with a street fight that broke out just before gunfire erupted.

Several people could be seen in videos scuffling on a street lined with an upscale hotel, nightclubs and bars when gunshots

sent people scattering.

Detectives also are trying to determine if a stolen handgun found at the crime scene was connected to the shooting. Police Chief Kathy Lester said. Witnesses answered her plea for help by providing more than 100 videos and photos of evidence.

District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert noted Martin was not arrested on suspicion of homicide, but suggested investigators were making progress.

"The investigation is highly complex involving

many witnesses, videos of numerous types and significant physical evidence," Schubert said in a statement. "This is an ongoing investigation and we anticipate more arrests in this case."

Martin was held without bail and was scheduled to appear in Sacramento County Superior Court on Tuesday, according to jail records.

Martin was freed from an Arizona prison in 2020 after serving just over 1 1/2 years for violating probation in separate cases

involving a felony conviction for aggravated assault in 2018 and a conviction on a marijuana charge in 2018. Court records show he pleaded guilty to punching, kicking and choking a woman in a hotel room when she refused to work for him as a prostitute.

It was not immediately clear whether Martin had an attorney who could speak on his behalf.

Of the 12 wounded, at least four suffered critical injuries, the Sacramento Fire Department said. At least seven of the victims had been released from hospitals by Monday.

At the scene where the chaos erupted, materials with candles and flowers began to grow on the same sidewalks where video showed people screaming and running for shelter as others lay on the ground writhing in pain.

A small bouquet of purple roses was dedicated to Melinda Davis, who lived on the streets for years, with a note saying "Melinda Rest in Peace."

Politicians decried the shooting, and some Democrats, including President Joe Biden, called for tougher action against gun violence.

California has some of the nation's toughest restrictions on firearms, requiring background

checks to buy guns and ammunition, limiting magazines to 10 bullets, and banning firearms that fall into its definition of assault weapons.

But state lawmakers plan to go further. A bill getting its first hearing Tuesday would allow citizens to sue those who possess illegal weapons, a measure patterned after a controversial Texas bill aimed at abortions.

Other proposed California legislation this year would make it easier for people to sue gun companies and target registered "ghost guns," firearms made from build-it-yourself kits.

The California Assembly held a moment of silence Monday in honor of the victims. Assemblymember Kevin McCarthy, a Democrat who represents Sacramento, noted lawmakers could see the crime scene from the building's balcony.

"Tragedy is too small of a word to describe what occurred just two nights ago as a devastating loss for our city," McCarthy said.

Associated Press writers Steve Austin, Brian Melny and Christopher Weber in Los Angeles, Don Thompson in Sacramento, Jacques Bilhouard in Phoenix and Steve Koenig in New York City contributed to this story.

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Chenango Bird Club kicking off 40th season this month —

Continued from Page 1

ing bird walk," said Knapp. "For example, we might go to Montezuma, which is on the north shore of Cayuga Lake in the Finger Lakes, because they have a tremendous amount of birds there. Or we might

go to Franklin Mountain, which is in Oneonta, in the fall when the birds are migrating because on any given day you can see hundreds of raptors flying over. Golden eagles or bald eagles. It's a pretty fascinating thing."

The club also participates in the Audubon Christmas Bird Count each year, which covers a 7.5-mile radius around Sherburne.

[We] just survey the whole area for what birds we might see, and that's reported through the Audubon Society. It's originally coordinated through them," said Smith. That Christmas Bird Count program is over 100 years old, but of course our bird club, we've been doing it since

sometime in the 60s. Similar to the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, the Chenango Bird Club will be hosting their first ever Big Bird Day on Saturday, May 14. According to Smith, participants will go to the same 7.5-mile area around Sherburne to catch a glimpse of local birds.

"We're going to spread out all among it, and that day we're going to see how many different species of birds we can tally. And that's the height of the migratory season, so we're hoping for a big number," said Knapp.

It's not as regulated as the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, so we can introduce people who want to learn something about birding. They can go with people who do it every year," he continued. "We're going to have that all day, but we're going to meet at lunch back at Rogers Center and have a little picnic, a little get together."

All meetings and events hosted by the club are open to the public, and membership is not a requirement. Smith said they "just want people to who are interested to come and see what they can learn, and see if they're interested."

Those who would like to get more involved and become a member of the Chenango Bird Club can join for a small fee. Membership is \$5 for students, \$8 for individuals, and \$12 for a family. Becoming a member provides the opportunity to learn from seasoned birders, and learn more about birds in the area.

Another perk of becoming a member is access to the quarterly Chenango Bird Club newsletter, The Goldfinch, which can be delivered via postal mail or email. The Goldfinch features information about the local bird population.

Smith said they "just want people to who are interested to come and see what they can learn, and see if they're interested."

For more information on the Chenango Bird Club, contact Club President John Knapp at 607-372-1242. To learn more about area birds or share bird sightings, join the Chenango Bird Club Facebook page.

information from members on unusual bird sightings in the area.

Overall, the group's main goal is to encourage an interest and appreciation of nature.

"This is our 40th year, and like every other year we are always looking to welcome anybody who has any interest not only in birds, but in nature itself," said Knapp. "Besides looking at the birds, we try to foster an appreciation of nature as a whole."

For more information on the Chenango Bird Club, contact Club President John Knapp at 607-372-1242. To learn more about area birds or share bird sightings, join the Chenango Bird Club Facebook page.

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Continued from Page 1

Angelo not only wishes to give judges more discretion on bail as they did before. Judges should be able to require bail for violent defendants and those who repeatedly break the law.

Additionally, the lawmakers would like to reverse the damaging changes made to the discovery process which put victims, witnesses, and first responders at risk.

"New Yorkers know how bad this law has been. How

long is it going to take for the Democrats to walk back their mistake. They need to join us now to fully bring an end to bail reform, and re-establish a ruleset that reforms the system and protects the vulnerable at the same time. We're ready to meet whenever they'd like," Lemondex said.

Here are additional proposals being supported:

- Bail for Gun Crimes (A.7066): Removes all gun crimes from the no-bail list of offenses Democrats established in 2019.
- Shooting Into Crowds (A.4259): Makes it a Class

B violent felony to fire into a crowded space with the intent to harm.

Additional Law 5 Years for Possession (A.4762): Provides for an additional 5-year term of imprisonment for committing a felony while possessing a loaded firearm.

- Paul's Law (A.6037): Prevents the parole of anyone who sexually assaults and murders a child under 18 years of age.

- Information provided by the offices of NY Assemblyman Angelo and Lemondex

New Preston Supervisor represents area at Albany conference with state leaders —

Continued from Page 1

the state showed the average cost for two children in care is \$2,047 per month or \$24,564 per year, and federal recommendations for spending claimed that childcare should not be more than seven percent of a family's income.

Meseck said based on that recommendation, a family with two children is expected to have an annual income of approximately \$350,414

to appropriately budget for childcare costs. He said while there are subsidies to help both parents who need childcare and the individuals providing it - the need for her-service remains prevalent even in Chenango County.

"Childcare costs in New York are unbearable for most working class parents," said Meseck. "For those who are paying for childcare, finding an available care provider proves to be another issue."

"There is an alarming disconnect between childcare cost and financial guidelines - between the federal government and the reality of childcare in our state."

With an average median household income of approximately \$52,000, Meseck said it's no wonder why many parents would choose to stay home with children rather than work to spend most of their pay on childcare costs.

He added that childcare was only one of

several major topics that were discussed at the meeting, and anyone interested in learning more can reach out to preston@co.chenango.ny.us for additional information.

"Partnering with other counties is such a valuable resource, and I was honored to have the opportunity to represent us at that conference," said Meseck.

- Information provided by Town of Preston Supervisor Zachary Meseck

New NYC mayor Adams strives for order, post-COVID comeback

By MICHELLE L. PRICE
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Many New Yorkers just want their city to feel orderly, functional and fun again after two years of plague and social disruption. Their new mayor, Eric Adams, has promised to deliver.

The question is, can the Democrat who pledged to bring back New York's "swagger" gain momentum in the face of repeated setbacks?

Adams' optimism remained high even as he marked his 100th day as mayor Sunday by going into quarantine after testing positive for COVID-19.

A hands-on politician and nightlife enthusiast, Adams, 61, caught the virus after a whirlwind week typical of his persona and time in office: He had attended the Gridiron dinner in Washington, gone to a New York gala, posed with Robert de Niro at a film festival, attended the Yankees opener and a slew of events in the state Capitol.

"I'm going to continue to try to be as visible as possible as we get through COVID and many of the other crises that we're facing," Adams said Monday, promising to resume his busy schedule after recovering from the virus.

In his first 100 days in office, Adams has projected an aggressive confidence as he's implemented policies aimed at combating an image of New York City as hobbled by the pandemic and beset by rising crime.

He dropped many COVID-19 precautions and is reluctant to bring them back, even as virus cases have steadily risen.

He's ordered homeless encampments removed from public spaces, despite complaints from activists that the sweeps are inhumane.

Over the objection of progressives, Adams, a former police captain, brought back an NYPD anti-gun unit disbanded by the previous mayor, saying that with better oversight it will shed its past reputation for using excessive force.

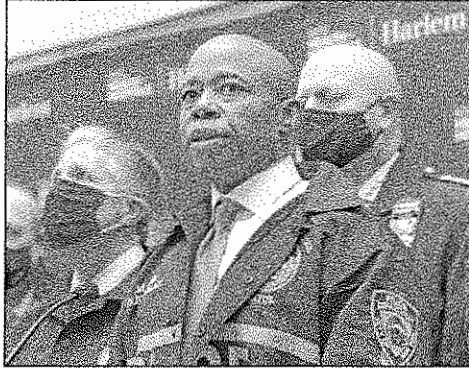
Critics say Adams is embracing the worst tendencies of previous mayors known for their heavy-handed approach to policing and social services.

Adams says he doesn't like chaos, as "Saturday Night Live" noted in his first days in office. Instead, he is seeking to harness the city's tangy dynamism.

"That is what I think our failure is in our city: We have thrown up our hands and said this city is not manageable. That is just not true," he said in an interview with The Associated Press on Thursday, prior to testing positive for COVID-19.

He said he starts every morning poring over a series of spreadsheets filled with data on his key initiatives.

When inspecting his efforts to clear tents and makeshift shelters set up by homeless people, Adams scrolls through hundreds of color-coded rows listing



New York Mayor Eric Adams speaks during the press conference at Harlem Hospital after the shooting of a New York City Police Department officer, in Harlem, Friday, Jan. 21, 2022, in New York. There were unrelenting crises in his first month: a fire ripped through a high-rise apartment building, killing 17 people; a baby was wounded and shot in the face; an officer was wounded and shot in the head; two other officers were fatally shot while responding to a call. (AP Photo/Yuki Iwamura File)

individual encampments reported to the city — some that the mayor has phoned in himself.

He checks to see if the entries are shaded blue by someone in his administration, indicating city workers have posted notices they're about to clean the area. He checks to see that the blue entries are later turned yellow, coded as a "successful cleanup." If too many days pass and the colors don't change, he'll make a call to find out why.

At a news conference last month, he said the city cleared 239 encampments in its first 12 days. Although the city didn't offer data

about how many people were living at the encampments, only five accepted offers to move to a shelter.

Adams said he thinks the number will grow, as it did with efforts to reach out to homeless people in the subway system.

The mayor also checks daily spreadsheets laying out data on crime, the city's sprawling transit system, affordable and supportive housing units, and hires and promotions in his government.

He likened himself to an airline pilot who sits down and checks his instruments before taking off, calling the city a "complex piece of

machinery."

"You have to constantly inspect what you expect, or it's suspect," Adams said, using one of his favored catchphrases.

Adams, a former New York City police captain, state lawmaker and elected borough president of Brooklyn, had to deal with unrelenting crises in his first month in office.

A fire ripped through a high-rise apartment building, killing 17 people; a baby was wounded by gunfire; two police officers were fatally shot while responding to a call; a woman was pushed to her death in front of a subway

train by a stranger.

"Outside of 9/11, I don't know if another mayor was just inundated with so much at one time," Adams remarked.

Crime, which has risen in cities across the U.S., has become one of his chief concerns.

It's by far the thorniest issue Adams took on, said Jon Reinish, a Democratic political strategist in New York City. But 100 days is still early, Reinish said, and a better barometer of progress would be a year into the administration.

"I think that he has navigated that well so far, but Rome wasn't built in a day," he said.

New York City's elected public advocate Jumaane Williams, a progressive Democrat who serves as a city ombudsman, praised Adams for partnering with him on issues like food insecurity, Black maternal health and summer jobs for young people. But he said he's concerned about too much emphasis on policing and not enough focus on mental health.

Adams, who is Black, points out that he spoke out about racial and unjust practices in the department while he was an officer. He says police can learn from the mistakes of the past while using new tools like body cameras to stay accountable — but the city also can't go back to the days of high rates of violent crime.

"I know I don't want to go back to the violence or the abuse. Some people only talk about not going

back to the abuse," he said.

Critics have also called Adams' actions to clear homeless encampments short-sighted, especially when some people living on the street say they don't feel safe in the city's shelters and there's not enough affordable housing to provide a long-term solution.

"It sounds to me like we're doing the last thing first," Williams said. Adams contends it's inhumane to accept that people sleep on the street, and defends his plan by pointing to a city law guaranteeing a right to space in a shelter for any homeless person who needs it.

But he also notes that when an encampment is cleared, "It is just unbelievable how visually, it just changes your mindset of your neighborhood. And that is part of the goal. Because we're dealing with an actual problem and the perception of a problem."

Perception, he said, is also why he's posting photos and videos on social media of himself shoveling snow during snowstorms or is seen meeting people all over the city and hitting up restaurants, night clubs and glitzy events.

"We have to get the city back up and operating and many New Yorkers are starting to do so. And they need to see me in the process," he said. "As I deal with the crises, I also have to be on that red carpet. Because Broadway is a major economic driver for our city."

Plea deal: No prison for attack on Black teen at NYC hotel

By MICHAEL R. SISAK
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A California woman who was accused of attacking a Black teen at a New York City hotel, grabbing at him as he tried to leave, has reached a plea deal that spares her from prison if she avoids trouble.

Miya Ponsetto, 23, pleaded guilty Monday to unlawful imprisonment as a hate crime, a felony, but will have a chance to plead to a misdemeanor or aggravated harassment

charge if she follows the terms of the agreement.

For that to happen, Ponsetto must abide by the terms of her probation for a separate drunk driving and resisting arrest case in her home state for two years, continue to receive counseling and have no further arrests. If she does not comply, she faces up to four years in prison, prosecutors said.

Miya Ponsetto has been leading an exemplary life since this incident with the young man close to a year and a half ago, Ponsetto's lawyer, Paul D'Emilia, said.

"We are appreciative of the district attorney's thoughtful and empathetic approach to finding an acceptable conclusion — especially in light of the unreasonable pressure brought to bear by many voices not familiar with the more granular details of what occurred that evening," D'Emilia said.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg said Ponsetto's plea agreement "ensures appropriate accountability by addressing the underlying causes for her behavior and ensuring that it does not recur."

"Ms. Ponsetto displayed outrageous behavior," Bragg said in a statement. "As a Black man, I have personally experienced racial profiling, countless times in my life and I sympathize with the young man victimized in this incident."

Video showed Ponsetto grabbing at 14-year-old Keyon Harrold Jr. as he tried to get away after she accused him of stealing her phone at the Arlo Hotel in Manhattan in December 2020. The phone was found soon afterward in an Uber.

The teen's father, jazz trumpeter Keyon Harrold,

recorded the confrontation and put the video online. In it, Ponsetto is seen demanding the teen's phone, claiming he stole it. A hotel manager tried to intervene. Keyon Harrold can be heard in the recording telling the woman to leave his son alone.

Security video later released by the NYPD shows Ponsetto frantically grabbing at the teen as he tried to get away from her through the hotel's front door. She's seen clutching him from behind before both tumble to the ground. Ponsetto, of Pinar,

California, initially appeared to apologize, but later backed off in a tense interview on a morning CBS news show. The teen's family filed a lawsuit against Ponsetto and the hotel, alleging racial profiling. The case is pending.

D'Emilia described the encounter as an "unfortunate misunderstanding" and said the misdemeanor harassment charge to which she will plead if she stays out of trouble "more realistically reflects her actions that night at the Arlo Hotel." "It is Ms. Ponsetto's wish that Keyon Harrold accept

her regrets and apology for her behavior that evening, and that all involved can move forward with added insight and compassion," D'Emilia said.



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Police shoot man armed with machete in NYC domestic dispute

NEW YORK (AP) — A man armed with a machete was shot by police Monday in New York City after officers responded to a report that the man was threatening his family, police said.

Officers responding to the call in an apartment in Queens fired three shots at the man, wounding him in the groin, after displaying a stun gun in no effect. Chief of Department Kenneth Corey said.

The man was expected to survive. He was taken to a hospital and was undergoing surgery, Corey said.

According to police, four uniformed officers went to the apartment around 9:48 a.m. after the mother of the man's child called 911 and said the man was armed, in the midst of a mental health episode and refusing to leave.

The woman told the 911 dispatcher that the man had taken pills and said he wanted to die, Corey said.

When officers arrived, they found the man holding the grandmother of his 3-year-old child, police said. Corey said the man confronted officers in a narrow hallway as they tried

getting people out of the apartment.

Officers tried to subdue the man with a stun gun before opening fire, Corey said. No other injuries were reported.

The woman who called 911 disputed the police version of events, shouting to reporters that officers didn't ask questions, dragged her mother to the floor and ripped her shirt off before shooting the man in front of the child. She said she feared the city's children's services agency was "trying to take my kid away from me because I called the police over an argument."

2022 Spring Pickup

The City of Norwich is currently conducting a City-wide curbside pickup of yard debris until May 25th with the following guidelines:

- Brush is to be bundled and tied with string, twine or rope (NO WIRE)
- Length of brush and branches no longer than 6'
- Largest diameter of brush and branches is 3"
- Leaves, grass clippings and twigs put in clear OR black plastic bags or biodegradable paper bags ONLY. Bags must NOT contain garbage. No cardboard boxes.
- All items to be placed between curb and sidewalk area
- All items must be light enough for 1 person to lift shoulder high

We CANNOT pick up the following items:

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Patrick Lyoya shooting raises issue of officer name release

By COREY WILLIAMS and
DON BAIWIN
Associated Press

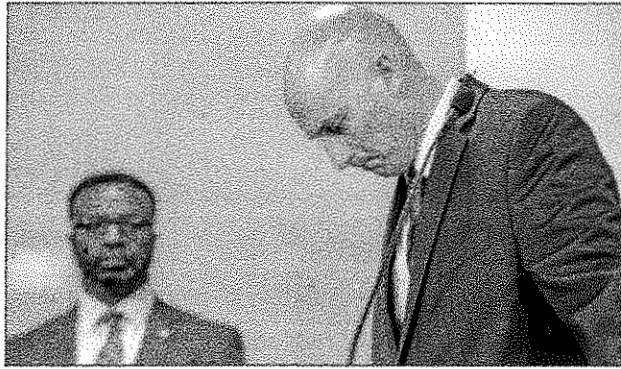
Patrick Lyoya's father says he and his family have a right to know the name of the white officer who fatally shot the 26-year-old Black man.

But the police chief in Grand Rapids, Michigan, says he will only do so if the officer is charged in the April 4 shooting that followed a brief foot chase and a struggle over the officer's Taser.

Eric Winstrom's department is among those across the U.S. that have faced scrutiny for withholding identities of officers in cases where Black people were wounded or killed during interactions with police. Some have said it's to protect the officers from retribution. Others, like Grand Rapids, point to policies that prohibit the release of an officer's name before charges are filed.

"I'm asking for the law to release his face, his image and his identification because I would love to know the person who has killed my son. I have the right," Peter Lyoya said through a translator during an emotional news conference after video of the shooting of his son was released last week.

Andrew Shannon, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference Peninsula Chapter and vice president for the SCLC Virginia State Unit, said police departments should treat officers



Grand Rapids Police Chief Eric Winstrom, right, and Grand Rapids City Manager Mark Washington react as a TV display shows video evidence of a Grand Rapids police officer slugging with and shooting Patrick Lyoya at Grand Rapids City Hall on Wednesday, April 13, 2022. Lyoya, 26, was shot and killed about 8:10 a.m. on April 4, after what police said was a traffic stop. (Cory Morse/The Grand Rapids Press via AP)

who are under investigation like they would anyone else.

"They always report who the suspect is and they report who the victim is, except in cases of rape," Shannon told The Associated Press. "There should be no special treatment when law enforcement are involved in these types of matters. They should want to demonstrate transparency and openness so everyone can be fully apprised of the process."

Lyoya was felled on the ground when an officer shot him in the back of the head while straddling Lyoya. The officer had

stopped Lyoya for driving with a license plate that didn't belong to the vehicle.

The funeral for Lyoya, a native of Congo, is scheduled Friday in Grand Rapids, about 150 miles (240 kilometers) northwest of Detroit. The Rev. Al Sharpton is scheduled to deliver the eulogy.

While Winstrom said he could not release the officer's name, he did release videos of the shooting, citing a need for transparency. The officer could be heard repeatedly ordering Lyoya to "let go" of his Taser, at one point demanding: "Drop the Taser!"

Ben Crump, an attorney

for Lyoya's family, planned to release results of an independent autopsy on Tuesday.

Michigan State Police are investigating. The prosecutor who will determine whether the officer will face any charges has said not to expect a quick decision.

A Grand Rapids police spokeswoman said Monday in an email that a person's name, age, other basic information and the charges against him can be released following an arrest or issuance of an arrest warrant.

"Not releasing the officer's name is consistent with" the procedure, Jennifer Kaleczuk wrote.

Monday, Federal authorities said they will not criminally charge Van Dyke.

In response to criticism of how the McDonald shooting was handled, the city made changes. While police still will not release an officer's name unless he's charged, the agency that reviews those shootings does so regardless. City policy also requires that video be released within 60 days.

Last year, within a month of two separate fatal shootings by police, including of a 13-year-old boy, the Civilian Office of Police Accountability released officers' names. Prosecutors have said the officers won't face charges. Ephraim Eaddy, spokesman for the agency, said it has concluded that officers' names cannot be held back because they are public servants.

If the release of the names of the Chicago officers involved in the two 2021 shootings seemed to come quickly, the name of the Kenosha, Wisconsin, police officer who shot Jacob Blake several times in 2020 was made public in lightning speed.

Three days after that shooting, the Wisconsin Department of Justice issued a news release that included Officer Rusten Sheskey's name.

The decision came

after the Kenosha Police Department handed the investigation over to the state's Justice Department "for complete transparency," said Kenosha police Lt. Joseph Nosalik.

Nosalik said he agreed with the decision. Had the department refused to release the name, Nosalik said he would have called to ask why.

"The public has a right to know ... and unless there's a logical reason like it might put the officer's safety and his family in jeopardy, I don't see a reason why the name can't be released," he said.

In fact, he said, the Kenosha police moved to "extricate" Sheskey's family from their home after learning that they might be in danger, and suggested the same concern might be part of the reason why authorities in Grand Rapids have not released the officer's name.

Crump, the Lyoyas' attorney, said having the officer's name would allow the family to find out more about him.

"We want to know his history," Crump said last week. "I can guarantee you, they're going to do everything in their power to try to learn the history of Patrick to assassinate his character."

Judge rules Amazon must reinstate fired warehouse worker

By HALELUYA HADERO
AP Business Writer

A judge has ruled Amazon must reinstate a former warehouse employee who was fired in the early days of the pandemic, saying the company "unlawfully" terminated the worker who led a protest calling for Amazon to do more to protect employees against COVID-19.

The dispute involving Gerald Bryson, who worked at an Amazon warehouse in the New York City borough of Staten Island, has stretched on since June 2020, when Bryson filed an unfair labor practice complaint with The National Labor Relations Board, claiming Amazon retaliated against him.

Later that year, the NLRB said it found merit in Bryson's complaint that Amazon illegally fired him for workplace organizing. Amazon didn't accept the findings, and the federal board filed a formal complaint against the company, triggering a lengthy administrative court process.

On Monday, administrative law judge Benjamin Green said Amazon must offer Bryson his job back, as well as lost wages and benefits resulting from his "discriminatory discharge."

Amazon spokesperson Kelly Nantel said in a statement that the company will appeal the ruling. "We strongly disagree with this ruling and are surprised the NLRB would want any employer to condone Mr. Bryson's behavior," Nantel said. "Mr. Bryson was fired for bullying, cursing at and defaming a female co-worker over a bullhorn in front of the workplace. We do not tolerate that type of conduct in our workplaces and intend to file an appeal with the NLRB."



An Amazon logo appears on an Amazon delivery van, Thursday, Oct. 1, 2020, in Boston. On Monday, April 18, 2022, a judge ordered Amazon to reinstate a former employee who was fired in the early days of the pandemic after leading a protest calling for the company to do more to protect workers against COVID-19. (AP Photo/Stevan Sere, File)

Bryson first participated in a March 2020 protest over working conditions led by Chris Smalls, another warehouse employee who was fired by the online retail giant and is heading up the Amazon Labor Union, the nascent group which won a union election earlier this month at the Amazon facility where both men worked.

After Smalls was fired, Bryson led another protest in April 2020 in front of the warehouse. While off the job during the protest, Bryson got into a dispute with another worker. He was later fired for violating Amazon's vulgar-language policy.

Court filings give an account of the altercation between Bryson and a female employee. A recording of their dispute detailed by the NLRB showed both Bryson and the woman using profanities during a heated exchange that lasted several minutes. The agency's account shows the woman began the exchange, and twice tried to provoke Bryson into a physical altercation with her, which he did not do.

The woman was given a "first warning."

The woman also told Bryson, who is Black, to "go back to the Bronx," which the judge said "racial" since he is African-American and might question why, other than his race, someone would assume he is from the Bronx.

Bryson testified that he informed an Amazon manager who spoke with him about the incident about that comment. The manager has denied Bryson made a reference to a racial comment. But the judge sided with Bryson's account, saying it was unlikely that he would "fail to convey such a prominent remark to which he had a strong reaction."

The judge said in his decision that Amazon rushed to judgment and pursued a "skewed investigation" into the argument designed to blame only Bryson for that incident, adding the company wanted discharge Bryson for his "provoked" concerted activity instead of fairly evaluating what happened.

In its investigation into the altercation, Greene said Amazon "preferred not to obtain information from someone who was protesting with Bryson even though that person was likely in the best position to explain what happened."

Instead, he said multiple witness accounts of the incident submitted by the company were coincidentally "one-sided," adding he found it implausible the statements were made "unless such accounts were solicited from them."

The NLRB had also pushed for Bryson's reinstatement in a federal lawsuit filed last month, using a provision of the National Labor Relations Act that allows it to seek temporary relief in federal court while a case goes through the administrative law process. Amazon has used the case as one of its objections over the Staten Island election results, accusing the agency of tainting the vote by pursuing Bryson's reinstatement in the lead-up to the election.

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Musk's 'free speech' push for Twitter: Repeating history?

By BARBARA GRUTAY and
AMANDA SEITZ
Associated Press

Elon Musk, the world's richest man, is spending \$44 billion to acquire Twitter with the stated aim of turning it into a haven for "free speech." There's just one problem: The social platform has been down this road before, and it didn't end well.

A decade ago, a Twitter executive dubbed the company "the free speech party" to underscore its commitment to untrammeled freedom of expression. Subsequent events put that moniker to the test, as repressive regimes cracked down on Twitter users, particularly in the wake of the short-lived "Arab Spring" demonstrations. In the U.S., a visceral 2014 article by journalist Amanda Hess exposed the incessant, vile harassment many women faced just for posting on Twitter or other online forums.

Over the subsequent years, Twitter learned a few things about the consequences of running a largely unmoderated social platform — one of the most important being that companies generally don't want their ads running against violent threats, hate speech that bleeds into incitement, and misinformation that aims to tip elections or undermine public health.

With Musk, his position of free speech — just leave every-



A sign is pictured outside the Twitter headquarters in San Francisco, Monday, April 25, 2022. Elon Musk reached an agreement to buy Twitter for roughly \$44 billion on Monday, promising a more lenient touch to policing content on the platform where he promotes his interests, attacks critics and opines on social and economic issues to more than 65 million followers. (AP Photo/Jed Jacobson)

thing up — that would be bad in and of itself," said Paul Barrett, the deputy director of the Center for Business and Human Rights at New York University. "If you stop moderating with automated systems and human reviews, a site like Twitter, in the space of a short period of time, you would have a cesspool."

Google, Barrett pointed out, quickly learned this lesson the hard way when major companies like Toyota and Anheuser-Busch ranked their ads after they ran ahead of YouTube videos

produced by extremists in 2013.

Once it was clear just how unhealthy the conversation had gotten, Twitter co-founder and former CEO Jack Dorsey spent years trying to improve what he called the "health" of the conversation on the platform.

The company was an early adopter of the "report abuse" button after U.K. member of parliament Stella Creasy received a barrage of rape and death threats on the platform. The online abuse was the result of a seem-

ingly positive tweet in support of feminist campaigner Caroline Criado-Peres, who successfully advocated for novelist Jane Austen to appear on a British banknote. Creasy's online harasser was sent to prison for 18 weeks.

Twitter has continued to tweak rules and invest in staff and technology that detect violent threats, harassment and misinformation that violates its policies. After evidence emerged that Russia used their platform to try to interfere with the 2016 U.S. presidential election, social

media companies also stepped up their efforts against political misinformation.

The big question now is how far Musk, who describes himself as a "free-speech absolutist," wants to ratchet back these systems — and whether users and advertisers will stick around if he does.

Even now, Americans say they're more likely to be harassed on social media than any other online forum, with women, people of color and LGBTQ users reporting a disproportionate amount of that

abuse. Roughly 80% of users believe the companies are still doing only a "fair or poor" job of handling that harassment, according to a Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults last year.

Meanwhile, terms like "censorship" and "free speech" have turned into political rallying cries for conservatives, frustrated by seeing right-leaning commentators and high-profile Republican officials booted off Facebook and Twitter for violating their rules.

Musk appeared to criticize Twitter's per-

manent ban of President Donald Trump last year for messages that the tech company said helped incite the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol last year.

"A lot of people are going to be super unhappy with West Coast high tech as the de facto arbiter of free speech," Musk tweeted days after Trump was banned from both Facebook and Twitter.

Trump's allies, including his son Donald Trump Jr., have even pleaded for Musk to buy out the company.

"If Elon Musk can privately send people into space I'm sure he can design a social network that isn't biased," Trump Jr. said in the caption of a video posted to Instagram last April.

Kirsten Martin, a professor of technology ethics at the University of Notre Dame, said Twitter has consistently worked at being a "reasonable" social media company through its moderation system, its hires in the area of machine learning ethics and in whom they allow to do research on the platform. The fact that Musk wants to change that, she added, suggests that he's focused on "irresponsible social media."

Twitter declined to comment for this story. A representative for Musk did not immediately respond to a message for comment.

Biden pardons former Secret Service agent and 2 others

By AAMER MADHANI
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden has granted the first three pardons of his term, providing clemency to a Kennedy-era Secret Service agent convicted of federal bribery charges that he tried to sell a copy of an agency file and to two people who were convicted on drug-related charges but went on to become pillars in their communities.

The Democratic president also commuted the sentences of 75 others for nonviolent, drug-related convictions. The White House announced the clemencies Tuesday as it launched a series of job training and reentry programs for those in prison or recently released.

Many of those who received commutations have been serving their sentences on home confinement during the COVID-19 pandemic. Several were serving lengthy sentences and would have received lesser terms had they been convicted today for the same offenses as a result of the 2018 bipartisan sentencing reform ushered into law by the Trump administration.

"America is a nation of laws and second chances, redemption, and rehabilitation," Biden said in a statement announcing the clemencies. "Elected officials on both sides of the aisle, faith leaders, civil rights advocates, and law enforcement leaders agree that our criminal justice system can and should reflect these core values that enable safer and stronger communities."

Those granted pardons

are: — Abraham Bolden Sr., 86, the first Black Secret Service agent to serve on a presidential detail. In 1964, Bolden, who served on President John F. Kennedy's detail, faced federal bribery charges that he attempted to sell a copy of a Secret Service file. His first trial ended in a hung jury. Following his conviction in a second trial, key witnesses admitted lying at the prosecutor's request. Bolden, of Chicago, was denied a retrial and served several years in federal prison. Bolden has maintained his innocence and wrote a book in which he argued he was targeted for speaking out against racist and unprofessional behavior in the Secret Service.

— Betty Jo Bogans, 51, was convicted in 1998 of possession with intent to distribute crack cocaine in Texas after attempting to transport drugs for her boyfriend and his accomplice. Bogans, a single mother with no prior record, received a seven-year sentence. In the years since her release from prison, Bogans has held consistent employment, even while undergoing cancer treatment, and has raised a son.

— Dexter Jackson, 52, of Athens, Georgia, was convicted in 2002 for using his pool hall to facilitate the trafficking of marijuana. Jackson pleaded guilty and acknowledged he allowed his business to be used by marijuana dealers.

After Jackson was released from prison, he converted his business into a cellphone repair service that employs local high school students through a program

that provides young adults with work experience. Jackson has built and renovated homes in his community, which has a shortage of affordable housing.

Civil rights and criminal justice reform groups have pushed the White House to commute sentences and work harder to reduce disparities in the criminal justice system.

Biden's grants of clemency also come as the administration has faced congressional scrutiny over misconduct and the treatment of inmates in the beleaguered federal Bureau of Prisons, which is responsible for inmates serving sentences of home confinement.

Biden, as head of the Senate Judiciary Committee, helped shepherd through the 1994 crime bill that many criminal justice experts say contributed to harsh sentences and mass incarceration of Black people.

During his 2020 White House run, Biden vowed to reduce the number of people incarcerated in the U.S. and called for nonviolent drug offenders to be diverted to drug courts and treatment.

He also has pushed for better training for law enforcement and called for criminal justice system changes to address disparities that have led to minorities and the poor making up a disproportionate share of the nation's incarcerated population.

Biden's predecessor, Donald Trump, granted 143 pardons and clemencies to 237 during his four years in office.

Trump sought the advice of prison reform advocate Alice Johnson, a Black woman whose life

sentence for a nonviolent drug offense he commuted in 2018. He was also lobbied by celebrity Kim Kardashian as well as advisers inside the White House, including daughter Ivanka Trump and son-in-law Jared Kushner, as he weighed applications for clemency.

The Republican used his pardon authority to help several political friends and allies, including former campaign chairman Paul Manafort, Republican operative Roger Stone and Charles Kushner, the father-in-law of Ivanka Trump.

Among Trump's final acts as president was pardoning his former chief strategist Steve Bannon and Al Pirro, the husband of Fox News host and Trump ally Jeanine Pirro.

Prosecutors alleged that Bannon, who had yet to stand trial when he was pardoned, had duped thousands of donors who believed their money would be used to fulfill Trump's chief campaign promise to build a wall along the southern border. Instead, Bannon allegedly diverted more than \$1 million, paying a salary to one campaign official and personal expenses for himself. Pirro was convicted in 2000 on tax charges.

With the slate of pardons and commutations announced Tuesday, Biden has issued more grants of clemency than any of the previous five presidents at this point in their terms, according to the White House.

In addition to the grants of clemency, Biden announced several new initiatives that are meant to help formerly incarcerated people gain

employment — an issue that his administration is driving home as key to lowering crime rates and preventing recidivism.

The Labor Department is directing \$140 million toward programs that offer job training, pre-apprenticeship programs, digital literacy training and pre-release and post-release career counseling and more for youth and incarcerated adults.

The \$1 trillion infra-

structure bill passed by Congress last year includes a trio of grant programs that the administration says promote hiring of formerly incarcerated individuals. And the Labor and Justice Departments announced on Tuesday a collabora-

tion plan to provide \$145 million over the next year on job skills training as well as individualized employment and reentry plans for people serving time in the Bureau of

Prisons.

Biden said the new initiatives are vital to helping the more than 600,000 people released from prison each year get on stable ground.

"Helping those who served their time return to their families and become contributing members of their communities is one of the most effective ways to reduce recidivism and decrease crime," Biden said.

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