ATLANTA POLICE + GEORGIA STATE PATROL

ARE GUILTY OF MURDER

THE EVIDENCE AND THE MOTIVE

CrimethInc.

Notes

1. The authorities sent Georgia State Patrol officers without body cameras to do their dirty work. They delayed the release of the footage of those officers who were equipped with body cameras for weeks—a clear indication that they did not believe it supported their narrative.
2. This is not to say that it would have been wrong for Tortuguita to practice self-defense when attacked by State Patrol officers eager to use lethal force—only to emphasize that the evidence suggests that they did not.

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crimethinc.com/Atlanta2023

ABOUT CRIMETHINC

CrimethInc. is a rebel alliance—a decentralized network pledged to anonymous collective action—a breakout from the prisons of our age. We strive to reinvent our lives and our world according to the principles of self-determination and mutual aid.

We believe that you should be free to dispose of your limitless potential on your own terms: that no government, market, or ideology should be able to dictate what your life can be. If you agree, *let's do something about it*.

Read more about CrimethInc. at crimethinc.com/about

For more information on the movement to Defend the Atlanta Forest, visit defendtheatlantaforest.org

"In the end, the praetorian guard got to determine who ruled the Roman Empire.

Likewise, in a social order maintained by violent force, the police want to call the shots in courts and government. This is the meaning of the Atlanta police demanding the right to kill with impunity."

—The @crimethinc account on Twitter (since banned by Elon Musk) in response to Johnny Akzam

"Sed quis custodiet ipsos custodes?"

—Juvenal, Satire VI

THE MERCENARIES VERSUS THE VOLUNTEERS

Because their own behavior is motivated only by the most short-sighted avarice and fear, police and their supporters imagine that those who oppose them must be driven by similar values. This is why they always allege that someone must be paying the protesters they brutalize and murder. They cannot imagine why people would freely risk their lives for others' sake—indeed, they dare not understand why, for if such a thing is possible, then it is truly shameful to be a mercenary doling out violence just to make a buck.

In a society structured by greed and materialism, police will inevitably play a more and more central role—for without them keeping everyone in line, the whole thing will come crashing down. The plan to build Cop City rather than addressing the root causes of desperation and unrest shows how much power police have already accumulated and how dependent upon them politicians of all stripes have become. It is the Democratic Party backing Cop City in Atlanta, just as it is the Democratic Party that has raised a former prosecutor to the Vice Presidency and made a former police officer mayor of New York City. We can look at Russia—a dictatorship ruled by a former KGB officer—to see what lies a little further down this road.

It's up to us to show that solidarity and the desire for freedom are more powerful than cupidity and the readiness to obey.

When people are suffering the same forms of oppression everywhere, it makes sense for us to come to each other's assistance, to make common cause.

This is not outside agitation. It is solidarity.

So long as we understand the problems we face individualistically, we will be powerless against them. Solidarity has always been the most important tool of the oppressed. This is why the authorities go to such lengths to demonize anyone who has the courage to take risks to support others. Throughout the civil rights struggles of the 20th century, participants who are celebrated as heroes today were tarred as "outside agitators." The term has a long history on the tongues of racists and reactionaries.

In a time when war, poverty, and natural disasters intensified by climate change are uprooting populations around the world, it would be a grave mistake to accept the logic of police departments that are determined to criminalize solidarity. The upheavals of the future will leave precious few people at ease in the hometowns they grew up in. We would do well to legitimize the voices of the displaced, the travelers, those far from home.

Tortuguita, for example, was a courageous "outside agitator" who traveled to Atlanta to risk their life for a future without police violence. Their example should inspire us all.

In Atlanta, police seeking to secure the construction of a massive training facility known as Cop City have escalated dramatically since December, murdering one activist and charging 42 more with domestic terrorism. In the three months since the killing of Tortuguita, the authorities have delayed the release of evidence that contradicts their narrative, hoping to destroy the forest before a public reckoning can take place—so that by the time the truth comes out, Cop City and the future it is intended to impose will be a fait accompli. Here, we use the autopsy of the Dekalb County Medical Examiner to debunk the police narrative about the events of January 18 and explore what the police stand to gain from lying to us.

THE EVIDENCE

On April 19, fully three months after the police murdered Manuel Paez Terán—known in Weelaunee forest as Tortuguita—the Dekalb County Medical Examiner finally released the results of the autopsy conducted at 8 am on the morning of January 19. At last, it is plain for all to see how little evidence there is that Tortuguita shot at the officers, despite the allegations of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation.

According to the Dekalb County autopsy,

> The fingernails are closely trimmed and intact. Gunpowder residue is not seen on the hands. A GSR kit [gunshot residue kit] is performed.

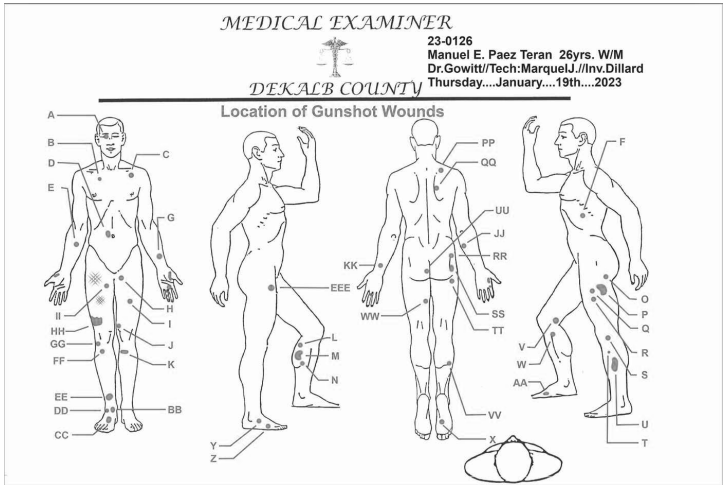
Gunshot residue tests are held to be reliable indicators of whether a person has fired a gun, scientifically and legally speaking. Gunshot residue can wear off over a period of four to six hours, but as mentioned in the autopsy, Tortuguita's hands were bagged shortly after the murder, in order that if there was any gunshot residue on their hands, it would be preserved. According to the "Investigator Narrative" included in the autopsy, the official who prepared that narrative reported to the scene of the murder within two and a half hours and "covered the hands with white handbags to preserve any trace evidence."

We can be sure that Atlanta authorities missed no opportunity to secure and publicize any evidence that could corroborate their narrative that Tortuguita shot first. Instead, because the autopsy showed that Tortuguita did not fire a gun at all, the results of the Dekalb County autopsy were suppressed for months.

Is it possible that Tortuguita somehow fired a gun while wearing gloves, or fired a gun and then cleaned their hands? According to the Dekalb County autopsy, Tortuguita experienced at least 57 gunshot wounds; video evidence shows that all of the gunfire occurred in less than eleven seconds.[1] That means that Tortuguita died within a few seconds of the first shot, whoever fired it. In the instants between the first couple shots and their death, there was no time for Tortuguita to remove and conceal gloves, nor to clean gunshot residue off their hands.

To all that evidence, we must add the findings of the second autopsy, the one that Tortuguita's family commissioned, which found that Tortuguita was "likely sitting cross-legged with their hands up" when they were killed. This is consistent with the gunshot wounds described in the autopsy conducted by the Dekalb County Medical Examiner:

- Right Forearm and Hand—fractures of the index finger and thumb metacarpal. [...]
- Left Forearm and Hand—fracture of the middle finger proximal phalange.



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In the three months since the murder of Tortuguita, Atlanta prosecutors have indiscriminately pressed terrorism charges against 42 people in hopes of crushing the movement that might otherwise have responded proportionally to Tortuguita's murder. They have charged young people with terrorism for allegedly sitting in trees, posting on social media, or attending a music festival. This use of terrorism charges is unprecedented, but it gives us a glimpse of the world we will live in if police succeed in securing themselves an even more central role in shaping our society.

To justify this campaign of violence and intimidation, Atlanta police have dusted off a strategy over a century old, deploying a discourse about "outside agitators." According to Natasha Lennard,

Out of 44 people originally detained in Sunday's forest raid [on March 5], the 11 people released without charge all had Atlanta addresses. Twenty-one of the 23 activists charged with domestic terrorism are from out of state.

The police utilized this devious tactic in order to be able to publish a press release implying that the movement against Cop City is comprised of outside agitators. This is selective policing as a means of constructing a PR campaign.

As we wrote in 2014, during the first wave of protest in response to the murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri,

> Today's militarized police understand that they are operating on two different battlefields at once: not only the battlefield of the streets, but also the battlefield of discourse.

As usual, the police themselves are the real outside agitators. According to one memo, nearly half of the officers who are to be trained at Cop City are expected to come from outside Atlanta. Even if that were not the case, the model represented by Cop City will proliferate elsewhere if it succeeds in Georgia. What happens in Atlanta will be duplicated around the country. Considering this, only a fool would confine himself to protesting the politicians and police that operate in "his own" voting district.

themselves at the expense of ordinary workers. Conservatives deploy this narrative selectively, using it to discredit programs that provide aid to those in need while turning a blind eye to those it describes best—police departments.

Yes, the United States is wracked by gun violence and anti-social activity. But there is precious little evidence that more policing does anything to diminish either of those in the long run. On the contrary, maintaining intense social and economic inequalities by brute force can only create more despair and disparities, which will inevitably lead to more violence and antisocial activity. If militarized policing alone could put an end to those, the United States would be more peaceful than nations with less militarized police, such as Norway and Belgium.

Only systemic economic and political change can address the root causes of strife and put an end to violence. Instead, police departments are capitalizing on these tragedies to demand even more resources for themselves. While manipulating the gullible with sensationalist narratives, they encourage their corporate funders to imagine that, protected by an ever thickening blue line, the capitalist class could go on impoverishing everyone else indefinitely.

Especially since the George Floyd Uprising, police departments have been using taxpayer funds to pay for PR campaigns to reshape public opinion, often by misrepresenting their actions. They are building a protection racket in which they hoard public resources for themselves in order to pay for propaganda campaigns to mislead the credulous and weapons with which to brutalize everyone else.

This is the context in which we should understand the murder of Tortuguita and the campaign to build Cop City.

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As can be seen in the diagram included in the Dekalb County autopsy, bullets struck Tortuguita in both their left hand and their right hand. If they had been holding a gun in either of those hands, the gun would have been struck by a bullet, leaving evidence that Tortuguita had been holding the gun when police opened fire. Atlanta authorities would have eagerly released that evidence in order to corroborate their narrative. They have done no such thing. They did release a photograph of the gun that they allege was in Tortuguita's possession—but in the photograph, the gun does not show any sign of having been struck by a bullet.

It follows that Tortuguita did not fire a gun on the morning of January 18, 2023.[2] In that case, how did it occur that an officer was shot that day, and with a bullet allegedly matching a handgun registered to Tortuguita that was found on the scene?

According to an early Georgia Bureau of Investigation press release,

> The handgun is described as a Smith & Wesson M&P Shield 9mm. Forensic ballistic analysis has confirmed that the projectile recovered from the trooper's wound matches Teran's handgun.

In fact, Georgia State Patrol—the officers who murdered Tortuguita—are *all* standard-issued firearms that use 9mm ammunition. According to the "Investigator Narrative" included in the Dekalb County autopsy, during the killing of Tortuguita, "[t]he uniformed officers reportedly discharged their service weapons, to include a .223 caliber rifle and 9mm handguns." So the fact that the gun apparently registered to Tortuguita used 9mm ammunition proves nothing, considering that Georgia State Patrol officers were shooting 9mm ammunition that day.

If exculpatory "forensic ballistic analysis" existed confirming that the bullet that struck the officer was fired *from the specific handgun registered to Tortuguita*, the authorities would surely have released that by now. The fact that they have not done so suggests that the GBI statement that "the projectile recovered from the trooper's wound matches Teran's handgun" means simply that it was 9mm ammunition, like all the bullets that the Georgia State Patrol officers were firing.

Tortuguita experienced at least 57 gunshot wounds within a period of eleven seconds. That offers a hint of how many bullets were in

the air during the murder. We don't know how many rounds Georgia State Patrol officers fired off, but it may have been considerably more than that. As body cam footage eventually revealed, officers expressed considerable anxiety about being caught in a crossfire as they deployed around the area immediately after the shooting. Shortly after the shooting, one officer said "You fucked your own officer up," clearly asserting that the injured officer had been struck by friendly fire.

One more detail remains to be accounted for. According to the "Investigator Narrative" included in the Dekalb County autopsy, "Two empty 9mm shell casings were located under the decedent's body" by the investigator who arrived on the scene after the shooting. Did Tortuguita fire those shells?

Video footage distinctly shows that the first *three* shots were fired in a steady, practiced rhythm, followed an instant later by a fourth shot, after which all the other shots began. It seems most likely that an edgy officer—not Tortuguita—fired those four shots, after which all the other officers began firing. If Tortuguita had fired those first shots, there would presumably have been three or four shell casings around Tortuguita's body—and more to the point, there would have been gunshot residue on Tortuguita's hands.

We have yet to see any evidence that the gun alleged to have been in Tortuguita's possession was fired at all. Should evidence emerge that it *was* fired, then—considering that there is no evidence that Tortuguita fired it—the most logical explanation would be that after murdering Tortuguita, officers found Tortuguita's firearm and discharged it in order to fabricate evidence implying that Tortuguita had shot first. Even if we are to take the author of the "Investigator Narrative" for an honest man, police could have discharged the firearm registered to Tortuguita at any point in the two hours between the murder and that author's arrival.

Regardless of whether that occurred, a large number of police and GBI agents are clearly participating in some sort of operation to cover up the murder of Tortuguita. We will likely never know what happened on that day in January because the authorities carrying out the investigation of Tortuguita's death are the same ones that sent the Georgia State Patrol to murder them in the first place.

THE MOTIVE

But why would police murder an activist and then lie about it?

In this case, the police have a clear incentive: they are in what they consider to be an existential struggle over how many resources are to be allotted to them. Cop City represents a possible future in which ever more resources will be invested in training and militarizing massive bodies of police that will control the population by brute force if necessary. For those employed in the violence industry, this represents a tremendous opportunity.

In short, the police are killing activists in order to secure the right to hoard all your tax dollars for themselves and their allies. If they get away with murder in this case, that will only embolden them to employ similar strategies in the future.

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The traditional conservative argument about state-funded agencies is that they are a waste of taxpayer funds. The story goes that the administrators of such agencies hurry to spend all the resources at their disposal however they can in order to demand an even bigger budget the following year. One of the perks of such a job is the opportunity to pass on lucrative government contracts to their cronies.

According to this narrative, channeling public resources into state institutions creates an entire sector of entitled parasites who enrich