

Tamir Rice, June 25, 2002 – Nov 22, 2014, 12 years old

Tamir Elijah Rice was born to Samaria Rice and Leonard Warner on June 25, 2002, in Cleveland, Ohio. He was the youngest of four children. Tamir loved playing soccer, football, and basketball. He also loved to draw, and was part of the art program at his school, where he attended sixth grade. His mother said of him: “As a single parent and his dad not really being around, Tamir was very attached to me. He would give me hugs and kisses. He was able to keep the family laughing and basically kept us glued together.”

On November 22, 2014, 12-year-old Tamir was at the park outside of Cudell Recreation Center, across the street from his house, throwing snowballs and playing with a toy pellet gun. A 911 caller reported seeing a juvenile with a gun but told dispatchers: “It’s probably fake.” The two white police officers responding to the call, Timothy Loehmann and Frank Garmback, were not informed that the gun may not be real. The police car was moving quite fast as they approached the gazebo where Tamir was playing. When Garmback applied the car’s brakes, it slid about 40 feet past where he meant to stop due to the wet conditions, putting the officers only a short distance from Tamir. Loehmann jumped out of the patrol car while it was still moving and fired two shots in less than two seconds after opening the passenger door. Tamir fell to the ground immediately. The officers requested emergency personnel but did not provide first aid while waiting.

Tamir’s sister, Tajai (14), heard the gunshots from inside the recreation center and ran outside when another child told her that her brother had been shot by a police officer. When she tried to run to her brother, the officers wrestled her to the ground, handcuffed her, and put her in the back of their police car.

Tamir’s mother, Samaria, was at home when two boys knocked on her door to tell her that a police officer had just shot her son. Her older son, Tavon (16), jumped up and ran across the street to the center with Samaria close behind. The following is an excerpt from an article by The Cut where Samaria shared her experience:

“[When I arrived], my 14-year-old daughter was screaming in the back of a police car and then they had my 16-year-old surrounded by eight police officers. And they told me to calm down or they was gon put me in the back of the police car. And they also gave me an ultimatum to stay at the scene of the crime or go with my 12-year-old son in the ambulance.” One child had been shot, the other two were under the control of the people who shot him. As a mother charged with protecting all three, she was at a terrible crossroads. She had to leave two behind to ride up front in the passenger seat of the ambulance, knowing Tamir was in the back surrounded by the people who had killed him.

Tamir Rice passed away at MetroHealth Medical Center soon after. The Cut article continued:

As the world responded in outrage, Rice grieved. What began as a makeshift memorial in Cudell Commons Park, filled with teddy bears, candles, and flowers, grew to frequent protests in Cleveland and in cities across the country. The national media chronicled this atrocity and the egregious failures of the Cleveland Police Department.

The police officer who shot Tamir, Timothy Loehmann, was terminated for lying during the hiring process after information came to light that he had been judged unfit for police service two years earlier, and had failed to get hired at multiple Ohio Police Departments. This was part of a larger problem, however. A 2014 Department of Justice Investigation, completed before Tamir's murder, found that Cleveland police officers used excessive deadly force, excessive force against people with mental illness and people in crisis, and used "poor and dangerous tactics" that often put them "in situations where avoidable force becomes inevitable."

In December 2014, Tamir's family filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the City of Cleveland and the Police Department. The City agreed to pay \$6 million as a settlement in April 2016, but did not admit any wrongdoing.

On December 28, 2015, a grand jury decided not to charge either of the officers who responded that day. On January 1, 2016, over a hundred protesters marched to the home of the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor, Timothy McGinty, and called for his resignation. Though he did not resign, he lost his bid for re-election three months later.

In 2016, Tamir's mother, Samaria, created *The Tamir Rice Foundation* to invest in the growth and enrichment of children through after-school programs in arts and culture, as well as advocating for police reform.

In July 2022, *The Rice Butterfly Memorial* was opened in Cudell Park, where Tamir was shot and killed. In the garden, a plaque bearing Tamir's picture and words from his mother reads:

*Tamir you are the light and stars
shining so bright to guide the way that we shall go.*

We will never forget, as one nation under God... Black magic, Black joy, and humanity.

You will be forever in our hearts, 12-year-old Tamir Rice.

In loving memory of Tamir Elijah Rice.

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