

News

Mourners: Black Teen Killed by Police More Than a Hashtag

17-year-old Antwon Rose was fatally shot by police in Pennsylvania last week

By Errin Haines
Whack, Associated Press

SWISSVALE, Pa. (AP) — Classmates and community members on Monday honored Antwon Rose Jr. as a dynamic and determined young man who deserves to be remembered as more than just the latest hashtag given to unarmed black men killed by police, while vowing to continue pushing for justice.

The funeral for Rose was held in a packed school auditorium six days after the 17-year-old was fatally shot by a police officer as he fled a traffic stop in a town near Pittsburgh. He would have been a senior in high school.

“Long before you were a cause, you were my friend,” said classmate Mian Laubscher, who was also a pallbearer.

“I won’t allow them to turn you into a stereotype,” he continued, mentioning Rose’s many traits, from musician, to artist, athlete and jokester. “You were so much more than what people see or want to believe.”

The two-hour, tear-filled service was an emotional celebration of a young man whose personality drew a diverse crowd of mourners. Portraits in tribute to Rose

were near the stage, and respect came in the form of letters, speeches and performances from close friends and people who didn’t know him well, but were touched by his legacy.

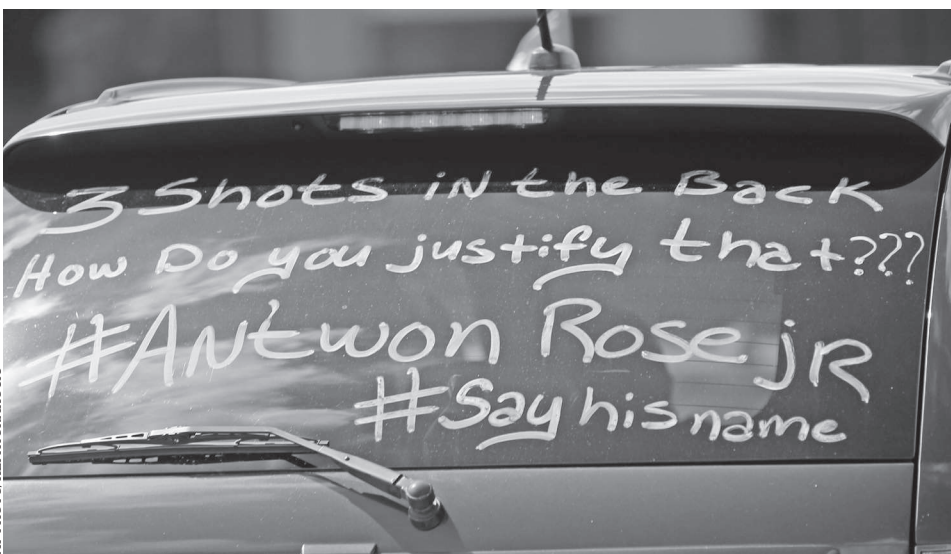
Muslim minister Victor Muhammad told the audience that Rose’s life and death are part of “a perfect storm” meant to bring about “justice for all” and social progress in America. Muhammad said Rose’s unfinished work is now up to those he leaves behind.

The funeral program included a poem Rose wrote two years before he was killed, and mourners referenced it frequently during the service. In it, he wrote about being “confused and afraid” and wondering what path his life would take.

“I see mothers bury their sons,” he wrote. “I want my mom to never feel that pain. I understand people believe I’m just a statistic. I say to them I’m different.”

Rose was a passenger in a car pulled over by Officer Michael Rosfeld because police said it matched the description of a car wanted in a shooting in a nearby town.

Rose was an avid skater and skier who also played the saxophone. His favorite color was purple, and



One of the vehicles in the funeral procession for Antwon Rose Jr. has a message displayed as it arrives at the Woodland Hills Intermediate school on Monday, June 25, 2018, in Swissvale, Pa. Rose was fatally shot by a police officer seconds after he fled a traffic stop June 19, in the suburb of East Pittsburgh.

some mourners wore that color in his honor.

The crowd cheered and clapped when friend Tre Hanis said of Rose: “Now his smile is all across the country.”

“I know who you are, Antwon,” Hanis said, referring to the poem. “A brave, fearless friend who has changed the lives of others around the world today.”

Messages such as “#SayHisName” and “Justice 4 Antwon” in the windows of some of the cars and on T-shirts bearing Rose’s image were the only outward signs of protest after a week of demonstrations calling for Rosfeld to be charged in the shooting. Protesters said there would be

no demonstrations Monday out of respect for the family.

Many at Monday’s funeral service also acknowledged Rose’s mother, thanking her for raising such a polite, helpful, thoughtful and respectful son.

Gisele Fetterman, the wife of Braddock, Pennsylvania, mayor John Fetterman, told the audience of Rose’s generous spirit, which she witnessed at Free Store, the non-profit she founded in the city where the teen volunteered.

“He was a kid that we shouldn’t be here talking about in this way, at this time,” she said.

Rose’s shooting remains under investigation by the county district attorney. No charges have been filed.

His mother, Michelle Kenney, told ABC News in an interview over the weekend the officer “murdered my son in cold blood.”

“If he has a son, I pray his heart never has to hurt the way mine does,” she said. “But I think he

should pay for taking my son’s life.”

The case is among several across the country in recent years that have ignited a national debate over race and policing.

Rosfeld is on administrative leave. He said last week he could not discuss the shooting but said he was getting a lot of support from law enforcement. His

attorney did not return a call Monday seeking his comment on the family’s statements.

A video shows Rose and another passenger running from the car.

Three gunshots can be heard, and the passengers can be seen either falling or crouching as they pass between houses.

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