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Daily OPINION

# STEVEN BARRIER DESERVES JUST AS MUCH ATTENTION AS NOLAN WELLS

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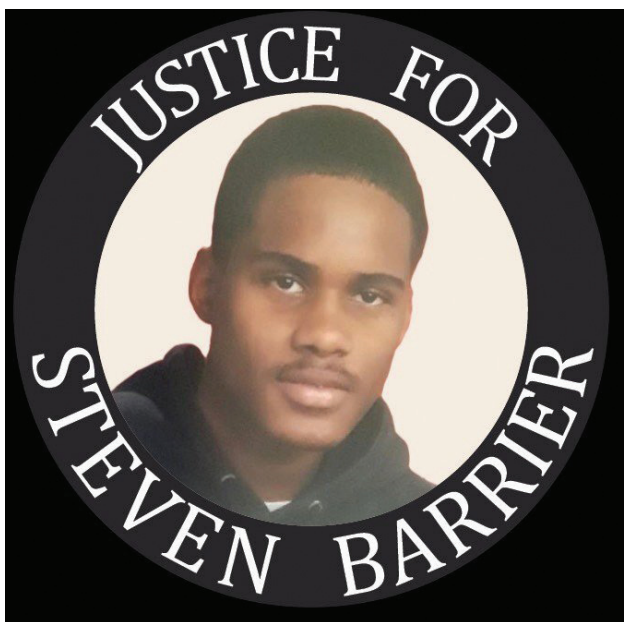



**Photo from advocacy page for Steven Barrier. He passed away in police custody on Oct. 23, 2019.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF @JUSTICEFORSTEVENBARRIER ON INSTAGRAM

The devastating death of Nolan Wells has sparked nationwide anger, along with renewed distrust for the justice system. For many, this case serves as an ongoing reminder of a corrupt system that protects white men and buries black bodies. Whether or not the boys did it, I truly cannot say. But I can say I feel an anger growing around me. Julia Nzita, Tasia Fortune, Kyle Bassinga and Keith Porter all died in heinous ways, yet their cases were closed quickly and their killers are walking free. In most of these cases, the cause of death was concluded as a suicide. I stand by the side of many activists, though, who have been repeating the notion that "black people don't hang themselves" for centuries now.

Amid these concerning deaths, I have heard people around me shake their heads and claim, "But what can I do? I'm not in Mississippi or North Carolina, how am I supposed to help these people?"

I think the answer is one most people like to avoid, because it requires patience, effort and lots of research. One of the best ways to support the black community in a period of civil unrest is to start local: Begin with learning about the issues in your state, town and offices. One of the biggest cases I think we should all focus on (and support) is the death of Steven Christopher Barrier in Stamford, Conn.

On Oct. 23, 2019, 23-year-old Steven Barrier left his house after a family disagreement, reported by police as a domestic violence incident. Six police officers, responding to the original 911 call, found and apprehended Steven. The Bodycam footage shows Steven being dragged down a hill by police with a bleeding head while he tried to explain that he had a respiratory condition and was struggling to stand. The police understood that Steven suffered from mental illness and instead of taking him to a hospital, as his mother asked when he had psychotic episodes, they drove him to the police department. While Barrier is unconscious and handcuffed, the police are seen laughing, joking about waking him up with a credit card under his nose. Barrier was eventually driven to a nearby hospital, where he was pronounced dead on his birthday.

It has been six years since Steven died, and his family is still fighting for justice. Since his death, no cops have been fired or investigated. Valerie Jaddo, Barrier's mother, is asking for the release of all body cam footage and an investigation into the police officers present. She also wants Barrier's body to be exhumed, after a meeting with Mayor Caroline Simmons and the retraction of the police statement saying a taser was never used on her son.

Barrier is not the only man to die at the hands of police during a mental health crisis in Connecticut. Similarly, Everard Walker was shot and killed by Hartford police in 2026. Only a week later, Steven Jones was also killed by Hartford police. Both were experiencing mental health crises, like Barrier, and should have been treated as such.

Barrier, Jones and Walker all deserve so much better. It is our duty as Connecticut citizens to hold police accountable for murdering innocent people instead of giving them the psychiatric care they need. If you want to be a part of the solution, you can donate to Steven Barrier's family at Justiceforstevenbarrier.com, or demand justice from the Stamford town using the steps provided on the Steven Barrier Instagram page.

After Barrier, there are so many other people who need justice. Connecting with your town's Facebook group is a good way to understand what's happening. Additionally, reading local news from multiple perspectives can educate one on how to respond and take action against injustice. It doesn't just have to be turning on the TV and watching news channels; it can be listening to the radio, podcasts or staying updated on local activist groups in your area. These are just a few ways to get in touch with your community while also giving back to the people who need it.

On the horizon, I truly hope a day comes where black men, women and children are allowed to live full lives without being shackled and killed at the hands of negligent white people. What we can do to make that future happen is to continue educating ourselves on systemic racism and prejudiced thoughts.

# PATRICK'S POLITICS:
## THE PUBLIC EXECUTION OF MORALITY

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FILE LOGO/THE DAILY CAMPUS

The United States military is about to carry out its first execution in 60 years, and this time they're putting in a violently dystopian twist: The method will be by firing squad, and it will all be livestreamed to the American public in a sickening spectacle.

The prisoner in question is Nidal Hasan, a former Army officer. Hasan is infamous for the 2009 attack on an Army complex at Fort Hood, Texas, which killed 13 people; 12 of those people were U.S. soldiers. This act earned him a conviction from a military jury, a consignment to death row and now an execution, which is scheduled for Dec. 3. As terrible as his actions were — the death penalty is a separate issue in this case — to livestream his execution by firing squad reflects extremely poorly on the U.S. Public executions are the weapon of authoritarian and tyrannical states; they are essentially the opposite of how we like to think of this country. But Trump and his Cabinet of cruelty has brought the unthinkable to the fore. Their outlook on state violence is dragging us into a much darker future.

The act of public execution has only been carried out by two countries in recent years: Afghanistan and Iran. These countries are both controlled by radical regimes that regularly embrace state violence; in Iran, at least 600 people have been executed for various offenses just in 2026. In Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, according to Amnesty International, extrajudicial executions and unlawful detentions are prevalent as well.

Across most of the world, public executions are deeply frowned upon. In 2025, only 17 countries carried out executions at all. America was, naturally, part of this short list, which also included other shining paragons of democracy such as Somalia, Saudi Arabia and China... oh wait. Those countries are all either deeply authoritarian or riven by societal conflict. The vast majority of the world's democracies have either put a pause on executions or abolished the death penalty altogether, let alone stage a public death by firing squad. Public executions simply aren't done by any state with a democratic system of government. Well, until America decided to bring it back.

There is a reason, of course, that the U.S. is returning to the idea of public execution. Livestreaming a state-ordained killing to the population is intended to spread fear and remind citizens of their place. Pete Hegseth, the Department of Defense secretary and the one who announced the plans, said as much in an interview: "People need to understand that there's serious consequences for these types of things." He was ostensibly referring to Hasan's killing spree, but there is an underlying message in the idea of consequences. Why show everyone the firing squad in their deliverance of death? By livestreaming the execution, Hegseth is telling the people of America that the state could do this to you, too, if it really wanted to. It puts the thought in your mind to not disobey. To conform. To not end up like the man shot dead, live for you to see.

At the same time, the public execution is meant to be a state-driven spectacle that desensitizes people to violence. In the age of the Internet, we've all been somewhat desensitized by violent and bloody acts that randomly appear on our screens — the shooting of Charlie Kirk last year comes to mind. We then scroll away from the violence, on to the next video or pressing task that demands our attention. The nature of these acts should drive us to concern, but the distance created by seeing them on a screen dulls that sense of caring. Now, the government is going further by choosing to livestream their violence to the public, encouraging us to watch along and even celebrate the occasion. Effectively, the Pentagon is arguing that not only should this man die, we should enjoy watching it happen.

This application of violence is also connected to a broader pattern of state-supported killings in the Trump regime. On "Saturday Night Live" last week, comedian Michael Che joked about the public execution being the first one since "a couple weeks ago," referring to the numerous deaths at the hands of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents. His connection was serious, though; according to a review from CBS News, nine people have been fatally shot by ICE since the second Trump administration began. In this sense, the upcoming public execution is an extension of the government's escalating tendencies toward violence. A violent, vengeful government is not what the American people deserve.

Death cannot pay for death. The public execution will not change the fact that 13 people lost their lives at Fort Hood in 2009. It will, however, show that America has lost its way. We are treading in the territory of extremely repressive regimes, and our government is doing so gladly. If the execution goes through and is livestreamed, we won't just be watching a man die. We'll be watching the fatal blow to what little morality remains in American governance.




**Department of Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth speaks at The Pentagon. He was interviewed about the planned U.S. public execution.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF FLICKR