

For Immediate Release:

August 16, 2023

RATHOD | MOHAMEDBHAI LLC, on behalf of the family of Destinee Thompson, filed a lawsuit today against Arvada Police Department (“APD”) Officers Anthony Benallo, C.J. Bickmore, Jeff Orndoff, Chris Dennehy, and Ian Gohlke. Each of these officers played a role in the murder of Ms. Thompson, with Officer Benallo firing the shot that killed her.

On August 17, 2021, police responded to the American Motel looking for a woman who allegedly brandished a knife while shoplifting from a nearby Target store. At the motel, the police encountered Ms. Thompson, who was uninvolved with the shoplifting. The officers noticed that Ms. Thompson did not match the description of the suspect, yet decided to detain her anyways. Ms. Thompson left the motel and proceeded outside to her minivan, where seconds later, a police vehicle blocked her in, and officers approached her and began yelling at her from both sides and trying to force open the minivan’s doors. Without any justification, Officer Chris Dennehy pulled out his police baton and violently swung at the passenger window of Ms. Thompson’s minivan, shattering it.

Ms. Thompson was terrified. She attempted to back out of her parking space, but police had blocked her exit. Ms. Thompson then drove forward over the curb, towards the road. After she was past the officers and posed no risk to anyone, Officer Benallo opened fire on the minivan. Officer Benallo fired a total of eight shots. Only the final shot struck Ms. Thompson, killing her and her unborn son. By the time Officer Benallo fired the fatal shot, Ms. Thompson had already pulled her minivan onto the road and had driven approximately 25 yards away from the officers.

Despite Officer Benallo’s clearly illegal decision to kill Ms. Thompson, the APD determined that Officer Benallo took “Proper Action.” It is time for law enforcement in Arvada to start protecting people and not just the police and their public image. This lawsuit seeks to hold these officers accountable for the murder of Ms. Thompson, find justice for Ms. Thompson’s family, and demonstrate to the Arvada Police Department that the people of Colorado have no tolerance for officers who kill without justification.

Please direct any questions for Ms. Thompson’s family to their attorneys:

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