

THE ORANGE COUNTY BETA REGISTER

Friends of man killed by police protest at headquarters

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ANAHEIM – Friends and family of a Fullerton man fatally shot by police marched outside Anaheim police headquarters Thursday night to protest the shooting and let the public know they won't forget.

Ten people, including Cruz's brother, sister and son, carried signs as they marched back and forth in front of the police station on Harbor Boulevard carrying signs that read, "Still no answers" and, "How many more must die? I love you dad."

"I want the police to know I'm not going to forget this; I'm not going to let this go," said Theresa Smith, Cruz's mother. "Nothing justifies

what happened to my son."

Thursday was three months to the day since Ceasar Cruz, 35, was shot and killed by police in the parking lot of Wal-Mart, in the Anaheim Plaza shopping center near Euclid Street and the I-5 freeway.

Police had been following Cruz's green sport-utility vehicle. They were looking for a former parolee who had been reported as driving a green Chevrolet and carrying a handgun.

In the parking lot, Cruz stopped his car, then sped down the parking aisle, police said. Officers followed, boxed the car in and then fired shots at Cruz's car, striking him in the upper body and head. A handgun was found in the car, police said. Cruz died at a hospital one hour later.

Cruz was not on parole. Seven years earlier, he had been convicted of one count of drug possession with intent to sell. He was sentenced to 240 days in jail and three years' probation.

On Wednesday, the family filed a claim against the city of Anaheim saying Cruz was killed "by police execution." Claims typically precede filings of lawsuits.

The Orange County District Attorney's Office is investigating whether criminal charges are warranted against officers for the shooting. The D.A. routinely investigates shootings involving police officers.

The Anaheim Police Department declined comment, citing the possible lawsuit.

Cruz was a father of four children. His oldest son, Michael Reinhardt, 17, marched Thursday.

"It's hard to get up in the mornings," he said. "We're still looking for answers."

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