

Police shooting protests help highlight plight of mentally ill in jails

By Mike Blasky, San Jose Mercury News

When Michael James Tyree was killed in a San Jose jail cell, his lifeless body found Aug. 27 battered and bruised after an encounter with correctional officers, there were no Twitter hashtags, no spontaneous street protests, no national news vans parked on the curb.

The rise of powerful civil rights movements such as Black Lives Matter – and the deaths of Michael Brown, Freddie Gray and Eric Garner, all of whom were black – have steered the national narrative around police force toward the systemic abuse of minority communities.

But the swift and shocking arrests of three Santa Clara County jail guards on suspicion of murder in the death of Tyree, who was white, signals that the heightened focus on police brutality will also raise awareness on a growing crisis confronting another often-ignored part of society – the mentally ill in our country's jails and prisons.

Read the whole story