



## Exercising The Right

### Murder at the IHOP

In a tragic story out of Huntsville, Alabama, an irate customer opened fire at an International House of Pancakes (IHOP) chain restaurant and killed a much-cherished manager. The Associated Press reported on January 17 about the senseless crime in which the customer, who was described by friends as an “aspiring rapper,” lost his temper owing to an issue he had with a carry-out order and began arguing with a restaurant employee. The customer, later identified as 25-year-old Roderick Turner, yelled at the IHOP staff and then got into a physical scuffle with one of the employees. Turner then went to his car and retrieved a gun.

When Turner returned to the store, the manager, who has worked in restaurant management for most of his adult life, intervened in an effort to de-escalate the situation. Fifty-six-year-old Roy Brown tried to calm Turner down but his efforts failed, and Turner pulled out his gun and began shooting. Brown was fatally wounded and his son, Jay Brown, who was working with his father at the IHOP, was shot in the arm. Fortunately the son had his carry permit and was carrying a concealed handgun. The son pulled out his own gun and returned fire at Turner, fatally wounding him. Police soon arrived, but both the suspect and the elder Brown were pronounced dead at the scene. The son was taken to a nearby medical facility for treatment for the injury to his arm and was released after a few days.

Brown’s death was mourned by the local community, who viewed him as a dedicated family man who loved making his customers happy. One Huntsville police officer even began a GoFundMe page to assist with funeral costs, since he was touched by Brown’s hospitality. Huntsville Police Officer James Andrew told the local ABC affiliate that he and his fellow officers ate at that IHOP multiple times and genuinely liked Brown, who they said always went out of his way to be kind. “We’re in IHOP at least four or five nights a week. He always took real good care of us, so we just thought we’d try to do something to help the family.... The family is definitely overwhelmed by all the support from the community.... All three sons worked for IHOP, so it’s really hurt the family all the way around, so anything that they can do to help is greatly appreciated.”

Brown was also remembered by former employees, who had nothing but kind things to say about him. Former IHOP employee Megan Ingram told the local ABC affiliate that Brown “was one of those managers that you would want to get up out of bed and work for every day.” Ingram also told ABC that Brown was a very special man whom people truly loved. “He is missed and he is loved, and I know he is at peace. I know that God got an angel in heaven last night.”

Another former employee, Josh Strange, told the ABC affiliate that Brown “was the guy that everyone knew when they came in. He would be the one behind the counter, smiling and behind the grill, smiling no matter how busy it was,” Strange said.

The CBS affiliate reported on January 24 that the Huntsville Police Department completed its investigation into the shooting, and based on what they found, they believe that the shooting of Turner was justified. “We have used all investigative material possible to reach our conclusion that this was an act of self-defense.... The overwhelming majority of witnesses in this case, including the surviving victim, all of their statements including the physical [evidence] at the scene, mirror one another,” Lieutenant Michael Johnson, spokesman for the Huntsville Police Department, told the CBS affiliate.



Written by [Patrick Krey](#) on February 18, 2019

Published in the February 18, 2019 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 35, No. 04

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ABC also reported on the claims of a friend of the deceased suspect who tried to cast doubt on the accusation that Turner killed Brown in cold blood. Turner's friend Kingsley Onyebinachi gave an interview to an ABC affiliate where he questioned what occurred and outright claimed that Turner wouldn't have done what police are saying he did. In a rambling and at times nonsensical rant, Onyebinachi claimed the deceased suspect was a peaceful and loving man who wouldn't hurt a fly. "We eat IHOP numerously. So for this to happen this time when we ate here 20 times in the last few months ... that sounds outrageous.... Knowing my friend for numerous of years, he has never had a problem with a carryout order. If anything, he would have bought a whole other order," Onyebinachi said.

Onyebinachi even showed up in the comment section for the ABC article repeating the claim that Turner wouldn't have committed a violent crime, but another commenter chastised Onyebinachi for misrepresenting what happened. James Chaney of Huntsville responded directly to Onyebinachi and wrote, "your comment makes no sense ... facts are facts.... He went to his car and got a gun. A building full of people saw this.... He is guilty and paid with his life."

Onyebinachi's claims about Turner's nonviolent nature also came into question when it was later revealed that the deceased suspect had a long record of violence. WHNT News 19 reported that Turner was involved in multiple violent assaults, using a firearm against three different victims and even being accused of shooting at people on more than one occasion! Madison County prosecutors explained that those cases never resulted in any convictions because the victims and witnesses refused to testify. This is common in high-crime communities that have a culture that looks down on "snitching," which is a slang and derogatory term for cooperating with criminal investigations.

The IHOP was reopened a few days later, with customers returning in large numbers. Employees and managers of the IHOP decorated the doors of the restaurant with blue balloons to welcome customers back, and IHOP's corporate offices also let people know counseling services were available for people who either witnessed the violent crime or were mourning Brown's death. Customer Mary Warren told the ABC affiliate that she was glad to see so many customers there, but she was most impressed by the IHOP employees. "They're really brave.... They're heroes too for coming back." It was an emotional experience as customers returned to the restaurant and interacted with IHOP employees who had just lost a beloved coworker. In no time at all, the restaurant was packed with customers and employees were hard at work, so it seemed like everything was back to business as usual, which is what many believe Roy Brown would have wanted. n

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Published in the February 18, 2019 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 35, No. 04

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