

The police killing of Amadou Diallo

24 February 1999

To the editor,

There has been a political uproar concerning the recent murder by New York City police of Amadou Diallo, because he apparently was innocent of any crime and not a threat, but mostly because he was shot at over 40 times. To many this seems as extreme as the New York City police torture by plunger of Abner Louima several months back.

Here in Houston, the massive firing of weapons on suspects by police officers is a regular thing and that leads me to believe that this is an unstated national policy, nearly like our foreign policy of hitting hard and getting out before anyone can complain. A news-making case in Houston was the murder of Pedro Oregon, an immigrant who was shot a dozen times from behind in a drug raid on his home where no drugs were found. Political pressure has brought some investigations and a minor prosecution of a police officer who was involved. Another case involved a car chase where the previously brain injured suspect was shot scores of times by police because they claim he had a shiny object in his hand which they later claimed turned out to be a can opener. The dead man's mother said the police were taking target practice on her son. I think that that is what it amounts to. And in this case there was no community outrage, no coalitions forming. The most the family will get out of it is a wrongful death lawsuit. The lack of outrage in this case is what worries me.

It's apparent that now we live in a time where there are hunting squads of professional assassins who act in the most cold-hearted manner in service to the state. The sci-fi stories of *Robocop*, *Blade Runner* and *The Terminator* are finally real life.

Peace,
EJ



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