

New York City police execute Guinean immigrant in a hail of bullets

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Four New York City police officers fired a total of 41 bullets at an unarmed man in front of his residence at 12:44 a.m. Friday. The victim, who died immediately at the scene, was Amadou Diallo, 22, a documented immigrant from Guinea who was living and working as a peddler for more than two years in New York City. Relatives and friends described him as a devout Muslim who prayed five times a day and was quiet and hard working.

The police officers, who were in plainclothes, were part of the Street Crimes Unit that focuses largely on taking illegal guns off the street. The cops utilized 9-millimeter semiautomatic pistols, which hold 16 bullets and can be discharged in a matter of seconds.

Two of the officers, Sean Carroll and Edward McMellon, fired all 16 of their bullets. Officer Kenneth Boss fired five times, and Richard Murphy fired four times. Three of the officers--Boss, McMellon and Carroll--have used their guns before, a high percentage in light of the fact that 90 percent of police in the city never discharge their weapons in the course of their careers.

Officer Boss, 27, has been on the force for seven years. He remains under investigation for an October 1997 fatal shooting of a man who police said was menacing people with a shotgun in front of a Brooklyn apartment building. Officer McMellon, 26, a five-year police force veteran, has had five complaints lodged against him. Boss and Carroll have each received three complaints. These complaints generally involve accusations of excessive force, abuse of authority, or racial insensitivity.

The four officers were patrolling the Soundview section of the Bronx in an unmarked car, and they approached Mr. Diallo in the vestibule in front of the building where he lives. Before the shooting they never

radioed that they were encountering a suspicious or criminal activity. Following the shooting the officers reported the incident on their radios, and neighbors called for emergency assistance on 911. Investigators who came later found no weapon on Mr. Diallo.

Amadou Diallo was one of many African immigrants who live in the Soundview neighborhood, coming to the US in an attempt to escape poverty and political instability in their countries. He came from the Fulani ethnic group, from a small village called Lelouma. He sold socks, gloves and videos on 14th Street in Manhattan, sending home to his parents much of the money that he earned.

He lived with two roommates in the apartment on Wheeler Avenue. One of them, Momodou Kujabi, explained that just before the incident on Thursday night the two men discussed who would pay the electric bill. Mr. Diallo then left, probably to get something to eat, which was his usual custom. Mr. Kujabi then went to sleep. The other roommate, Abdou Rahman Diallo, the victim's cousin, was already sleeping. Mr. Kujabi told investigators that it was only 30 minutes after he went to bed that his friend was killed.

A lawyer for the family, Kyle Waters, has stated, "There is nothing to indicate that he [Mr. Diallo] was a criminal, nothing to indicate that he had a weapon. For him to be sent back to his homeland in Guinea in a box is a horrible tragedy."

Republican Mayor Rudolph Giuliani has touted the reduction of street crime as a major accomplishment of his administration. There have been many complaints that the decrease in crime has been accompanied by an increase in police brutality. It was only a year and half ago that four police officers tortured Haitian immigrant Abner Louima inside a Brooklyn police precinct.



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