

Letters on the Nathaniel Abraham verdict

3 December 1999

The WSWS received the following letters on the case of Nathaniel Abraham, the 13-year-old convicted of second-degree murder in Pontiac, Michigan on November 16. Nathaniel, only 11 years old at the time of the shooting of Ronnie Greene Jr., is the youngest person in the US to stand trial for murder as an adult, and could face a sentence of up to life in prison at his sentencing hearing December 14.

Dear WSWS,

Thank you for your excellent coverage of the Nathaniel Abraham case. I grew up only a few miles from the site of the killing and have been horrified by the Dickensian quality of the proceedings. I thought, however, that it might be useful to highlight a rather tragic point of comparison: that being the deaths of Ronnie Greene and Malice Green. The death of the former you are familiar with as the victim of the Abraham case, while the latter, a lower class African-American man from Detroit, was beaten to death by police officers with flashlights on the night of 5 November 1992 because he would not show to the police officers, who stopped him under the fictional suspicion of driving a stolen car, what he held in his hand. Later, an EMS technician who arrived on the scene was prevented from treating him as the officers beat Green.

It is remarkable that these two men, who savagely beat a man to death with their flashlights, and Nathaniel Abraham, who fired a damaged weapon whose bullet ricocheted off of a tree and struck a man in the head, were all convicted of the same crime: second-degree murder. Significantly, in the former case, the jury was not even instructed to consider first-degree murder charges, while in the latter that was the prosecution's main goal. Both deaths were tragedies, but it is equally tragic that a poor African-American child with severe emotional and mental difficulties is held to a higher standard of responsibility than two police officers.

Sincerely,

SM

Japan

23 November 1999

I have been following the incredible story of Nathaniel Abraham and court case that is in progress. It never ceases to amaze me how knowledge of child brain development is overlooked in situations where a child's behavior is in question.

For the past century we have spent millions of dollars on research in the areas of child development and most recently brain development, only to throw all of the excellent research out the window due to hysteria surrounding youth violence.

Perhaps the question should be, where did Nathaniel get the gun? If the trial focused on the irresponsible adult, or irresponsible gun control laws, making an adult responsible for Nathaniel and having them face the prison sentence, things would be different. As it appears in this instance, Nathaniel has become the scapegoat for irresponsible adults and legislators.

Thanks,

PB

10 November 1999



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