

New York cops cleared in killing of Patrick Dorismond

Bill Vann
2 August 2000

A Manhattan grand jury cleared a New York City detective of criminal charges in the death of Patrick M. Dorismond, an unarmed Haitian-American security guard who was shot dead after angrily rebuffing undercover cops who approached him asking to buy drugs.

The July 27 decision was applauded by New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, who said that Dorismond “was clearly the aggressor,” while the dead man’s mother denounced the failure to indict the detective, Anthony Vasquez, as “an abuse ... discrimination,” and declared, “They took my son’s life in vain.”

The killing of Patrick Dorismond, the father of two young girls, was the result of a “buy-and-bust” operation that typifies police methods that have relentlessly targeted minority youth and young workers as suspects, with no evidence that they have committed any crime.

Recognizing the intense controversy surrounding the shooting, which took place March 16, less than a month after four other undercover cops were acquitted in the killing of Amadou Diallo, the West African immigrant shot dead in his own doorway with 41 bullets, Manhattan District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau publicly released a letter to Police Commissioner Howard Safir providing an extremely detailed summary of the facts uncovered in the course of the grand jury investigation.

In a statement accompanying the letter, Morgenthau acknowledged that, on the night he was shot, Dorismond was engaged in no criminal activity and had no idea that the three men whom he confronted after they asked him for drugs were police officers.

Dorismond, who worked for a Business Improvement District in the Madison Square Garden area of Manhattan’s West Side, had gone to a bar with

coworkers after getting off a 3-11 p.m. shift. After drinking two beers, Dorismond left and was standing outside with one of his friends, talking and getting ready to go home.

It was then that he was accosted by a man asking if he could buy crack cocaine. The man was an undercover detective working with two other undercover cops on the street and backed up by several teams of police riding in vehicles and following their every move over radio receivers.

“The undercover cops had the discretion to approach individuals without observing actual narcotics transactions,” DA Morgenthau wrote in his letter. In other words, the officers were licensed to target completely innocent people in what amounted to a lethal fishing expedition.

In two and a half hours on the street, the undercover team made three buys and eight arrests. Most of those arrested, it later turned out, had sold the cops not cocaine, but innocuous substances packaged to look like drugs.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact