

Chicago police officer fatally shoots 22-year-old woman

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On March 21, Rekia Boyd was shot by an off-duty Chicago police officer. The 22-year-old died the following day from a fatal shot to the head. The shooting took place at Douglas Park, in the Lawndale neighborhood of Chicago. Family and friends who were present at the shooting say she was an innocent bystander and are calling for a federal investigation into her death.

The incident took place just after 1:00 a.m. on the morning of March 21 as an off-duty detective rolled down his car window and asked a group of people near the park to quiet down. According to the police, 39-year-old Antonio Cross approached the officer's car and pointed a gun at the officer, who drew his weapon and fired in response. The bullet grazed the alleged gunman's hand and hit Rekia Boyd in the head as she stood nearby.

Chicago police maintain that Cross was armed and deemed the shooting justified. Cross has been charged with a misdemeanor of aggravated assault. No weapon was recovered from the scene.

According to witnesses, nobody pulled a gun on the officer. There were 60-70 people gathered at Douglas Park enjoying the unseasonably warm weather. Witnesses said that Cross was holding a cell phone in his hands as the off-duty officer shot in his direction.

Cross told ABC last week: "I want people to know I didn't have no gun. She didn't have no gun. I want people to know that girl was killed for nothing."

According to Cross, he was talking on the phone when he saw the officer draw a gun at him. He immediately covered his face. A bullet hit his hand and wounded his thumb. According to Cross, he thinks the officer was trying to shoot him in the face, and that the officer told him he thought his phone was a weapon.

Cross maintains that phone records will show that he

was talking on the phone at the time. ABC Chicago spoke to the man he was talking to when the shooting began. He told them, "I was talking to [Cross] on the phone and I heard the shots. I heard five shots. Tried calling and calling him. No answer."

Witnesses say that the officer fired at least ten times. Cross said: "He fired plenty of shots. I think he was trying to kill me."

The police officer's neighbors say tensions have been growing in the neighborhood for days. The officer was allegedly angry about the people and the noise coming from Douglas Park as the weather became unseasonably warm.

The day before Boyd's death, neighbors reportedly overheard the officer tell a crowd: "What do I have to do around here to get some peace, quiet and respect? Shoot someone?"

Martinez Sutton, the brother of Rekia Boyd, spoke to the press, asking: "How could this be justified? They took my sister away from me. This young beautiful girl dead in the streets. Why? They said the shooting is justified, but how is it justified when you got a young girl up there with a bullet in her head? What kind of justice is that?"

Noting the similarity of the killing of Trayvon Martin in Florida, he added, "First you got Trayvon, now you got Rekia. Senseless, senseless violence. It didn't have to happen."

The killing of Rekia has sparked outrage and protest. Last week, some 200 protesters who were angered by the death rallied outside the officer's home, calling for justice.

The incident, however, is only one of a series of police involved shootings in Chicago in recent weeks. Last month, the Chicago police shot a man who allegedly pulled a gun on them, also in the Lawndale

neighborhood. A Chicago police officer also shot a man allegedly wielding a sawed-off shotgun on the city's Far South Side.

In February 2007, Anthony Abbate—an off-duty police officer drinking at a south side bar—beat the young bartender working there, Karolina Obrycka, for refusing to serve him any more alcohol. The incident, which was captured on video, shows Abbate going behind the bar and punching and kicking the woman. Abbate was sentenced to two years of probation, but a lawsuit recently filed against the city by Obrycka will attempt to show that the police and city engaged in a systematic cover-up of the crime, and attempted to bribe her into dropping her initial complaint.

The maintenance of the vastly unequal conditions generated by capitalism in the third largest city in the United States inevitably engenders the incubation of the most reactionary and violent attitudes among the police. This brutality has long been condoned and utilized by elements within the Democratic Party.

In January of 2011, former police commander Jon Burge was sentenced to four and a half years in prison for perjury resulting from the torture of hundreds of prisoners. Threats and physical abuse was routinely used to coerce confessions. The Cook County state's attorney at the time was Richard M. Daley, who would later become mayor of Chicago. Lawyers for a man tortured by Burge have filed suit against the city, to compel Daley to submit to questioning regarding his knowledge of police torture.



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