

Troubled 18-year-old murdered by police in North Carolina

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Eighteen-year-old Keith Vidal of Boiling Springs Lake, in southeastern North Carolina, was shot and killed in his own home, apparently execution-style, by an officer responding to a 911 call placed by his stepparents after their son began experiencing a schizophrenic episode.

Vidal's stepparents, Mark and Mary Wilsey, called the police last Sunday at around 12:30 in the afternoon and reported that Vidal had not been taking his medication and was behaving erratically. Although Keith had not had a history of violence, his parents were worried that he might lash out. "He's not doing very good. You've got to get him someplace," Mark told 911 operators, according to transcripts obtained by a local television station. "He wants to fight his mother.... She's scared to death of him right now." When two police officers arrived on the scene, each from separate jurisdictions, they found Keith wielding a small screwdriver, but apparently did not encounter any difficulties, as one officer radioed in that although there had been a confrontation, the situation was under control.

Things abruptly took a turn for the worse when a third officer from nearby Southport arrived on the scene 14 minutes later. Accounts in the media of what happened after this are somewhat conflicting, but all agree that scarcely a minute later, the third officer, after declaring, "I don't have time for this," fired at the teen, who was 5 feet and 3 inches tall and barely 90 pounds, after he had been tasered and tackled to the floor by the other two officers. He was apparently readying to fire a second shot when he was restrained by Mark Wilsey. The police then radioed that the teen had been shot in "self defense."

The Southport officer has merely been placed on administrative leave pending an investigation, despite

multiple witnesses to the murder. As for the first two officers, they have been exonerated by investigations conducted by their respective departments. The North Carolina Police Benevolent Association, after conducting its own brief "investigation," announced Thursday that the third officer, whose name has not yet been made public, had acted correctly, taking as good coin the claim that the 90-pound teenager posed a "deadly threat" and that he was merely protecting his fellow officers. After shedding a few crocodile tears for Vidal's family, the group then turned its attention toward the alleged psychological pain felt by the officer in question: "Officers struggle every time they are put in a situation like this, because they are human beings, too."

Although multiple investigations into the incident are ongoing at both the state and local level, there is every reason to believe that the final reports will be a whitewash, to the extent that it is politically possible. If the officer in question is ever charged, it will only have been through the Herculean efforts of Vidal's friends and family in bringing this atrocity to public attention. The shooting became a national story after being brought to the attention of CNN by a friend of the family, who is a so-called "iReporter" for the network—someone who submits local stories, photographs, and video to the network. Although officials involved in the investigations have largely declined to comment, Vidal's family have not been so reticent. They have used every opportunity to not only demand that the officer face justice, but to express their devastation and anger. They even picketed a press conference on the shooting by the local district attorney, to which they were not invited.

Furthermore, none of these investigations will even take note of the widespread occurrence of such

instances of police brutality nationally. For example, in October, Dallas police shot and killed a 59-year-old mentally ill man after he had complied with police orders to “freeze.” In November, a mentally ill 29-year-old man in Vermont was killed by police while wielding a shovel.

In fact, such investigations are designed to obscure what is widely sensed among millions of poor and disadvantaged Americans: that the law-and-order hysteria being whipped up by the political establishment has a class character. Within the ruling elite, the most profound lawlessness and disorder pervades in the interest of amassing greater profits while the police are tasked with enforcing the increasing social misery imposed on the rest of society.

From the daily humiliations caused by such flagrantly unconstitutional programs as the “stop-and-frisk” campaign in New York City, to the commonplace brutality and even murder meted out against the poor and mentally ill, police forces increasingly operate above the law. The social powder keg that is American society finds expression in that it has the world’s largest prison population in both absolute and relative terms.



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