

Two months after killing of Michael Brown

Off-duty cop kills St. Louis teenager

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On Wednesday, the day before the two-month anniversary of the police murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, a St. Louis police officer shot and killed yet another teenager who family members say was unarmed.

A preliminary autopsy showed that Vonderrit Myers Jr., 18, was killed by a bullet that entered his right cheek and passed into his body. This suggested that he, like Michael Brown, was killed while surrendering or lying on the ground. He was shot between six and seven times, according to the St. Louis medical examiner.

St. Louis Police Chief Sam Dotson refused to reveal the identity of Myers's killer, but said that he fired 17 rounds, possibly the full magazine of his pistol.

The latest police killing in St. Louis, the third since the shooting of Michael Brown on August 9, sparked a new round of protests. Hundreds of people participated in a spontaneous demonstration at the scene of the shooting, with some kicking police vehicles and breaking their windows. Reporters on the scene said they heard gunshots.

The crowd was met by about 100 officers and a police tactical team, who ordered demonstrators off the street. Police arrested one person. The shooting came ahead of a weekend of protests scheduled to coincide with the two-month anniversary of Brown's death.

Jackie Williams, Myers' aunt who lived with him, told the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* that Myers was unarmed. "My nephew was coming out of a store from purchasing a sandwich. Security was supposedly searching for someone else," she said. "I don't know how this happened, but they went off and shot him 16 times. That's outright murder."

"He was unarmed," said Teyonna Myers, the young man's cousin. "He had a sandwich in his hand, and

they thought it was a gun. It's like Michael Brown all over again."

The manager of the store the young man had visited told the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* that he had known Myers for a decade, and that he visited his store almost every day. He described him as "relaxed, regular, no worries or nothing." The manager told Myers "to go home and be safe because it's getting dark." Ten minutes later he was dead.

Dotson said that the officer, who was off-duty but wearing his uniform because he was moonlighting as a security guard, started chasing Myers and two friends, ostensibly because one of them ran when they saw him pass by.

The chase continued on foot, and at one point the officer grabbed Myers and tore off his sweatshirt. Myers continued to run away and the officer opened fire, killing him.

Police claimed that Myers was armed with a handgun and had shot three times at the officer, who was uninjured. Police also claimed to have recovered the gun and three bullets fired by Myers.

As with the killing of Brown by police officer Darren Wilson, police immediately sought to smear Myers' character, saying he was "no stranger to law enforcement." He had earlier been charged with unlawful use of a weapon because police claimed he threw a firearm in a storm drain after he was a passenger in a high-speed car chase. He was set to stand trial in November.

The shooting of Myers follows the August 20 police killing of 25-year-old Kajieme Powell, a mentally disturbed man who died in a barrage of a dozen shots from two police officers, including several while he was motionless on the ground. A cell phone video subsequently showed that police misled the public

about important circumstances of the killing.

“These incidents keep occurring,” said Dr. Brandy Peoples, a psychologist living in Hazelwood, outside of St. Louis, who spoke with the WSWs by telephone Thursday. “This is a young man whose life has been lost.”

“What made an off-duty officer take it upon himself to chase these boys?” she added. “There seems to be an abuse of power and authority. If you are a certain color or a certain age or come from a certain socioeconomic background, it’s shoot first and ask questions later.”

“It’s more than just a race thing or an age thing,” she said. “When these things come up, a lot of people are really quick to talk about race. But often money trumps race. The people who have the money are protected.”

Asked whether she thought the protests against the killing of Michael Brown have changed anything in official politics, Peoples replied, “There’s been no action; the officer hasn’t been brought to trial. From the legal end, I haven’t seen anything happening.”

The police murder of Brown two months ago was followed by mass repression against protests over the killing. The largely working class town was placed under de facto martial law, with hundreds of police, backed by National Guard troops, attacking demonstrators with tear gas and rubber bullets and carrying out large-scale arrests. Civil liberties were suspended as police arrested reporters and imposed a rule requiring residents to keep moving and not stand in one place.

The use of machine gun-mounted armored vehicles and helicopters to support police dressed in military fatigues and pointing combat weapons at protesters shocked the country and the world. The events demonstrated the build-up of police-state methods to be used against any expression of social opposition.

Since the killing of Brown, not only have more than 100 people been killed by police, but courts have repeatedly failed to hold officers accountable for violence and murder. This week an appeals court sanctioned the dropping of felony charges against the Detroit policeman who shot and killed seven-year-old Aiyana Stanley-Jones during a SWAT raid in 2010. Also this week, a grand jury decided that the Georgia SWAT team officers who severely injured an infant by throwing a flash-bang grenade into his crib last May will not face charges.

A grand jury is deliberating whether to bring charges against Darren Wilson and is expected to come to a decision next month. Reuters reported earlier this week that local police are working with the FBI and other intelligence agencies to plan out a major crackdown in the event that a failure by the grand jury to press charges against Brown’s killer sparks further protests.



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