

# Two months since the police murder of Michael Brown

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On Wednesday, the eve of the two-month anniversary of the police murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, an off-duty St. Louis police officer shot and killed yet another teenager, 18-year-old Vonderrit Myers Jr.

As with the August 9 killing of Brown and the August 20 police shooting of 25-year-old Kajieme Powell, there is no reason to believe anything said by the police. They have defended this latest street execution, while repeatedly changing their account of the shooting and withholding the name of the cop involved, who has been placed on paid leave.

In addition to firing 17 rounds at the youth, while remaining unscathed himself, there is evidence that Myers's uniformed killer continued shooting as the teenager was on the ground. "The fatal shot entered the right cheek and was recovered in the body," the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported.

Myers's killer, who was wearing his police uniform while moonlighting as a contractor for a private security company, gave chase to the young man because he said he looked "suspicious."

St. Louis police have claimed that the youth was armed and fired first. Myers's family members insist that he was unarmed, which is substantiated by video surveillance footage from a convenience store where he bought a sandwich minutes before being hunted down and murdered by the St. Louis cop.

Asked why the officer felt compelled to shoot the teenager so many times, Neil Bruntrager, a lawyer for the St. Louis Police Officers' Association, replied that when an officer "uses deadly force, he uses deadly force until the threat is gone."

The latest police killing sparked overnight protests that were met by over a hundred officers, together with SWAT teams, and helicopters, reminiscent of the

earlier militarized police crackdown on demonstrators in Ferguson. This week, Reuters reported police are preparing for a series of demonstrations scheduled for this weekend, marking two months since the killing of Michael Brown. Regular meetings have been held with intelligence agencies to share information on "out-of-state agitators," who are to be targeted.

Two months since the killing of Michael Brown, an unarmed eighteen-year-old who was gunned down execution-style while he had his hands in the air, Brown's killer remains at large, under paid leave and police protection, with no charges brought against him.

Ferguson residents responded to the murder of Brown with a series of demonstrations, protests, and vigils, which were met with a massive police crackdown. The largely working class town was placed under de facto martial law, with hundreds of police in military gear, backed by National Guard troops, attacking demonstrators with tear gas and rubber bullets. Hundreds of people were arrested, arbitrarily detained, and given punitive bail amounts on charges largely invented by police, such as "failure to disperse" and "unlawful assembly."

The illegal and unconstitutional character of the police response was summed up by an injunction issued by a federal judge this week against the so-called "five second rule," an arbitrary directive that police used to abrogate the constitutionally-protected freedom of assembly. The judge said the order allowed "police officers, if they felt like it, to order peaceful, law-abiding protesters to keep moving rather than standing still."

She concluded, "As it was applied in this case, the practice...violates the constitution."

What then is the penalty for the crime of violating the constitution, the fundamental law of the land, which the

ruling concludes “unquestionably constitutes irreparable injury”?

There will be no punishment, nor even an admission of guilt. “I never heard of such a rule, that wasn’t anything that we had put into policy, practice or procedure,” County Police Chief Jon Belmar told the *Washington Post* in response to the injunction. This is a patent lie. WSWS reporters were on the scene when this unconstitutional rule was used as the pretense to arrest photographer Scott Olson, who had earlier captured the iconic image of a lone protestor confronting a dozen masked police officers pointing assault rifles.

In her ruling, the judge concluded, “The rule of law is essential to our constitutional system of government, and it applies equally to law enforcement officers and to other citizens.”

This ruling, which is so at odds with reality, reads as a sweeping indictment of American society as it exists today. It is in fact the case that the law does not apply equally to all. The police are free to violate the law with impunity, and are immune, to use the language of the declaration of independence, from “punishment for any murders which they should commit.”

The rights of citizens may exist in the realm of abstract theory, but as one police training instructor recently wrote in an op-ed in the *Washington Post*, “if you don’t want to get shot, tased, pepper-sprayed, struck with a baton or thrown to the ground, just do what I tell you.”

Two months since thousands of people marched against the murder of Michael Brown, over 100 people have been killed by police across the United States, while courts have repeatedly failed to hold them accountable for violence and murder. This week, an appeals court sanctioned the dropping of felony charges against the Detroit cop who shot and killed seven-year-old Aiyana Stanley-Jones during a SWAT raid in 2010. Also this week, a grand jury refused to bring charges against members of a Georgia SWAT team who severely injured an infant by throwing a flash-bang grenade into his crib last May.

The fact is that the United States is no longer governed by the rule of law, but rather by force, power, and monopolized wealth. The police kill hundreds of people every year, the federal government commits torture, drone assassinations, and illegal spying and

Wall Street executives defraud millions of people—all with impunity.

The hollowing out of the rule of law and its replacement with arbitrary, militaristic, and essentially dictatorial forms of rule are the legal expression of the cancerous growth of social inequality, and go hand in hand with the drive to war.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote in August, “At the heart of all the social and democratic issues raised in Ferguson is the nature of the capitalist system. No struggle against inequality and the police state apparatus in America can be successful unless it is based on the understanding that what is involved is a struggle against the entire social and economic order.”

Two months later, new crimes and tragedies have only substantiated this assessment. The burning issue in the struggle against police state repression and in defense of democratic rights remains the building of a mass movement of the working class, armed with a socialist program for reorganizing society to meet social needs, not private profit.



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