

As whitewash of police murder in Ferguson continues

Video shows Cleveland cop killed 12-year-old boy in under two seconds

Andre Damon
28 November 2014

Cleveland police released a video Wednesday of the shooting of Tamir Rice, a 12-year-old boy killed by a police officer this past weekend. The video clearly shows that a police officer shot Rice within two seconds of pulling up to a park gazebo where he was sitting.

The shooting on Saturday, the latest in a series of nationwide police killings, came only two days before the decision not to indict Darren Wilson, the Ferguson, Missouri police officer who shot 18-year-old Michael Brown on August 9.

The video released by Cleveland police Wednesday contradicts earlier police statements that the officers told Rice three times to drop a toy handgun he was holding and raise his hands. Given the tiny amount of time between the officers' arrival and the shooting, they would not have had time to do this, and the boy would not have had time to comply.

Police also released an audio recording of a 911 call that preceded the shooting, in which a local resident complained that someone who was "probably a juvenile" was pointing a gun that was "probably fake."

"The video shows one thing distinctly: the police officers reacted quickly," Rice's parents, Samaria Rice and Leonard Warner, said in a statement requesting that the video be made public.

"The news of Tamir's death has devastated our family. Tamir was a bright young man who had his whole life ahead of him... Everyone loved him. The holiday season begins this week. Instead of the love, fellowship and joy the season brings to many families, we will be mourning the loss of Tamir.

"We feel the actions of the patrol officer who took our son's life must be made public," they said, asking

for peaceful demonstrations against the young man's killing.

This month, the FBI reported that 461 people were killed by police in "justifiable homicides" last year, the highest number in at least two decades, and up from 404 in 2011. By comparison, police in Germany killed only six people in 2011, while police in the UK killed two.

There is little doubt that Rice's killer will be treated in a similar manner as Wilson. In fact, the response to Brown's killing has been deliberately used to set a precedent for protecting killer cops from prosecution, leading police to function in an even more openly violent and aggressive fashion.

In the days following the decision of the highly manipulated grand jury, Wilson has been treated as a quasi-celebrity by the media, which has largely swallowed his improbable and self-serving account of the killing of Brown. The tone was set by the interview of Wilson aired Wednesday by ABC News and conducted by George Stephanopoulos.

In the days prior to the grand jury decision, Wilson had met with nearly all of the leading TV news anchors, including Matt Lauer of NBC, Scott Pelley of CBS and Anderson Cooper and Don Lemon of CNN, essentially having the various newscasters audition for an exclusive interview.

Ultimately, it was Stephanopoulos, a former White House Communications director under the Clinton administration, who got the job. Stephanopoulos's discussion with Wilson was entirely in continuity with Wilson's treatment at the hands of St. Louis County prosecutor Robert McCulloch: that is, instead of treating Wilson as a man accused of a terrible crime,

with every incentive to lie and misinterpret the truth, Stephanopoulos accepted every fact Wilson presented as good coin.

Wilson's story falls somewhere between the highly improbable and the impossible. In his grand jury testimony, Wilson said that the unarmed Brown, after having been hit by at least three hollow-point .40 caliber bullets, somehow managed to charge at him full speed, headfirst. The cop described the teenager in comic-book language, saying Brown looked "like a demon" and described his conflict with the supposedly superhuman teenager as akin to "a five-year-old holding onto Hulk Hogan."

Stephanopoulos did not question any element of this story, asking only if the killer cop would have done anything differently in retrospect. "No," replied Wilson.

On Thursday, the *New York Times* published a front-page article analyzing Wilson's ABC interview. It quoted two former police officers and an "expert" from the Homeland Security Management Institute at Long Island University, all of whom offered suggestions on how Wilson might have responded to Brown in a different fashion, including calling for backup. The article did not even mention the possibility that Wilson's story could be false, once again serving to reinforce his version of events.

The grand jury proceeding was itself a fraud, in which the prosecution failed to specify charges it was pursuing against Wilson and did not provide an account of what laws it thought he violated. Prosecutors, functioning as defense attorneys for Wilson, sought to discredit and undermine the mass of evidence that clearly justified a trial, while allowing Wilson himself to speak for hours without any critical questions.

There is a line of continuity between the grand jury proceeding that exonerated Wilson and the subsequent treatment of the issue in the media. Nowhere was the cop subject to a frank and adversarial challenge to his absurd story.

The implications of all of this are clear: If a police officer says he had grounds to use lethal force, he had the right to do so and will not be questioned. He will be exonerated by the courts and lauded in the media. The result will be more police murders like those of Tamir Rice.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact