

Maryland grand jury announces charges against six cops in killing of Freddie Gray

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On Thursday a grand jury indicted six Baltimore cops involved in the death of 25-year-old Freddie Gray. Gray's death last month from spinal injuries he incurred while in police custody set off an eruption of social anger and the police-military occupation of the city.

The indictment came three weeks after Baltimore State Attorney Marilyn Mosby announced charges against the six police officers involved in Gray's arrest. Mosby's action, taken in close coordination with the Obama administration, was aimed at dissipating social tensions in Baltimore after the deployment of 5,000 National Guard to stop mass protests, which also spread to other cities.

The grand jury largely upheld Mosby's initial charges with significant exceptions. Caesar R. Goodson Jr., who gave Gray a "rough ride" in the police van after his arrest, received the stiffest charge, including a second-degree "depraved heart" murder that carries a potential 30-year sentence. All the cops were charged with second-degree assault, which carries a potential ten-year sentence, as well as with reckless endangerment, which carries a five-year penalty.

Significantly, the false imprisonment charge given to the officers involved in Gray's arrest has been dropped from the indictment. Mosby was originally adamant that Gray's arrest was illegal and the cops had no reason to arrest him. The small knife police say Gray had in his pocket, Mosby declared, was legal under Maryland law.

Attorneys for the police will no doubt point to the dropping of the false imprisonment charges to malign Gray and legitimize the actions of the cops. Mosby sought to justify the grand jury's decision in a brief press conference, saying, "As our investigation has continued, additional information has been discovered

and is often the case, during an ongoing investigation, charges can and should be revised based upon the evidence."

Attorneys for the police have already attacked Mosby's indictment as an example of "overzealous prosecution," and have accused her of conflicts of interests because her husband is a City Council member in the district where Gray was killed and she has political and personal ties to lawyers representing the Gray family. There are also efforts by supporters of the cops to move the venue of any future trial out of Baltimore in hopes of getting a more police-friendly jury.

Under mounting social anger due to a spate of exonerations of killer cops by rigged grand juries, including in Ferguson, Missouri and Staten Island, New York late last year, the grand jury indictment in Baltimore is designed to boost illusions in the so-called justice system and the Democratic Party in particular. Indictments, however, are by no means convictions and there will be many efforts to reduce charges or reach plea bargains with wrist-slap punishments before any eventual trial.

Regardless of the outcome of any trial, none of the essential causes behind the death of Freddie Gray and the wave of police killings across the country will be resolved. The almost daily police murder of unarmed citizens and the militarization of the police in response to mass protests have their roots in the explosive social polarization in America and the efforts of the incredibly wealthy corporate and financial elite to contain an ever-more impoverished and restive working class.

An investigation last month by the *Washington Post* found that of the thousands of killings in which a police officer was involved, only several dozen cops were ever charged in court, with even fewer resulting in a

conviction.



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