

Notes on police violence in America

# Black youth dies in Virginia jail cell after being held four months for alleged \$5 theft

**Evan Blake**  
**31 August 2015**

Jamycheal Mitchell, 24, was found dead in his jail cell in Portsmouth, Virginia on August 19, after spending nearly four months behind bars without bail for allegedly stealing snacks worth approximately \$5.

Mitchell, who suffered from bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, was kept in jail and denied access to adequate medical care, despite officials' reports that he refused to take medication or eat his meals.

The young man's aunt, Roxanne Adams, spoke with the media, asserting that he starved to death after refusing meals and medication at the jail. Adams told *The Guardian*, "His body failed. It is extraordinary. The person I saw deceased was not even the same person."

Adams, a registered nurse, asserts that Mitchell had lost at least 65 pounds while in prison and had virtually no muscle mass left by the time of his death.

While the official autopsy results have yet to be released, Portsmouth police claim that they found Mitchell lying on the floor of his cell early in the morning and he was pronounced dead shortly thereafter. Prison officials have stated that Mitchell's death is not being treated as suspicious, even though there remain many questions surrounding his imprisonment and death.

Nearly three weeks after his arrest on April 22 Mitchell was transferred to a regional jail on May 11. Ten days later, Judge Morton Whitlow ruled that Mitchell was not competent to stand trial, and ordered him transferred to nearby Eastern State hospital for psychological treatment.

When the jail appeared to be dragging its feet on the transfer, Adams stepped in. "He was just deteriorating so fast," she told *The Guardian*. "I kept calling the jail, but they said they couldn't transfer him because there were no available beds. So I called Eastern State, too, and people there said they didn't know anything about the request or not having bed availability."

No officials from the court, the police department or the jail have explained why Mitchell was denied the chance of

release on bail, or why the prison failed to transfer him to Eastern State or another appropriate medical facility.

## Cop who shot unarmed man 10 times is exonerated

Randall Kerrick, a white Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Virginia officer who killed unarmed 24-year-old Jonathan Ferrell, who was black, will not face a retrial after his initial trial ended last week with a deadlocked jury. Kerrick fired 12 shots at Ferrell on the evening of September 14, 2013, hitting him 10 times and killing him instantly.

Kerrick was initially charged with manslaughter after Police Chief Rodney Monroe stated, "Our investigation has shown that Officer Kendrick did not have a lawful right to discharge his weapon during the encounter." His trial began earlier this summer, and after deliberating for three days last week, jurors told Judge Robert C. Ervin they could not reach a verdict, leading Ervin to declare a mistrial.

On Friday, Robert C. Montgomery, North Carolina's senior deputy attorney general announced that prosecutors would seek to have the charge against Kerrick dismissed, thus concluding the case.

Ferrell's mother, Georgia Ferrell, told the *Charlotte Observer*, "They didn't try hard enough. It was just another black life they don't care, it doesn't matter. I am going to continue to fight. I am going to work on the foundation, continue work for justice. It's not the end."

Dashcam video of the police shooting revealed that Ferrell was clearly unarmed at the time he was shot to death, and appeared to be running from police for safety. Kerrick fired 12 shots in rapid succession while yelling "Get on the ground!" shortly after Ferrell ran out of view of the camera. The official autopsy found that most of the shots that struck Ferrell were fired at a downward angle, suggesting that he

was on his knees or kneeling down at the time Kerrick unloaded his weapon.

### **Witness testimony sharply contradicts official police narrative of the killing of Mansur Ball-Bey**

The primary witness to the shooting of 18-year-old Mansur Ball-Bey, killed by St. Louis police on August 19, has testified that he and Ball-Bey were unarmed and not present at the house where police issued their search warrant, according to attorneys representing Ball-Bey's family.

The 14-year-old, whose name has been withheld due to his age, asserts that he and Ball-Bey were in the back alley a few houses down, where Ball-Bey's cousin lives, and became frightened when two unidentified, armed men entered the shared alleyway. When police opened fire, shooting Ball-Bey in the back, the boy hid in a stairwell and soon fled the scene in fear of his life, running directly home.

The boy's story contradicts the official narrative in many key respects. Police have claimed that the 14-year-old fled with Ball-Bey out the back door of 1211 Wooten Avenue, and that Ball-Bey turned and pointed a gun at one of the officers, prompting them to shoot him. However, not a single witness has attested to the police story, while multiple witnesses have asserted that Ball-Bey was unarmed when police opened fire.

### **No charges for Detroit ICE agent who killed 20-year-old Terrance Kellom**

Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy recently announced that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officer Mitchell Quinn, who murdered 20-year-old black youth Terrance Kellom on April 27, will not face any charges. Quinn, who is also African American, shot Kellom ten times in front of his family members after being allowed into their home.

The investigation into Kellom's death was carried out by Michigan State Police, who worked to protect Quinn. The Kellom family's lawyer, Karri Mitchell, has said that there should have been an independent investigation, and that the family plans to file a civil lawsuit.

Police claim that Kellom charged at Quinn, prompting him to shoot in fear of his life. However, members of the Kellom family who witnessed the shooting assert that he was

unarmed. Further, the autopsy revealed that none of the bullets were fired from close range, indicating that Quinn was at a safe distance from Kellom when he opened fire.

Kellom's death sparked protests in Detroit, where roughly 200 workers and youth gathered to commemorate his life and demand an end to police brutality. At the protest Kevin Kellom, the victim's father, declared, "My son died with clenched fists. He didn't have a hammer. They assassinated my son."

### **Witness challenges official narrative of police killing in Los Angeles**

Police shot and killed 30-year-old Redel Kentel Jones earlier this month in the Baldwin Hills neighborhood of South Los Angeles. Jones was the 25th person shot and 13th person killed by Los Angeles police so far this year. Immediately after the shooting, the LAPD sought to bury the story, as Detective Meghan Aguilar alleged that Jones was holding a "large knife" and that officers attempted to detain her by first firing a Taser.

In the police report, responding officers from the Southwest Division alleged, "Jones began to advance toward one of the officers while still armed with the knife and an Officer-Involved Shooting (OIS) ensued."

Witness Courtyana Franklin has come forward to dispute the official narrative. "She was running from them," Franklin told *NBC Los Angeles*. "I hear a report saying they tasered her first. I didn't see any of that. All I saw was a person running down the alley towards my car."

The following day, Franklin told the *LA Times*, "I do know for a fact that she was not charging at them. Those police were running. They were not trying to get away from her."



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