

Three shot, two killed by Chicago police in one day

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28 December 2015

On December 26, a college student and a bakery worker were shot and killed by one or more members of the Chicago Police Department (CPD) in an incident on the west side of the city. In a separate incident that day, a 26-year-old father was shot five times and seriously injured by CPD officers on the far south side of the city.

The killings in Chicago add to the daily list of victims of police violence. According the news aggregator KilledByPolice.net, 1,185 people have been killed by cops in 2015 so far, a 6.7 percent increase over the 1,108 killed in 2014.

The shootings occur amid a political crisis in the city of Chicago touched off by the exposure of a cover-up orchestrated by the administration of Democratic Mayor Rahm Emanuel of the 2014 police murder of 19-year-old Laquan McDonald by Chicago cop Jason Van Dyke. (See: “A police killing and criminal conspiracy in Chicago”)

Early on December 26, one or more Chicago police officers shot and killed 19-year-old Quintonio LeGrier, a Northern Illinois University electrical engineering student home for the Christmas holiday, and 55-year-old Bettie Jones, a bakery worker and mother of five, in the west side neighborhood of Garfield Park. At 4:15 a.m. LeGrier’s father, Antonio, called the police to the apartment building where LeGrier and Jones both lived to help with a mental health episode Quintonio was suffering. According to relatives, the younger LeGrier struggled in recent months with some mental health issues, and had recently been prescribed medications.

The young man was reported to be acting erratically and swinging a baseball bat in the apartment and hitting his father’s bedroom door. Police arrived around 4:25 a.m. In less than an hour, both Quintonio LeGrier and Bettie Jones were declared dead at two different area

hospitals.

Antonio LeGrier, the landlord, called Bettie Jones, his downstairs tenant, to ask her to let the police into the building. Jones was reportedly shot in the neck as she opened the door. Jones was heard to yell, “Whoa! Whoa!” several times before the cops fired. One of Jones’s five children, Latisha, was awakened by the noise and ran to her mother’s side as she lay unresponsive on the ground. Latisha said she learned several hours later that her mother was dead.

Some facts about what took place are still unclear, including how many officers fired into the home. The only witnesses to the shootings were the cops and the victims. Antonio LeGrier said he was making his way down to the first floor when he heard shots and found both his son and Bettie Jones wounded in the foyer of the building. At least one news report indicates that bullet holes in the door and inside the entryway of the apartment building show police may have shot through the door. It is not clear whether LeGrier was armed with the bat when he was killed. CPD has given no comment on the circumstances of the killings.

Families of both the victims have spoken out about the recklessness and brutality of the police. Antonio LeGrier told the *Sun-Times* he heard a cop yell, “F—, no, no, no. I thought he was lunging at me with the bat.”

LeGrier went on to say, “In my opinion, he knew he had messed up. It was senseless. He knew he had shot blindly, recklessly into the doorway and now two people are dead because of it. My son had some emotional problems. Did it warrant him getting shot and killed? I don’t believe it.”

Quintonio’s mother, Janet Cooksey, said, “They did tell me he was shot seven times. ... I don’t take all of that. My son only weighed about 150 pounds. Why do

you have to be shot that many times? Why? If the police is trained in the field, then how, they're just handling the situation by killing people?"

Bettie Jones' brother, James Reynolds, declared, "They'll say it was justified, and then 14 days later no one will even be talking about it anymore... By that time, it will have probably happened to someone else."

At a vigil held December 27 on the block where LeGrier and Jones were killed, local Democratic politicians sought to obscure the class character of police violence and shore up support for the Democratic Party by appealing to the Obama administration. Since 2013, Obama has overseen a staggering increase in police violence in the US and the distribution of military-grade weaponry and vehicles to domestic police departments, including those used in Ferguson, Missouri against protests over the 2014 police murder of Michael Brown.

Congressman Danny Davis, referring to the federal civil rights investigation of the Chicago police department that was opened after the uncovering of the murder of Laquan McDonald, said, "Federal investigators are in town. Of course we eagerly await their findings."

Another official said, "Here in his hometown, President Obama we are under siege. We need help. And here in Chicago right now we need leadership we can trust."

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On the same day that Jones and LeGrier were killed, 26-year-old Mikel Lumpkin was shot by Chicago police in the south side neighborhood of Washington Heights. Lumpkin was reportedly arguing with his brother, and police were called. According to witnesses, SWAT surrounded the block and police claimed one of the men had a gun and began firing. Family members dispute the claim that shots were fired. Witnesses reported that when asked to put his gun down, Lumpkin complied. He was shot five times and handcuffed.

Residents who witnessed the police actions became angry and some were arrested, according to witnesses. Jasmine Jackson said, "They tried to take this man's life even after he surrendered his hands... He surrendered. It's not fair and they shouldn't handle people like that. Everybody was upset because the guy was shot and he was in handcuffs."

A number of videos have surfaced of the violence meted out by Chicago police in the wake of public outcry. After the release of the video of Laquan McDonald's murder, Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez released video of the police killing of Ronald Johnson, shot to death in October 2014. Alvarez chose not to press charges against the officer who killed him.

After three years of keeping it from the public, the city this month also released video from December 2012 showing the murder of Philip Coleman, a 38-year-old University of Chicago graduate with mental health issues, at the hands of police in a local jail. Coleman was arrested after he began acting erratically, and his family called police in the hope they would help get him to a mental hospital. Instead he ended up in a police station where he was brutally beaten and electrocuted with a Taser, resulting in his eventual death.

The author also recommends:

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[2 December 2015]



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