

Chicago police accused of threatening witnesses of Laquan McDonald shooting and falsifying accounts

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Lawyers for the family of Laquan McDonald have accused Chicago police officers of threatening at least three people who witnessed McDonald's murder by Chicago police officer Jason Van Dyke in 2014. According to the attorneys the witnesses were interrogated for hours and forced to change their accounts from the night of the shooting.

On October 20th, 2014, Laquan McDonald was shot 16 times as he walked away from Chicago police officer Jason Van Dyke. Video of the execution style murder was suppressed by the Chicago Police Department (CPD) and the administration of Mayor Rahm Emanuel, with the complicity of the Obama administration, for over a year.

In an interview with CNN, attorneys for the McDonald family, Jeffrey Neslund and Michael Robbins, stated that they discovered further evidence of a cover-up by the CPD while reading over witness statements from the night of the shooting released as part of a freedom of information request by CNN family.

"You have a false narrative put out by police, outright lies to cover up an illegal shooting, corroborated by other officers," Robbins told CNN.

The official witness summaries from the night of the shooting were signed off on and approved by a Chicago police lieutenant on March 15, 2015, nearly five months after the event and nine days after attorneys Neslund and Robbins requested information from the CPD.

The summaries produced by the CPD stated that five people were located in the vicinity of the shooting but none had actually witnessed it. According to the official reports, two witnesses "did not see or hear anything,"

While another witness allegedly heard the gunshots and then saw McDonald "lying in the street." The final two witnesses stated they had seen McDonald being chased by police, but did not witness the shooting.

One only needs to take a cursory glance at the video of the killing of Laquan McDonald to see that this is a complete lie. The video itself shows what is most likely a non-police car on the right side of the frame. The car is seen stopping as police cars assemble on the middle of the street and remains there after the shooting. It is highly unlikely that the driver of the vehicle did not witness anything. Additionally, the street where McDonald was murdered, Pulaski Road, is a major street that routinely has significant traffic. With an assemblage of police cars, lights glaring, stationed in the middle of the street, it is also highly unlikely that there would be no witnesses to the shooting.

In fact, Robbins told CNN that a father and his son had witnessed the shooting while driving in their car nearby. The father was told by a uniformed officer "to get out of there immediately, to drive off or be arrested." Robbins commented, "This is somebody who is an occurrence witness to a fatal shooting. Nobody asked him, 'What did you see?'"

Meanwhile, three witnesses were brought to a police station by officers where they were interrogated for hours. The witnesses were a truck driver who witnessed the shooting from a Burger King parking lot nearby, and a woman and her friend. All three witnesses were interviewed separately for hours, during which they were intimidated by the police and told to lie about what they had seen.

Speaking on behalf of the truck driver, Robbins said, "He kept describing it and he said the police were

visibly angry with him and arguing with him about what happened, saying, “That’s not what happened,” “He’d say, ‘Well, that’s what I saw.’ They said, ‘No, you’re wrong.’” Robbins told CNN that the truck driver told the police that he had to leave to go to work for a 6 am shift, at which point, “The police said, ‘We don’t give a f— about your truck. Let’s go through this again.’”

“The truck driver says he did tell police, that it was like an execution,” Robbins stated. “What he described was what we saw in the video.”

“We saw these (summaries) by the three witnesses who were interviewed at the station—that police say they didn’t see anything. We said, ‘Where’s the witness statements?’ We were told there were no witness statements,” Robbins concluded.

Neslund stated that the female witness had yelled to Van Dyke as he emptied his clip into Laquan McDonald’s body to “Stop shooting.” According to Neslund, she told the McDonald family, “There’s a reason they kept us there ‘til 4 a.m. One officer said he was going to get me.”

“We saw these (summaries) by the three witnesses who were interviewed at the station—that police say they didn’t see anything. We said, ‘Where’s the witness statements?’ We were told there were no witness statements,” Robbins stated to CNN. “Significantly in our view, of these three witnesses—the truck driver, the woman and her companion—none of them were asked to sign a statement.”

Neslund went on to tell CNN, “It’s not just the officers on the street. It’s a lieutenant, a sergeant and detectives—and the lengths they went to justify what simply was not true.” And from there, it’s Rahm Emanuel, the City Council to all the way Obama Administration and the Democratic Party, who see the police as a mandatory instrument of the state for maintaining class rule of the ruling elite.



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