

# Off-duty Cincinnati police officer uses taser on 11-year old child

Jacob Crosse  
11 August 2018

Last Monday, Cincinnati Police Department (CPD) Officer Kevin Brown, 55, saw fit to tase 11-year-old Donesha Gowdy as she was leaving a Spring Grove Village Kroger grocery store Monday evening. Brown, working as a security guard, tasered Gowdy for allegedly stealing “snacks.”

According to the police report, Gowdy refused to comply with Brown’s demands to stop. As she turned her back and walked away, the off-duty officer electrocuted the adolescent, shocking her with up to 50,000 volts of electricity. The metal electrodes pierced her skin and embedded in her back, completing a circuit that witnesses state caused Gowdy to collapse. She began convulsing as the electricity sent spasms through her 4-foot-11-inch, 90-pound body. The fourth grader was transported to the Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center and charged with “theft” and “obstructing official business.”

The use of a Taser on a child “as young as 7 or an adult as old as 70” is currently permitted under the CPD’s Use of Force policy.

Donna Gowdy, mother of Donesha, was irate at the officer’s actions. “If you can’t restrain these little kids, you need to find a different job.” She also stated that her daughter was suffering from back pain and having difficulty sleeping since the incident. In comments to local reporters, Donesha stated that she didn’t comply with the officer’s demand to stop because she was scared.

The Taser, developed by Axon Enterprise Inc., has been sold to law enforcement departments, the military and civilians as a “less lethal electroshock weapon” that can incapacitate from up to 25 feet away. Axon, formerly Taser International, touts the ability of its products to induce NMI, or neuromuscular incapacitation, which “temporarily overrides an

attacker’s central nervous system, limiting muscular control for 5 seconds.”

According to a 2017 Reuters investigation, this “less lethal” weapon has been the cause of or a contributing factor in at least 153 deaths in the United States since its widespread adoption by police forces beginning in 2000. The same study concluded that, as with Donesha Gowdy, nine out of ten of those killed by taser were unarmed.

Axon disputes the study, claiming only 24 instances of taser usage have resulted in death. Axon further claims that 18 of those 24 died from falling after the taser was used, while the remaining six instances were caused due to “fires sparked by the weapon’s electrical arc.”

In a morbid coincidence, August 6 marked the seven-year anniversary of the murder in Cincinnati of 18-year-old Everette Howard Jr. by campus police officer Richard Hass. Hass used his taser in an early Sunday morning altercation after Howard allegedly didn’t comply with the officer’s commands. Howard was attending summer college preparatory classes at the University of Cincinnati.

Despite paramedic attempts to save him, Howard was declared dead upon arriving at the local hospital. Howard was unarmed and witnesses state he was complying with police demands, lowering himself to the ground and resting on his knees when Hass shot him in the chest. After suing Hass and the University of Cincinnati, the Howard family received a two million dollar settlement in 2013.

The latter court outcome is rare. According to a 2015 investigation conducted by the *Washington Post*, of the thousands of police killings which occurred in the ten-year period from 2005 to 2015, only 54 officers were so much as *charged*, let alone convicted of murder. At the

same time, literally thousands have continued to die at the hands of police. According to the internet aggregator website [killedbypolice.net](http://killedbypolice.net), as of July, 720 individuals have been killed by law enforcement this year.

As is par for the course, social outrage has prompted city officials to promise a “thorough investigation” while Officer Kevin Brown is put on restricted duty. This “thorough investigation” will have to be completed without the use of body camera footage. While Brown was wearing a camera at the time of the incident, as so often is the case, it was not turned on.

Vice Mayor Christopher Smitherman has proposed raising the “minimum age” for stun gun use to 12 years old. It is unclear how police officers will determine if a child is 11 or 12 and therefore eligible to receive “electroshock.” Meanwhile at the behest of Cincinnati Mayor John Cranley, Hamilton County Prosecutor Joe Deters has dropped the charges originally filed against Donesha Gowdy.

Likewise, figures around the Democratic Party specializing in channeling social opposition along the lines of race and gender, rather than class, have sprung into action. Shaun King, columnist at *The Intercept* and arch-peddler of identity politics, lamented on Twitter Thursday: “This would NEVER happen to an 11-year-old WHITE girl. Never.” The fact that Officer Kevin Brown is black did not deter King’s racist ramblings.

Police departments such as Cincinnati’s have been integrated for decades. Despite this “diversity,” officers continue to assault and kill working class citizens of all races and ages with regularity, while the wealthy continue to swindle billions of dollars from workers and orchestrate imperialist wars around the globe. Only a struggle against the capitalist system, the chief driver of inequality, police brutality and war, can eliminate such scourges from society.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**