

Former Dallas cop indicted for murder of neighbor

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A former Dallas police officer was indicted on a murder charge almost three months after fatally shooting her neighbor in his apartment. Amber Guyger, 30, told investigators she entered Botham Jean's apartment by accident last September, believing it was her own, and opened fire upon encountering Jean.

Guyger, who at the time of the shooting was a member of the police force, was returning home from her shift still in uniform. According to her testimony, she mistook Jean's apartment for her own, which was a floor above. Seeing that the door was slightly ajar and opened when she tried to unlock it, she claims to have thought Jean was a burglar and shot him after issuing commands. Soon after the incident, Guyger was arrested and terminated by the Dallas police department. The Texas Rangers charged Guyger with manslaughter and opened an investigation.

The circumstances of the shooting led to many questions and sparked outrage. According to court documents, Guyger fired her service weapon twice, striking Jean in the torso. He later died at the hospital. Critics, including Jean's family, wondered why it took three days for Guyger to be charged, why she was not taken into custody immediately after the shooting and whether race played a factor in her decision to use deadly force.

Many believed the original manslaughter charge. Protesters rallied for weeks calling for Ms. Guyger to be charged with murder, demanding justice in front of Dallas Police headquarters as well as at a city council meeting. Additional protests were held after Guyger posted a \$300,000 bond just hours after she was arrested while some protesters were jailed for two days.

Lawyers for Jean's family insisted that his door was closed and that neighbors had heard someone banging on the door, demanding to be let in, before they heard

gunshots fired.

Guyger's indictment marks the second Texas officer to be charged or found guilty of murder this year. Such an occurrence is rare in the United States. Less than 10 non-federal officers have been found guilty of murder since 2005, yet officers kill an average of three people a day. This year saw the first police murder conviction in the state of Texas since 1973.

One can only speculate on what influenced the string of decisions that culminated in Guyger's indictment. The decision likely indicates a fear of further public outrage. Local police already caused an outcry when they deployed pepper balls on demonstrators a week after the shooting. The authorities may feel they are on thin ice.

Dallas Police Chief U. Reneè Hall released a public statement announcing cosmetic measures intended to mollify social discontent, such as a revamped Citizens' Review Board, while declaring that the Dallas police force still "continues to feel anguish about this difficult and tragic event."

Botham Jean's mother, Allison Jean, said during a news conference that she's satisfied with the murder indictment. Guyger "inflicted tremendous evil on my son," she said. "He didn't deserve it. He was seated in his own apartment. He felt safe and he was violated by her coming in and murdering him."

When asked why the grand jury indicted Guyger on the more serious offense of murder, Dallas County District Attorney Faith Johnson replied, "We presented the evidence and we explained the law." Johnson clarified the implications of the sentencing, saying murder constitutes someone "intentionally and knowingly" committing a crime, whereas manslaughter involves "recklessly doing something."

"At the moment of the shooting it was a knowing ...

offense,” she said. Guyger faces a sentence ranging from five years in prison to life.



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