

Video shows Florida school police officer boasting after arresting six-year-old

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Video was released Monday of the arrest of Kaia Rolle, a six-year-old student who was charged with battery and taken to a juvenile facility where she was fingerprinted and had her mugshot taken in September 2019. According to her grandmother, Rolle suffers from sleep apnea and was acting out of frustration when she struck her teachers at Lucious and Emma Nixon Academy, a charter school in Orlando, Florida.

The video from a police body camera shows Rolle seated and listening calmly to a teacher while they wait for the officers to arrive. Dennis Turner, a police officer employed by Nixon Academy as a school resource officer (SRO), and another police officer arrived with zip ties to restrain the young girl's arms and trundle her away in a waiting police SUV.

Rolle cried out for help and broke into tears after Turner affirmed that the ties were for her and the accompanying officer bound her arms together, her wrists too small and delicate for handcuffs. "I don't want to go in a police car," she sobbed, "Please, give me a second chance."

Turner bragged to school administrators that he had made more than 6,000 arrests over the course of his career, including a child as young as seven for shoplifting. Informed that Rolle was only six, Turner boasted that she had "broken the record" for the youngest person he had ever arrested. On the same day, Turner also arrested an eight-year-old student at Nixon Academy.

After news of the two arrests made their way to the public, Turner was fired for violating an agency policy, which states that a supervisor must be present before an SRO can arrest a student under the age of 12.

It has also come to light that Turner has had a long record of violence. In 1998, he was charged with aggravated child abuse after beating his seven-year-old

son. The child had "welts and bruises" on his torso and arms, and had reportedly received the beating after bringing home low test scores. The *Orlando Sentinel* reported that in 2016 Turner, then a 20-year department veteran, used a Taser on a man five times. The last two jolts came after the suspect was on the floor and had stopped resisting. In 2003, Turner had reportedly told the husband of a woman he was dating that he could "hurt him" and authorities "couldn't do anything to me."

Turner retired as a full-time police officer in 2018. He had an annual salary of \$100,000 for years, and despite being fired for his arrest of children in 2019, he is still collecting his pension.

Throughout the United States, police officers have beaten members of the public, planted evidence and committed murder without receiving the slightest punishment. A *Wall Street Journal* report in 2015 found approximately 1200 people were killed by police that year, yet no officer was found guilty of murder or manslaughter.

In 1985, the supreme court case of *Tennessee v. Garner* ruled that police officers could use deadly force if it is "objectively reasonable." In practice, US courts universally defer to a police officer's personal assessment of threat at the time, which has allowed officers to literally get away with murder.

Law enforcement officers like Turner, who enjoy the privilege of protection from the law, are an increasing presence in schools, turning encounters between students and teachers, which once would have led to detention or a stern reprimand, into criminal offenses that become a permanent stain on the records of students, and negatively impact the development of their young lives.

According to Samuel Sinyangwe, co-founder of the

project “Mapping Police Violence” and a public policy analyst, since the Columbine High School massacre in 1999 schools have become increasingly militarized. From 1999 to 2010 the Department of Justice has spent over \$753 million to aid in the hiring of school police officers and from 2010 to 2018 another \$1 billion was spent. This has resulted in an increase of over 10,000 police officers in schools from 1999 to 2018.

The result of this increase in policing has made no impact on rates of school shootings, but has had disastrous consequences for schoolchildren.

Arrests of young schoolchildren like Kaia Rolle are not anomalies but are becoming increasingly common. In 2015, the Americans Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit against a local sheriff’s department in Kentucky after an SRO cuffed two disabled children, an eight-year-old boy and nine-year-old girl.

A report last year from ABC News found that nearly 30,000 children under the age of 10 were arrested across the United States between the years of 2013 and 2017. Data collected by the FBI reveals that a staggering 719,000 children under the age of 18 were arrested in 2017, including 38,000 between the ages of 10 and 12 and 3,500 under the age of 10.

SROs have also collaborated with Immigration and Customs Enforcement to send young children to concentration camps. A recent ProPublica report revealed that a Long Island high school student legally in the US was deported after drawing a doodle of the symbol for MS-13, a predominantly Salvadoran gang founded in Los Angeles. School resource officers facilitate arrests and deportations by sending tips and information over to federal agencies.



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