

New prosecutor refuses to press charges against cop that killed Michael Brown

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On July 30, the St. Louis County prosecuting attorney Wesley Bell announced that no charges would be filed against Darren Wilson, the former Ferguson, Missouri, police officer who shot and killed Michael Brown in 2014. The murder of Brown, an unarmed African-American teenager, and earlier failure to indict Wilson, who is white, six years ago sparked massive nationwide protests against racist police violence.

In justifying his decision Bell, elected St. Louis County's first African-American prosecuting attorney in 2018, stated, "Although this case represents one of the most significant moments in St. Louis' history, the question for this office was a simple one: Could we prove beyond a reasonable doubt that when Darren Wilson shot Michael Brown he committed murder or manslaughter under Missouri law?"

Bell claimed that a review of the evidence could not prove Wilson's guilt, continuing the whitewash carried out by his predecessor, Bob McCulloch.

In fact, there is a substantial body of evidence showing Wilson gunned down the 18-year-old, despite the youth not posing any threat to the cop. Most witnesses to the event cited in a federal government report described that Wilson initially tried to force Brown into his police car and shot the youth after he attempted to flee. Brown, who was injured by the initial volley of gunfire and some distance away, then tried to surrender putting his hands up and turning around. Wilson then resumed shooting, with one bullet fatally hitting Brown in the head.

An independent autopsy of Brown's body was also conducted in 2014 by long-time medical examiner Dr. Michael Baden and forensic pathologist Shawn Parcells. The autopsy disproved claims by Ferguson police that the death was caused by a physical altercation between Brown and Wilson.

Bell, in an attempt to distance himself from his own decision to not file against the former cop, also stated, "There are so many points at which Darren Wilson could have handled the situation differently, and if he had, Michael Brown might still be alive."

One of Wilson's lawyers, Jim Tower, told the *New York Times* that neither he nor Wilson was aware of the investigation.

Bell's failure to bring any charges against the former cop are a travesty of justice and indicative of the entire political establishment's defense of police violence. Bell became prosecuting attorney last year after beating incumbent McCulloch on a platform of reforms to reduce jailing for non-violent crimes and transparent investigations. Both Bell and McCulloch are Democrats.

McCulloch was known to have close ties to the police. As prosecutor, he utilized a grand jury process that lasted three months to clear Wilson and claimed that "physical evidence" contradicted the accounts of witnesses. The decision by the grand jury not to indict was suspicious given the amount of evidence and witnesses involved in the case. An indictment does not have the same legal standard as a guilty verdict in a trial.

Mass anger over Brown's killing and the decision not to indict Wilson, resulted in protests across the US. Democratic Missouri Governor Jay Nixon deployed National Guard troops to disperse the peaceful demonstrations in Ferguson.

The Obama administration throughout the protests feigned sympathy for Brown's family, while accepting the grand jury decision and decrying "mistrust of the police."

Following Bell's victory over McCulloch in the 2018 Democratic primary, there was a growing demand for

Bell to reinvestigate the killing of Brown. Brown's family also made a public plea to the attorney to reopen the case.

A number of liberal publications including the *Times* also hailed the election of Bell and Ella Jones, the first African-American mayor of Ferguson, claiming that they would be more sympathetic to peaceful protests and open to reforms.

On the one-year anniversary of Michael Brown's murder, the WSWS noted:

In official circles—and this includes the proponents of identity politics that orbit around the Democratic Party—the killing of Brown and other incidents of police brutality are presented entirely within the framework of race. This is a political diversion to conceal the underlying class issues and roots of police repression in the capitalist system itself. ...

The military/police occupation of Ferguson revealed to the whole world that behind the outward trappings of democracy in the US, the groundwork for a police state has been created. This is one expression of the deep decay and crisis of American capitalism.

The last two months have completely confirmed the perspective of the WSWS. The promotion of politicians like Bell with the claim that due to his race he will implement policies that benefit the poor or the “black community” has proven to be a complete failure.

In fact, in the US roughly 1,000 people are killed by police every year. While a disproportionate number of people killed by police are black and the plurality are white, the shared aspect of those killed by police is that they are poor. According to the data gathered by *killedbypolice.net*, which has tracked police killings in the US since 2015, the number of police killings has remained relatively constant under both the Obama and Trump administrations.

The ongoing wave of police killings is reflective of the continued lurching of the political establishment toward authoritarianism. The Trump administration's deployment of federal agents to disperse protests sparked by the killing of George Floyd in cities

throughout the US is only the most recent and overt expression of the ruling elite's moves toward dictatorship.



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