

Hundreds protest in Columbus, Ohio to demand justice for Casey Goodson, victim of police shooting

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On Saturday, December 12, over 200 protesters gathered in front of the state capitol in Columbus, Ohio to demand justice for Casey Goodson Jr., a 23-year-old African American man who was gunned down on his doorstep by a white sheriff's deputy on December 4.

The protests by Goodson's family and supporters since his murder are representative of widespread opposition to police violence and racism in the United States, which found an expression earlier this year with the massive multi-racial demonstrations sparked by the police murder of George Floyd.

At Saturday's protest Goodson's family members expounded on his good character and the criminality of the police actions that led to his untimely death. One of Goodson's younger sisters told the crowd, "Casey was not only my brother, he was my best friend he was also a father figure for me."

Tamala Payne, Goodson's mother, said, "My son was murdered in cold blood."

The day before, hundreds of demonstrators marched from the Franklin County Government Center to the capitol, chanting "Justice for Casey," "No justice no peace," and "Black Lives Matter." Both demonstrations were completely peaceful, according to all news reports.

Goodson's family is currently demanding that Franklin County Sheriff's Deputy Jason Meade, who shot and killed Goodson, immediately be charged with murder for the killing. According to initial statements from the family's attorney, Goodson was on his way home from a dentist appointment and had picked up sandwiches from a deli for his grandmother and younger brother. He was shot shortly after unlocking the door to his home and collapsed into the kitchen

after being mortally wounded.

Goodson was taken to the Ohio Health Riverside Methodist Hospital, where he later died.

Sean Walton, one of the attorneys representing the family said, "Casey was not a suspect in any way shape or form. Casey was just someone who was killed on his kitchen floor simply because he was a black man and his skin was weaponized."

Walton also stated that Meade pointed a gun at Goodson's uncle, who was holding his 3-year-old daughter. Meade is alleged to have said, "get out of this house before I shoot you, too."

Payne also reported that an officer mistreated her shortly after her son was shot. According to Payne, a deputy at the scene cursed at her and refused to give her basic information about her son's condition.

The family's lawyers have stated that a preliminary autopsy report confirms that Goodson was shot in the back multiple times. However, the final results of the autopsy are not expected for at least another three months. The family announced last Thursday that they would have a separate independent autopsy done.

Goodson had no criminal record and was not being investigated for any crime at the time of his death.

According to reports from the police, Meade, who has worked as a sheriff's deputy for 17 years, had recently completed an unsuccessful search for a suspect when he had an unrelated encounter with Goodson. Meade claims that he saw Goodson waving a gun in the air, prompting the sheriff's deputy to follow the young man and shoot him after Goodson refused to drop his weapon.

Meade's lawyer, Mark Collins, has stated that, "At no time did Deputy Meade mistake a sandwich for a

gun.” Collins further asserted that Goodson had pointed a gun at Meade.

While police later found a gun at the crime scene, Goodson’s family members—who were home when the shooting took place—said that they did not see a gun in Goodson’s hand or near his body after he had been shot. Goodson did have an up-to-date concealed carry license and was known to regularly educate his family members about gun safety and gun laws.

Attorneys representing Goodson’s family responded to Collins’ claims in a press release, which noted, “neither the City of Columbus nor any other investigatory agency has alleged that Casey Goodson pointed a gun before Meade pulled the trigger.”

Meade had previously been cleared of wrongdoing in a shooting that took place two years ago, when he and six other deputies fired their guns as part of a raid by the Franklin County SWAT team. After the incident, he was put on administrative leave.

The police have claimed that other cops had witnessed Meade shoot Goodson, that there were no civilian eyewitnesses, and that there is no body camera footage of the exchange. Some witnesses have reported hearing a verbal exchange between Goodson and Meade, and gunshots.

Almost immediately following Goodson’s death, Peter Tobin—the US Marshal for the Southern District of Ohio—and the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigations (BCI), which is tasked with investigating police-use-of-force cases, sided with Meade. At a press conference on December 4, Tobin described the shooting as “justified.” The BCI claimed that because of a three-day delay in between the murder of Goodson and the bureau being contacted they could not accept the case.

While it has become almost the de facto policy in the United States to not hold police accountable for murder, there are clear concerns among police departments that such a blatant disregard for justice could trigger a massive backlash from the population. As a result, the Columbus Division of Police has announced that they will be holding an independent investigation and the US Attorney’s Office in Southern Ohio has opened a civil rights investigation.

Sarah Gelsomino, another attorney representing the Goodson family, stated, "The federal government has a very large hurdle here in order to be able to prove that

the investigation into this case can be unbiased and thorough and adequate," she added, "Because from the start, we know that it was in fact biased."

In an attempt to dissipate anger, Columbus Division of Police Chief Tom Quinlan stated last Thursday that “The difficult reality is, very often in police work, information and answers are necessarily, unavoidably slow to come.”

Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown and Columbus mayor Andrew Ginther, both Democrats, have also stated the need for an independent investigation.

It goes without saying that had the roles between Goodson and Meade been reversed, the answer would not be “slow to come” and Goodson would have been arrested almost immediately.

According to a recent report by the *Washington Post*, 166 people in Ohio have been shot and killed by police between 2015 and 2020 with 21 individuals killed in 2020 alone. While the *Post* notes that African Americans are disproportionately killed by police nationally, roughly half of those shot and killed by police are white. The report notes that 935 people have been shot and killed by police this year, out of which 408 were white and 213 were black.

The main concern of the federal investigators, Columbus Division of Police, Senator Brown and May Ginther is that Goodson’s murder could trigger massive protests against police violence that would rapidly come into conflict with the entire political establishment. This would include demonstrators coming into conflict with the Democratic Party, which despite its claims to fight against racism, has handled police killings in a manner almost indistinguishable from the Republicans.



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