

Officer involved in the murder of Breonna Taylor found not guilty of wanton endangerment

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The only officer to be charged with committing a crime during the brutal shooting death of Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old African American emergency room technician, on March 13, 2020, was found not guilty of wanton endangerment by a jury on Thursday.

Former Louisville police officer Brett Hankison was acquitted of the three counts against him for recklessly firing ten shots through the patio door of Taylor's apartment that night, three of which went through a wall shared by another apartment where a man, a pregnant woman and a 5-year-old boy were home.

The Kentucky jury of eight men and four women deliberated for three hours following closing arguments on Thursday and after five days of the trial at Jefferson County Circuit Court that included testimony from some thirty witnesses.

The acquittal of Hankison is the latest chapter in the conspiracy by the Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD) and the state of Kentucky to whitewash the raid and block the prosecution of the officers responsible for Taylor's death.

The fact that the only minor charges were brought against Hankison while the other two officers, Jonathan Mattingly and Myles Cosgrove, were never charged at all by Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron was a travesty of justice to begin with. Cosgrove, who fired 16 shots—six of which struck Breonna Taylor—and Mattingly, who fired six times, were found by Cameron to be justified in doing so.

The three officers, who are white, were serving a “no knock” warrant in connection with a drug investigation that night and used a battering ram to knock down the door of Taylor's apartment while she and her boyfriend Kenneth Walker were sleeping. Walker, who is also

black, was legally in possession of a handgun and fired a warning shot at what he thought were intruders. The bullet struck Mattingly in the leg.

In response, the officers returned a total of 32 shots, one of which struck Taylor in the head and killed her in the hallway of the apartment. Everything that happened from that point forward shows that the LMPD and local and state criminal justice officials did everything they could to sweep the murder of Taylor under the rug.

It began with Walker being arrested and charged with assault and attempted murder. While Walker said the police did not identify themselves before he fired his weapon, the officers claimed that they announced themselves before smashing down the door of the apartment. Numerous witnesses said they heard no door knocking or announcement that night. Twelve months later, the charges against Walker were dropped.

The four-page police incident report filed the night of the shooting was nearly blank. It said that the deceased had no injuries and that there was no forced entry. In the section of the form where the officers were to give a narrative of what happened, it said, “PIU investigation,” for Public Integrity Unit.

This report was released to the public on June 11, 2020, nearly three months after the shooting and amid the mass protests across the country that had erupted following the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin on May 25, 2020. These demonstrations increasingly raised the demand of “Justice for Breonna Taylor.”

While the officers had been placed on administrative leave, Hankison was fired on June 23, 2020, and the LMPD settled with Taylor's family by agreeing to pay \$12 million and “reform police practices.” Cosgrove

was fired in January 2021 for violating standard operating procedures involved in using deadly force and for failing to use a body camera. Mattingly retired from the LMPD and has written a book defending his conduct in the shooting.

Unlike the murder convictions of former officers Derek Chauvin and Kim Potter, who shot and killed Daunte Wright on April 11, 2021, no one in law enforcement has yet been held accountable for Taylor's death. In responding to the verdict on Thursday, Hankison's attorney said, "I think it's a good day, finally, for law enforcement," and Mattingly tweeted, "Thank you, Jesus."

Meanwhile, the conspiracy against Walker and Taylor's family continues. During closing arguments, Hankison's attorney Stewart Matthews blamed Walker for the violence that resulted in Taylor's death. He perpetuated a claim that Walker actually fired an AR-15-style rifle at the officers when only a handgun was found at the apartment that night.

Matthews said that a .223 shell casing was found outside and another in a bedroom of the apartment and that Taylor's family was given access the crime scene the day of the raid.

"I have a problem with coincidences sometimes," Matthews said. "It just is a bit curious."

The claim that Walker had a rifle comes from the assertion by Hankison that the muzzle flash he saw in the dark coming from Walker's weapon was too bright to be from a handgun. However, the prosecutor Barbara Maines Whaley said, "The reason there were no AR bullets, and no AR bullet holes and nobody that got shot with an AR is because there was never one."



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