

84-year-old surrenders in shooting of Missouri teenager Ralph Yarl

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The 84-year-old white man who shot black teenager Ralph Yarl in Kansas City, Missouri, last Thursday turned himself in to police on Tuesday, a day after he was charged by the Clay County prosecutor with first-degree assault and armed criminal action.

The Clay County Sheriff's Office reported that Andrew D. Lester surrendered at the county detention center in the afternoon, was booked and released on \$200,000 bond for shooting the 16-year-old Yarl twice, seriously injuring him.

On April 13, Yarl was asked by his parents to pick up his younger twin brothers at the house of a family friend in northeast Kansas City. The teenager went to the wrong address, confusing Northeast 115th Street for Northeast 115th Terrace, and rang the doorbell.

When Lester opened the door, he was armed with a .32 caliber revolver, and he fired two shots through the locked exterior glass door, striking Yarl above his left eye and at the top of his right arm.

Speaking with the *New York Times* on Monday, Ralph's father, Paul Yarl, said his son had surgery over the weekend to remove the bullets, and the teenager was able to walk out of the hospital on Sunday. Medical officials said Yarl was expected to make a full recovery.

In an interview with "CBS Mornings" on Tuesday, Ralph's mother, Cleo Nagbe, said, "The residual effect of that injury is going to stay with him for quite a while."

In a probable cause statement Kansas City Police Detective Dennis Paquette wrote that "a Smith and Wesson .32 caliber revolver was located in the front living room chair with two (2) spent shell casings still in the cylinder along with live rounds in the remaining chambers."

The detective also wrote that Lester gave a recorded

statement at the Kansas City Police Department headquarters Thursday night in which he said he had just laid down in bed when he heard the doorbell ring. The police detective's statement went on, "Lester stated he opened the interior door, and saw a black male approximately 6 feet tall pulling on the exterior storm door handle. He stated he believed someone was attempting to break into the house, and shot twice within a few seconds of opening the door. LESTER stated the male ran away and he immediately used his home phone to call 911."

The statement said that Lester was booked and then, upon the advice of the Clay County prosecutor, was released pending further investigation.

The probable cause document also recorded the conversation of police with Ralph Yarl at the Children's Mercy Hospital the day after the shooting. Yarl said that he parked his car in the driveway and rang the doorbell looking to pick up his brothers. He said that it took a long time for the homeowner to come to the door "but finally opened the door holding a firearm."

The police report said Yarl stated, "he was immediately shot in the head and fell to the ground." Yarl continued to explain that, while on the ground, he was shot a second time in the arm. He told the police detective, "he did not pull on the door and this was the first time coming to the residence. He stated he got up and ran away to keep from being shot." Yarl also told the police that Lester said to him, "Don't come around here," during the shooting.

Sections of the corporate media and the Democratic Party have seized upon the tragedy in Kansas City to portray it as fundamentally an issue of race.

For example, Mayor Quinton Lucas of Kansas City told the *New York Times* on Monday, "You've heard

about driving while Black. ... You've heard about all the other issues that Black people confront in life. Can you not knock on the door while Black? It's almost like you can't exist."

Meanwhile, attorneys Benjamin Crump and S. Lee Merritt, who are representing the family, issued a statement after Lester was charged on Monday denouncing gun violence against unarmed black individuals, saying, "Our children should feel safe, not as though they are being hunted."

Crump also told CNN that he believes things would have been different if the races of the two were reversed. "Nobody can tell us if the roles were reversed, and you had a black man shoot a white, 16-year-old teenager for merely ringing his doorbell that he would not be arrested," he said.

The singular emphasis on racism as the cause of the shooting of Yarl is a transparent attempt to conceal the fact that the immense levels of social inequality, police brutality and war produced by the capitalist system are the root cause of the epidemic of gun violence and murder across the US.

That the phenomenon of someone who approaches the wrong home being shot by a homeowner is not fundamentally a racial matter was exposed almost immediately in upstate New York on Saturday evening.

Twenty-year-old Kaylin Gillis was inside a vehicle with three friends when they made a wrong turn into a driveway while searching for their friend's house in the town of Hebron. As they pulled off, homeowner Kevin Monahan allegedly fired twice at the vehicle striking the young woman and killing her.

There was no interaction between the group of friends and Monahan, nor did anyone exit the vehicle. When police arrived at the scene, Monahan refused to leave his home for an hour before he was taken into custody.

While television commentators on cable news programs have been fixated on the color of Yarl's and Lester's skin as evidence of systemic racism in American society, little is being reported about the actions of James Lynch, a white neighbor, who saw the black teenager banging on a neighbor's door after he had been shot.

Lynch told NBC News that he heard someone screaming, "Help, help, I've been shot," and he ran outside and jumped his fence to get to the teenager and helped to save his life along with another neighbor

before emergency paramedics arrived.

Meanwhile, there is clear evidence of widespread public support from people of all backgrounds for Ralph Yarl and against gun violence. On Tuesday, hundreds students and staff from Staley High School, where Ralph is an outstanding student, the majority of whom are white, walked out and marched in the street outside the school in support of the young man.



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