

Pregnant Columbus, Ohio mother gunned down by police for allegedly shoplifting liquor

Jacob Crosse
30 August 2023

In an attempt to quell rising social anger over the latest violent police murder, on Wednesday, Blendon Township, Ohio, Police Chief John Belford confirmed that body camera footage showing the killing of 21-year-old pregnant mother of two, Ta’Kiya Young, by a still unidentified police officer outside a Kroger grocery store last Thursday, would not be released until Friday. Belford has also refused to name the killer cop.

The shooting took place at a Kroger grocery store in the city of Westerville, a northeastern suburb of Columbus, the capital and largest city in Ohio with more than 900,000 residents.

Young, who was African American, was shot and killed by police after allegedly taking liquor from the store without paying. Both Young, and her unborn child were declared dead after the police shooting. In his initial video statement on the shooting, Chief Belford alleged that a Kroger employee pointed out Young to two police officers, who were already at the store, and claimed she had taken some alcohol.

According to Belford, Young was already inside her car and had turned it on by the time police approached her. Belford claims that Young refused police directives to exit the vehicle, although it is unclear if Young heard the directives, or was even aware that she was being approached by police.

Belford said the when the cops approached the vehicle, one cop came up on the driver’s side, while another cop decided to place himself in front of the vehicle. This is a common tactic employed by police to give legal cover for their murderous actions; by purposefully standing in front of the car, the cop created the conditions in which he (or she) could claim they “feared for their life,” because the vehicle could be used as a “weapon” against them.

Emphasizing the supposed danger the cop faced, Belford claimed the one officer was standing in the “direct pathway”

of the car, without saying exactly how far in front of the vehicle the cop was standing. Belford claimed that after refusing police directives to exit the vehicle, Young put the car in drive and began “accelerating” in the direction of the cop. How fast Young “accelerated,” Belford neglected to elaborate.

Belford said at this point the cop standing in front of the car fired a single shot, mortally wounding Young. The vehicle Young was driving rolled some 50 feet before crashing into a brick wall outside the store’s pharmacy.

In last Friday’s statement, Belford announced that both officers involved in the shooting would be placed on paid administrative leave while the Ohio Attorney General’s Bureau of Criminal Investigation, fresh off of covering up the police murders of Jayland Walker and James Williams, would be brought in to conduct a so-called “outside” investigation.

Belford originally indicated body camera footage could be released as early as last Friday. However, on Wednesday, Belford released a statement claiming “legal review and video redactions are still ongoing,” and that the footage would not be released to the public until Friday.

Young is one of at least 725 people that have been killed by police so far this year in the United States, according to Mapping Police Violence. According to the tracker, American police are killing human beings at a “similar rate” to 2022, a year in which police “killed more people...than any year in the past decade.”

Since the killing of Young last Thursday, multiple protests have taken place at the Kroger store, including this past Friday, and on Sunday. Protesters, who include family members of previous victims of wanton police murder, are demanding not only the release of body camera footage, but also that the name of the cop be released and that they be

charged for killing Young over alleged petty theft.

There is no question that the police are engaged in a major cover-up. Since the killing of Young nearly a week ago, no body camera footage from the police, or security footage from Kroger, has been released to support the police claims that Young left the store with unpaid items, or that she posed a mortal threat to police.

In a press conference held on August 30, an attorney for Young's family, Sean Walton, denounced the police for refusing to release all of the tape showing the police shooting of Ta'Kiya, or identify the killer cop.

"If there was any justification [for the shooting] we would have seen the video before Friday," Walton said, adding, "We have a murder suspect. We deserve to know who that person is. We deserve to have that murder suspect held accountable by the law in the same way that anybody else would."

Walton disputed the police narrative that they were in any danger from Young. "Ta'Kiya was in a state of flight from the moment she was pointed out to police" Walton said. "At no point was Ta'Kiya trying to harm the officers or be aggressive towards the officers, or anyone else."

"At no point was Ta'Kiya, who is accused of petty theft, attempting to take the life of this officer." Walton then revealed that they had located a witness who claims to have been inside the store the same day Young was killed. The witness said that they saw Young leave the alleged stolen bottle(s) of liquor inside the store before exiting and returning to her vehicle.

"So, there is evidence out there that no crime actually occurred," Walton said. "She would not have been under arrest had the officer not taken her life. We have no idea if a crime actually occurred, outside the murder of Ta'Kiya Young, and her unborn daughter."

Speaking at Wednesday's press conference, Tamala Payne, the mother of Casey Goodson Jr., a 23-year-old African American man who was murdered by Franklin County deputy Jason Meade in December 2020, denounced the "murder" of Young and the US criminal justice system.

"We are standing here today on the one year anniversary of Donovan Lewis's killing when he was sleeping in his bed" and almost "three years since my son, Casey Goodson Jr. was walking into his home and was shot six-times and was murdered.

"Now we have a beautiful, 21-year-old, pregnant woman...over an alleged stolen bottle of liquor."

Payne questioned the delay in releasing the body camera footage. "If I killed someone, my face would be plastered all over the news. [The cop] is a murderer. We deserve to know who we are living amongst. If there was nothing to hide, why haven't they released the footage?"

The ongoing cover-up of Young's murder illustrates the role of cops in capitalist society. The police exist not to "serve and protect" human life, but capitalist property relations. The cops, prison guards and border police are the murderous fist of capitalist state repression.

Under conditions of historic inequality, a growing strike wave and mass opposition to both big business parties and capitalism in general, the police, operating in the interests of a parasitic financial oligarchy that has lost all right to rule, cannot be "reformed" into serving the interests of workers. Appeals to the Democratic Party and the state for reform, more than three years after the police murder of George Floyd, and thousands of other police killings, have fallen on deaf ears.

The Democratic Party, the leading purveyors of identity politics, have vehemently denounced demands from millions of protesting workers and youth for a reallocation of society's resources from bloated police budgets to starved social services. Instead, Democrats, from President Joe Biden, to Atlanta Mayor Andre Dickens, have repeatedly pledged to "fund the police" and block any efforts to the contrary.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact