

Bodycam footage shows former Illinois sheriff deputy murdered Sonya Massey

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Shock and outrage continue to reverberate following the release of a bodycam video by Illinois State Police on Monday showing then-Illinois Sheriff Deputy Sean Grayson's murder of Sonya Massey, a 36-year-old black woman, in her home in Springfield, Illinois.

Two Sangamon County Sheriff's deputies, Grayson and another deputy who has not yet been named, both white, were responding to Massey's call about a prowler at her home on the 2800 block of Hoover Avenue early in the morning of July 6 around 12:50 a.m. Soon after, the deputies reported shots fired at 1:21 a.m. Massey was taken to St. John's Hospital emergency room, where she was pronounced dead.

The video comes from the unnamed deputy's bodycam, as Grayson reportedly did not activate his bodycam until after he shot Massey. The horrifying video shows the events from the time of the deputies' arrival and Massey's murder. The two officers searched outside Massey's home for the first nine minutes of the video for the reported intruder. After not encountering anyone, they knocked on Massey's door to inform her they found no one. They then request her identification to make a report.

While looking for her identification, they stepped into her home. Massey, having a pot of boiling water on her stove, went to pour it out in her kitchen sink. The officers made joking laughs, and they stepped back as the sink was close to them.

Massey noticed this and asks, "Where [are] you going?" An officer responds, "Away from your hot, steaming water," again making a joking laugh.

Massey believed that Grayson was joking and made a joke in return: "I rebuke you in the name of Jesus." She repeated the joke, as the officer seemed not to have heard her. Grayson suddenly became extremely aggressive, pulled out his firearm and threatened to shoot her "in her fuckin' face."

With both officers' guns pointed at her, ready to kill, Massey immediately began to apologize, dropping down in fear for her life with her hands up. The officer started screaming, "Drop the fucking pot," advancing towards her.

Grayson then proceeded to fire three shots, one hitting her in the face below her eye.

From the point of unholstering their weapons to the first shot fired, five seconds passed, giving Massey no time to comply with the command of dropping a pot of boiling water.

Afterwards, Grayson behaved as if the act of shooting Massey was business as usual, while she was still breathing, gasping for air. Grayson stated casually, "Let her just [bleed out]" and "Nothing we can do." Grayson repeatedly attempted to convince the unnamed officer in the incident not to start first aid.

Only after two minutes of Massey bleeding out on the floor did the unnamed deputy reluctantly render first aid and attempt to stop the bleeding.

In Grayson's body cam footage audio, he attempts to justify the murder by falsely claiming she "came at me with boiling water," remarking that Massey called the police "on purpose," implying that it was part of her plan to throw boiling water on them.

In the aftermath of the video going public, there has been a wave of denunciation and disgust at the police and the American justice system. Sonya Massey's family, speaking out about the bodycam footage, held a press conference calling for justice for Massey. Civil rights attorney Ben Crump, who is representing Massey's family, called it "senseless on every level."

Protests were held throughout Springfield and surrounding communities on Monday afternoon, and just a few hours after the video's release more are being called. Many expressed their anger in social media comments after viewing the videos and shared calls for justice.

A Sangamon County grand jury has indicted Grayson in the fatal shooting on charges of first-degree murder, aggravated battery, and official misconduct two weeks after he shot and killed Massey. Grayson turned himself in shortly after the indictment was handed down and remains in the Sangamon County jail without bond pending trial. He pleaded not guilty at his first pre-trial hearing on July 19.

The Democratic Party, as with previous high profile police killings, has responded by pressing its agenda of “police reform” as a means of assuaging general anger over people being killed at the hands of police across the country and pushing divisive identity politics by presenting police violence as a fundamentally racial issue.

Joe Biden made a statement: “Sonya Massey, a beloved mother, friend, daughter, and young Black woman, should be alive today. Sonya called the police because she was concerned about a potential intruder. When we call for help, all of us as Americans—regardless of who we are or where we live—should be able to do so without fearing for our lives. Sonya’s death at the hands of a responding officer reminds us that all too often, Black Americans face fears for their safety in ways many of the rest of us do not.

“Sonya’s family deserves justice. I am heartbroken for her children and her entire family as they face this unthinkable and senseless loss. Jill and I mourn with the rest of the country, and our prayers are with Sonya’s family, loved ones, and community during this devastating time.

“I commend the swift actions taken by the Springfield State Attorney’s office. While we wait for the case to be prosecuted, let us pray to comfort the grieving. Congress must pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act now. Our fundamental commitment to justice is at stake.”

Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker was quoted in the Springfield *State Journal-Register* as saying that a review of training may be necessary which would require even more funding for the police. “Look, when you talk to police officers and leaders in law enforcement, they will tell you that they think there should be more training, that we should put more resources into training, and that their officers should receive more training. And I couldn’t agree more.”

Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson also released a statement, declaring: “The footage of Sonya Massey’s murder is horrific. To see yet another unarmed black woman lose her life at the hand of law enforcement both enrages and saddens me...”

SEP 2024 candidate for president Joe Kishore wrote on Twitter/X, explaining the essential issues in the continuing wave of police killings in the US: “The murder of Sonya Massey is the latest in an unending string of atrocities. Every year, more than 1k people of all races are killed by police. Police murder cannot be separated from the brutal wars abroad and the massive levels of social inequality.”

What Biden, Pritzker and Johnson do not and cannot talk about is that the Democratic Party as a whole has actively

pursued the largest-ever US military spending and a substantial increase in domestic police repression. They focus on presenting police violence as a racial issue, ignoring its impact on people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds while pushing for more funding for the police.

The brutalization of the working class by the police is directly linked to capitalism. Protests and calls for police reform now, as in the past, have not changed anything. The election of Democrats or more African American mayors and police chiefs has not reversed this trend.

As of July 10, the databases maintained by Mapping Police Violence recorded 694 killings, outpacing the total at the same time last year by 56, setting over 1,300 deaths as the most on record.

In 2020, the world witnessed a wave of multiracial and multiethnic protests against police violence following the release of the video of George Floyd being murdered by Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin and his partners. Millions were outraged and disgusted and took to the streets in every state in the US and cities internationally in protest.

Since then, millions around the world have been allowed to die in the COVID-19 pandemic to protect the interests of the financial aristocracy; 100,000 have been sacrificed in NATO’s war against Russia, and with the backing of the Biden administration, Israel is committing genocide in Gaza which has claimed so far an estimated 186,000 lives.

The fight against police violence, as with all forms of capitalist brutality, has to be fought based on the struggle of the working class against capitalism and for socialism.



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