

Grand jury indicts Ohio officer who shot and killed pregnant woman in 2023

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A grand jury indicted Ohio police officer Connor Grubb, 29, Monday for the murder of 21-year-old Ta’Kiya Young last year.

Young was six months pregnant when she was shot by Grubb on August 24, 2023, in Blendon Township, a suburb of Columbus, Ohio. Both Young and her future child were declared dead shortly after the shooting at Mount Carmel St. Ann’s Hospital in Westerville, Ohio. She left behind two sons, one six and one three years old.

Grubb, who pleaded not guilty, will face four counts of murder, four counts of felonious assault and two counts of involuntary manslaughter. The charges are split between the deaths of Young and her future daughter.

Grubb’s indictment is incredibly rare. According to Mapping Police Violence, there have been 366 police killings in Ohio since 2013 when systematic record keeping of police violence began. Of these, only 11 involve any charges being brought against an officer and just two have resulted in a conviction for an officer, not including Young’s killing.

One officer, former Pike County deputy Joel Jenkins, pleaded guilty in 2017 to reckless homicide for the killing of Jason Brady in an off-duty shooting and was sentenced to 3.5 years. The other, Columbus Police Detective Demetris Ortega, was convicted for failing to stop following a hit-and-run accident, again while he was off-duty, and was sentenced last year to 18 months in the killing of Naimo Abdirahman.

Nationally, data from the Henry A. Wallace Police Crime Database shows that at least 140 officers have been charged with murder or manslaughter since 2005. Only about a third of these officers were convicted on any charge and just seven were convicted of murder. This is relative to the more than 10,000 people who

have been killed by police since 2013, with a killing rate of more than 1,000 every year.

The fact that Grubb was charged at all is a reflection of the brutality with which the pregnant Young was gunned down in public. In an effort to temper mass outrage over the killing, prosecutors dragged out a decision on charges against Grubb by almost a year to head off the resumption of protests that erupted after her death last year.

Body camera footage demonstrates clearly that Young was the victim of a brutal police killing in a manner akin to a police state execution. The footage shows two officers in the parking lot of a Kroger grocery store, assisting a person who had locked their keys inside their car. A Kroger employee can be heard accusing Young of shoplifting alcohol from the store.

One of the officers approached Young’s car, which she had just gotten into, and began banging on her driver-side window repeatedly demanding that she exit the vehicle without justifying why. This officer has yet to be named on the argument from police officials that he is the victim of assault by Young.

Blendon Township Police Chief John Belford vehemently supported the two officers after the shooting, falsely claiming that Young had attempted to use her vehicle as a weapon against the officers. Belford claimed that Grubb was a “victim of attempted vehicular assault” and that the other officer was a victim of “misdemeanor assault” because his arm was allegedly caught in the car window as it slowly rolled away.

Young rolled down her window partially to ask the officer why she was being ordered to exit the vehicle, only after which the officer informed her that she had been accused of shoplifting. Young denied the accusations as Grubb positioned himself in front of the

car, which was running but not moving.

This is a common tactic by officers to justify the use of violence, allowing them to claim they were in danger if a car begins to move.

Young put her hands on the steering wheel and turned it far to the right, indicating she was attempting to go around Grubb, who pulled out his pistol even though there was no indication that Young had a weapon or was a threat to either officer. The other officer used a window breaker to hit Young's driver-side window as she is heard asking "Are you going to shoot me?"

Young's car then moved slowly forward towards Grubb, who fired a single shot through the windshield into Young's heart. Her car continued to roll as the officers yelled at her to get out of the vehicle before it crashed into a wall. The footage shows the officers then broke her window to open the door to render aid and that she was slumped over the steering wheel.

What is clear in the video is that the officers were belligerent and prepared to use deadly force on Young if she did not comply with their demands. Young was clearly afraid for her life after the second officer attempted to break through her window and Grubb pulled a gun on her. The incredibly slow speed of the vehicle posed no danger to Grubb's life, who utilized lethal force over an accusation of petty theft, a crime carrying up to six months in jail.

While Kroger did eventually release security footage showing Young and several other people had put several bottles of alcohol in bags and then walked out of the store without paying, the response of the officers was clearly disproportionate to her actions.

Grubb's actions were also a violation of the township's policies, which state that an officer should move away from an approaching vehicle and that they should not fire their weapon. Officers should only shoot when he or she "reasonably believes there are no other reasonable means available to avert the imminent threat of the vehicle, or if deadly force other than the vehicle is directed at the officer or others."

Sean Walton, the Young family attorney, called the indictment of Grubb a "solemn victory" and said, "The actions that led to the death of Ta'Kiya—the unnecessary aggression, the chilling commands that amounted to 'comply or die'—were there for us all to witness in dreadful clarity. Ta'Kiya's life and that of her daughter were extinguished in an act of brutality,

becoming yet another symbol of the urgent need for reform in police conduct and accountability."

Young is one among many on a growing list of police violence victims in the United States. So far this year police have killed 815 people across the country, putting 2024 on track to break last year's record of 1,351 people. In Franklin County, Ohio alone, which contains Columbus and its suburbs, four other officers have been indicted by grand juries for crimes related to on-duty shootings since 2019. Multiple other shootings in the county have not resulted in an indictment from a grand jury. Of the 11 Ohio charges in Mapping Police Violence's database, six of them are from Franklin County. All but one have occurred this decade.

At least 74 people have been killed by police in Franklin County since 2013, or 20 percent of the state's total compared to the county's 10 percent of the state's population. Eight people have already been killed by police in Franklin County this year, including Benjamin Wheeler, who was shot by a SWAT team on August 1 while suffering a psychiatric crisis.



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