

WORTHY GOES AFTER AIYANA JONES' DAD WITH A VENGEANCE; KILLER COPS WEEKLY, TAYLOR GET KID GLOVES

<http://voiceofdetroit.net/2011/10/21/worthy-goes-after-aiyana-jones%e2%80%99-dad-with-a-vengeance-killer-cops-weekly-and-taylor-get-kid-gloves/>



Demonstration in downtown Detroit June 26, 2010

- **P.O. Kata-Ante Taylor snatched Aiyana's body from home despite her family's pleas; he previously executed teen in 2008, not charged in either case**
- **Federalist Society member WCCC Judge Timothy Kenny was "one-man grand juror" for Weekly, A&E photographer**
- **WCCC Judge Cynthia Gray Hathaway, married to a law enforcement officer, is to preside over their trials**

By Diane Bukowski -- VOICE OF DETROIT

Oct. 21, 2011

DETROIT – Killer cop Kata-Ante Taylor was the officer who snatched Aiyana Stanley-Jones away from her family after she was shot in the head by Detroit cop Joseph Weekly May 16, 2010. Taylor ran the child out of her home “like a rag doll,” *Kata-Ante Taylor* in the words of Attorney Geoffrey Fieger, thus depriving Aiyana in the last moments of her conscious life from being held by family members who loved her.



Attorney Jonathan Marko of the law firm of Fieger, Fieger, Kenney and Giroux, P.C., who represents Aiyana's parents in a civil lawsuit against Weekly, provided this information to VOD. He said he has taken depositions of several of the other officers involved in the raid, but cannot release any other details at this point because the process is still ongoing.



Taylor and his partner Aubrey Wade shot 18-year-old Artrell Dickerson to death as he ran from them after a friend's funeral at the Cantrell Funeral Home on Mack in Detroit, in 2008. (Click on <http://michigancitizen.com/police-executed-teen-at-funeral-say-witnesses-p4173-1.htm> to read article by this reporter.)

No charges were ever brought against them, despite the fact that eyewitnesses said the cops shot the teen in the back as he lay on the ground, already wounded.

Artrell Dickerson, 18 at death

“One officer stood over him and executed him,” a relative of the family of 24-year-old Dontell Martin, who was being buried that day, said at the time. “I saw this because I was on the street corner watching. There was no gun nowhere near him. His hands were visible, he was face down, and the officer shot three times. He executed that boy. He didn't have to do him like that. All he had to do was put handcuffs on him.”

Worthy's treatment of killer cops, Aiyana's dad, differs drastically

This new revelation starkly illustrates the disparity between Worthy's treatment of Aiyana's father and that of killer cops Weekly, Taylor and the police command involved.

She directly brought first-degree murder charges against Jones in the killing of Je'rean Blake May 14, for “aiding and abetting” defendant Chauncey Owens, not for shooting Blake. But she brought no “aiding and abetting” charges against Taylor or other Detroit police involved in Aiyana's death.



Joseph Weekly, Aiyana Jones, depiction of killing after second autopsy



Heckler & Koch automatic rifle Weekly used to kill Aiyana

“Are they going to charge the cops that threw the flash bomb and the ones that tried to cover it up?” Aiyana's grandmother Mertilla Jones asked Oct. 5 after her son was arraigned.

Ducking police criticism which has come anyway, Worthy said she used a “one-man grand jury” to bring only involuntary manslaughter and reckless use of a firearm charges against Weekly, the actual shooter. Allison Howard, a photographer with A&E’s “The First 48,” faces perjury and obstruction of justice charges. She is allegedly the only person on the TV show’s crew who had enough compassion for the family to show the video to Attorney Fieger.



Weekly was released on a \$100,000 personal bond, Howard on a 10 percent \$50,000 cash bond, while Jones was remanded to jail without bond.

Weekly and Howard will not have a preliminary exam in 36th District Court under the grand jury proceeding, but will first appear before Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Cynthia Gray Hathaway Friday, Nov. 11 for a “calendar conference.”

Jones’ preliminary exam is scheduled for Friday, Nov. 18. He will be represented in his criminal case by Fieger’s firm, which asked for time for discovery before the exam.

Worthy claimed that under state law she cannot comment on the alleged “grand jury” proceedings which resulted in

WC Prosecutor Kym Worthy charges against Weekly and Howard.

Federalist Society member WCCC Judge Timothy Kenny was “one-man grand juror”

However, a review of the court files for the two shows that Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Timothy Kenny, who is presiding judge of the Criminal Division, brought the “grand jury indictment” Oct. 4. There is a separate case file for the “grand jury” proceedings, #11-501-GJ, but Kenny told VOD that the file is not open for public review.

Kenny is a member of the Federalist Society, “a well established network of right-wing lawyers, politicians, pundits, and judges [who] advocate a rollback of civil rights measures, reproductive choice, labor and employment regulations, and environmental protections,” according to “Right Wing Watch.”



Timothy Kenny

Howard’s indictment for perjury says that on May 21, 2010, she “testified that she did not show third parties the video recording, and/or that she did not provide third parties with copies of the said video recording,” and that that “slowed the investigation.”



It further states that she “committed the crime of obstruction of justice by providing false testimony under oath at an Investigative Subpoena requiring redirection and expenditure of law enforcement resources to uncover the falsity of the testimony and the truth of the underlying matter.” Marko said a video he alluded to in the civil proceedings which is in the Fieger firm’s possession is not the A&E video, but another murky film that was shot from a distance away.

Allison Howard at arraignment

Worthy’s media representative, Assistant Prosecutor Maria Miller, said she could not comment on the date testimony was taken by the “grand juror.” Worthy had announced shortly after Aiyana’s killing that she was turning the investigation over to the Michigan State Police. It is thus unclear WHO took her allegedly perjured testimony May 21, 2010.



During the civil suit, it was “The First 48” TV series and its producer Kirkstall Rd. Enterprises of New York who refused to provide their videotapes of the Jones homes raid. However, no corporate representatives have been charged with “obstruction of justice.” It is unknown whether the A&E tape is in the prosecutor’s possession.

Former First 48 Detroit cop Williams shot self and wife.



Weekly’s indictment for involuntary manslaughter and reckless use of a firearm says he “did because of carelessness, recklessness, or negligence but not willfully or wantonly cause or allow a certain firearm under his/her immediate control, to wit, a 9 mm. submachine gun, to be discharged so as to kill another person.”

The phrasing leaves open the opportunity for his defense to claim, as have city attorneys in the civil suit, that Mertilla Jones caused the gun to go off by having contact with Weekly, a charge she has vehemently denied.

Abbe Raven, A&E CEO

Whether Judge Cynthia Gray Hathaway was picked by blind draw to preside over Weekly’s and Howard’s trials is another matter open to question.

According to her official biography, “Judge Cynthia Gray Hathaway is married to Rev. DeWayne R. Hayes, Wayne County Deputy Sheriff and Founder of The DeWayne R. Hayes Law Enforcement Officers and Youths Support Foundation.



The State of Michigan “business entity” site listed the foundation is listed as a non-profit corporation created first in 2008 and dissolved, then re-created in 2009. There are however no tax returns or other financial statements available for it on guidestar.org, which receives documents for non-profits from the IRS.

Judge Cythia Hathaway, husband

Gray Hathaway is divorced from WCCC Judge Michael Hathaway but has maintained the well-known Hathaway name, likely for electoral purposes.



Jason Gibson, atty. Susan Reed

Hathaway presided over the trial of Jason Gibson in March for the killing of police officer Brian Huff in May, 2010, and the wounding of three other cops. The improbable scenario presented at that trial was that Gibson shot Huff in the living room of what many believed to be a drug house operated by the police. Cops testified he then jumped out on the front porch, gun blazing, and shot three other cops, among dozens who were aiming their guns at him. Mysteriously, Gibson ended up with only one bullet in his buttock, rather than shot dozens of times as normally would have been the case. Hathaway facilitated the guilty verdict by allowing the testimony of police officers involved in two prior arrests of Gibson, in 2007 and 2009, over the strenuous objections of his attorney.

Gibson had never even been tried and convicted in the second case. VOD interviewed eyewitnesses to the second arrest who completely contradicted the cops’ testimony. (Click on <http://voiceofdetroit.net/2011/03/22/%e2%80%9cfree-jay-bird-gibson-trial-continues-mar-15-18-wrap-up-due-mar-22/> .)

The City of Detroit has fought Aiyana’s parents’ lawsuit every inch of the way. Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Daphne Means Curtis shot down Weekley’s request to seal all materials related to the suit Sept. 1. (<http://voiceofdetroit.net/2011/09/02/judge-shoots-down-killer-cop%e2%80%99s-request-to-seal-file/>)

On Oct. 11, she denied Weekley’s motion to stay proceedings pending the outcome of criminal charges against both himself and Aiyana’s father Charles Jones.

<http://detnews.com/article/20111011/METRO01/110110393/Judge-won't-halt-research-into-wrongful-death-lawsuit-in-Aiyana-case#ixzz1aUzYZMfD.>)

Means-Curtis sealed depositions of both Weekly and Jones in the civil proceedings. The family's brief contended, "Charles Jones' criminal proceeding has absolutely nothing to do with how and why Defendant Weekly shot Aiyana. This Court should recall that it already ruled Charles Jones' conduct was not relevant to the gross negligence claim in this case. . . This court should not allow the City to dictate the direction of this action through nothing less than executive fiat."

Family dismay in Detroit

BY DIANE BUKOWSKI | LAST UPDATED: OCT 20, 2011 - 5:57:40 PM

http://www.finalcall.com/artman/publish/National_News_2/article_8237.shtml

Father of girl killed as police raided home charged with murder in related case

DETROIT (FinalCall.com) - Seventeen months after a Detroit police "Special Response Team" stormed seven-year-old Aiyana Stanley-Jones' home in a poor neighborhood and shot her to death as an A&E TV crew was filming, Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy has charged the child's father, Charles Jones, 26, with first-degree murder.

At the same time, she charged a single officer, Joseph Weekley, 36, who lives in the well-to-do White suburb of Grosse Pointe, and a single A&E official with lesser charges of manslaughter and perjury, respectively, related to the horrific raid.

Aiyana's grandmother, Mertilla Jones, who was sleeping with the child on a couch when police tossed an incendiary grenade through the window above them on May 16, 2010, and saw her granddaughter die, expressed utter anguish after her son was arraigned Oct. 5.

"This is a sad day for my family," Mertilla Jones, the mother of eight, said. "We are not doing well at all. This is the second one of my sons they have railroaded. I have lost two of my sisters in the last six months. It's not right to charge Charles after he lost his daughter. Are they going to charge the cops that threw the flash bomb and the ones that tried to cover it up? Meanwhile, a seven-year-old innocent little baby girl is dead."



Family photo of Aiyana Stanley-Jones. (left) Stuffed animals and balloons grace a memorial at the family's home in Detroit.

Police arrested the grandmother, drug tested her, and held her for several days after the raid. Assistant Police Chief Ralph Godbee (now head of the department) claimed she had “interfered” with Ofc. Weekley, causing his gun to go off.

She was never charged, but the city has reiterated those contentions in an ongoing civil suit brought by Charles Jones and Aiyana's mother Dominika Stanley in the case.

Charles Jones' sister LaKrystal Sanders said, “My brother had nothing to do with that case,” referring to the shooting death of 17-year-old Je'Rean Blake two days earlier, the case in which Charles Jones is charged, and the pretext police used for the raid.

His friends Randolph Monzure and Calvin Carpenter also said Mr. Jones didn't have anything to do with the Blake shooting.

“They're trying to railroad him,” Mr. Carpenter said. “He already lost his child, and now they're trying to make more moves.”

Charles Jones was represented at his arraignment by attorney Jonathan Marko of the law firm of nationally noted attorney Geoffrey Fieger. He requested that Mr. Jones' preliminary exam be postponed until Nov. 18 to allow time for discovery. Mr. Jones will later be represented by another attorney from Fieger's firm. Meanwhile he was ordered held without bond.

“He needs representation and deserves representation,” Atty. Marko said.

Ms. Sanders' fiancé Chauncey Owens pled guilty to second-degree murder as the shooter in the Blake case, but questions remain. His attorneys tried several times to get his confession thrown out, saying it was taken under extreme duress after he found out Aiyana was dead, and that he was not competent to stand trial.

His sentencing has been postponed twice, due to “problems with the plea deal,” according to the prosecutor's office. It is now set for Oct. 31.

Local media has claimed his plea deal involved saying Charles Jones gave him the gun, but no such claim exists in his court file. Mr. Owens was peacefully arrested during the raid, which took place at 12:30 a.m., although police watching the house saw him outside during daylight hours and could have made the arrest then.

A cousin of Aiyana's who was out walking the family dogs just before the raid warned the Special Response Team that there were small children inside. Children's toys were strewn all over the yard.



Detroit Mayor Dave Bing (above, rear); Prosecutor Kym Worthy has charged the child's father, Charles Jones, 26, with first-degree murder and Officer, Joseph Weekley, 36 (inset) with manslaughter and perjury.

Ms. Worthy brought no charges against the police command involved, or against former police Chief Warren Evans, who signed the contract with A&E to shadow Detroit police. Detroit Mayor Dave Bing refused to meet with community groups about the killing and did not extend sympathy or an apology to the Jones family at the time.

Prosecutor Worthy also brought no charges against A&E as a corporate entity. The charges against “The First 48” principal photographer Allison Howard allege she showed the videotape of the raid to a “third party.” The Jones family's attorney Geoffrey Fieger said at a press conference after the killing that he had seen a copy of a videotape but did not say it was the A&E tape.

Aiyana's killing sparked outrage around the world. E-mails, articles, and song videos poured in from everywhere. But it was clear from the very beginning that no charges would be brought against the police until her father was charged, largely due to police and media collusion, many believe.

During the Fieger press conference, the first question a reporter asked was whether Charles Jones gave the gun to Mr. Owens in the Blake case. Talk show hosts repeatedly whipped up division in the community between the two families, diverting attention away from the role of the police.

The Detroit Free Press now has published positive interviews with Mr. Weekley's friends and cited “expert” sources who allege a jury is likely to be sympathetic to him.

Juries in Wayne County's Third Circuit, where Mr. Jones will also be tried, are generally dominated by suburban Whites, according to several studies, since the abolition of Detroit's Recorders' Court in 1999. The state legislature folded it into the Third Circuit after a predominantly Black jury convicted two White officers, Larry Nevers and Walter Budzyn, of second-degree murder in the beating death of Black driver Malice Green in 1992.

A White cameraman for Fox 2 News, who was filming Mr. Jones' arraignment, wore a “U.S. Marshal” T-shirt and said he worked part-time for the Wayne County Sheriff. In conversation, he expressed sentiments in favor of the first-degree murder charge against Charles Jones.

The prosecutor's release said Mr. Jones is charged with “First Degree Murder (Mandatory Life without Parole), Felon in Possession of a Firearm (5 year maximum penalty), Felony Firearm (2 year mandatory consecutive sentence), Habitual 4th Offender (sentence can be enhanced to a Life Sentence) and Perjury at a Court Proceeding (15 years maximum penalty.)”

Ms. Worthy said, “It is alleged that, after the argument, Jones accompanied Owens to the scene of the shooting and aided, abetted, and encouraged Owens during the murder of Blake.”

Police Officer Joseph Weekley was arraigned Oct. 4 on charges of “Involuntary Manslaughter (15 years maximum penalty) and Careless and Reckless Discharge-Death Resulting (two-year maximum penalty).” A&E producer Allison Howard was charged with “Perjury during an Investigative Subpoena (15 year maximum penalty) and Obstruction of Justice (5 year maximum penalty),” related to her testimony on the A&E videotape of the raid.

Ofc. Weekley was involved, but never charged, in an earlier case where he and other Special Response Team officers raided a home in similar fashion, guns blazing, and shot two family pets to death in front of young children.

Ms. Worthy used legally valid but obscure “one-man grand jury” proceedings and “investigative subpoenas” to bring the charges after first having the Michigan State Police investigate the case. Their investigation, which concluded in March, resulted in a warrant for a single man, whose identity was never revealed. It was clear that they were also focusing on Aiyana's father, since they impounded a van in his backyard allegedly connected to the Je'Rean Blake killing.

“In cases that generate extreme interest, people always want a quick investigation, and a quick announcement of charges,” Ms. Worthy said in her statement. “I will never rush to judgment. I am interested in being thorough and doing the right thing. This has been a long process and we had to turn to a one man grand jury when our normal tools failed to ensure an impartial process with a fair result.”

She said she was precluded under the grand jury statute from discussing details of the case.

This is the first time Ms. Worthy, who took office in 2004 as the county's first Black woman prosecutor, has brought charges against any Detroit police officer in a fatal shooting of a civilian. There have been dozens of cases during that time in which the police killings of young Black men, in particular, appeared highly questionable, but were ruled “justifiable homicides.”

One case involved Officer Kata-Ante Taylor, who is cited as a witness in the civil suit Fieger brought on behalf of Aiyana's parents against Off. Weekley. It is unclear if Off. Taylor was part of the “Special Response Team” that raided the Jones' home.

Mr. Fieger's firm sued Ofc. Taylor and another officer, Aubrey Wade for shooting 18-year-old Artrell Dickerson to death on the premises of the Cantrell Funeral Home on Detroit's east side, after a friend's funeral in Feb. 2007.

The lawsuit contends, “That while Mr. Dickerson was peacefully running away from Defendants TAYLOR and/or WADE, without any warning, just cause, provocation, or threat, Defendant TAYLOR and/or Defendant WADE unlawfully discharged their firearms at least four to five times, inflicting several gunshot wounds into Mr. Dickerson's back, and fatally wounding Mr. Dickerson.”

This reporter spoke to several witnesses who saw the killing at close range. They insist Ofc. Taylor shot Mr. Dickerson in the back as the victim lay on the ground, already wounded.

The Detroit People's Task Force to Free the Wrongfully Convicted has been demonstrating regularly against what they say is Prosecutor Worthy's failure to fully examine crime lab evidence that was shown to be falsified in 2008, and grant new trials.

They issued the following statement regarding charges brought in the Aiyana Stanley-Jones case.

“We are deeply disappointed that Officer Weekley was undercharged for what we truly feel was an act of murder. The officers' actions clearly show premeditation and deliberation sufficient for a first degree murder charge. The Special Response Team admittedly planned and waited until 12:30 a.m. to invade and terrorize the home of Aiyana Stanley Jones that day. ... We strongly condemn the treatment of Officer Weekley as though his only crime is theft in a candy store, while Aiyana Stanley-Jones' father faces a mandatory life in prison charge of first degree murder. The prosecutor is lenient toward Officer Weekley, while filing maximum charges against Mr. Jones based on nothing but hearsay. This is insulting, nauseating, and disrespectful to the people.”

Related news:

[Hurting family sues A&E, The First 48](#) (FCN, 12-30-2010) (ALSO BY DIANE BUKOWSKI)

Hundreds march against police killing of 7-year-old in Detroit, abuses nationwide

BY DIANE BUKOWSKI | LAST UPDATED: JUL 13, 2010 - 4:06:15 PM

http://www.finalcall.com/artman/publish/National_News_2/article_7130.shtml

DETROIT (FinalCall.com) - A mother and child from New York City led a march of hundreds from Detroit and across the nation down Woodward Avenue June 26 to condemn the police killing of seven-year-old Aiyana Stanley-Jones on May 16.

They carried dozens of signs displaying Aiyana's photo, which declared in bright red, “Redeem Aiyana's Dream,” and “We Say No to No-Knock Raids.” They chanted, “Don't kill our kids, don't shoot our kids!” and “The system is wrong, we've got to be strong, Aiyana Jones, she has a name, her family is not to blame!”



Allison with daughter Honesti at her right lead June 26 protest against Aiyana Jones' murder. Photo: Herb Boyd

Jewel Allison, the founder of the International Aiyana Alliance, said, “People all over New York City, and from London, Africa, Germany and Peru have contacted me in outrage over this child's death.”

She and her daughter Honesti, 11, held hands during the march.

“New York is Detroit and Detroit is New York. Out of the love I have for my daughter, I say, oh no, you cannot shoot our children in the head and get away with it,” Ms. Allison declared. “I began grieving myself when I heard of Aiyana's killing, this totally upset our household. For the

last four weeks, we have organized non-stop to bring our message to the world on the streets of this city where Aiyana was killed.”

Detroit police officer Joseph Weekley allegedly shot Aiyana to death during a military-style assault on her home in a poverty-stricken East Side neighborhood May 16. He fired as other officers lobbed an incendiary stun grenade through a front window of the Jones family's home, according to the family's attorney Geoffrey Fieger. Aiyana and her grandmother Vertilla Jones were sleeping on a couch directly below that window.

“The First 48,” an Arts and Entertainment (A&E) reality show which features Officer Weekley on its website as a regular star, was filming the episode.

The International Aiyana Alliance has also called for a fall march on the U.S. Department of Justice to demand a stop to no-knock raids in the near future.

“At the heart of the Washington march will be a demand for the Justice Department to pull money and grants from local police departments that are using them to carry out no-knock raids,” Ms. Allison said. “These raids are only carried out in poor neighborhoods of color, which don't have the means to fight back, not in rich White suburbs.”

Regarding the notion that a general atmosphere of violence in Detroit led to Aiyana's death, Ms. Allison said, “We are powerless as relates to any type of real violence. The whole system needs to be renovated. The recession has caused mass unemployment, which linked with internalized self-hatred results in violent crime within our communities. Black people are only 12 percent of the population nationally, and Black women and children make up the majority of that. What you have left is maybe five percent of the population being Black males, and they want us to believe they are all strapped and violent and a threat to the country. That is ridiculous.”

Makeisha Harris, a young Detroit mother who is head of Healing Detroit, led a grassroots march of hundreds throughout the city in May to bring community members together in the wake of Aiyana's death. Ms. Harris participated in the I.A.A. march, as did Joyce Johnson, a leader of the City Airport Renaissance Association (CARA), which is calling attention to the unsolved murders of 12 women in that East Side neighborhood.

Also present were members of Call ‘em Out, the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality (DCAPB), and other local organizations. Many protesters who came from other parts of the country had just attended the U.S. Social Forum, held June 22-26 at Cobo Hall. That event brought out thousands of activists.

Myla Johnson of Gary, Ind., who leads the Central District Organizing Project there, brought her six children to the USSF and the march.

“How come this officer has not been charged?” she asked. “He's not God, to take a life like he did. It's becoming so common, and the police just get a pass. We have our share of police-instigated violence in Gary. I am so happy that we were able to come out to support Aiyana. Everyone in Gary has heard about her case and we are devastated by it.”

Luther Allen of Providence, R.I. said, "I think it's disgusting to see law enforcement not held accountable in the killing of this child. The police culture itself is responsible. I just can't believe they did this because they wanted to be on TV."

"Racist police brutality and harassment are happening all over the country," said Hoku Jeffrey of Los Angeles. "A mass community campaign against the police killing of Oscar Grant succeeded in getting his killer tried for murder."

Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) officer Johannes Mehserle shot the unarmed Grant, a 22-year-old father, in the back in 2009. Cell phone photos and videos of Mr. Grant's murder which went worldwide, led to three community rebellions in Oakland. Mr. Mehserle's trial is currently ongoing.

Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy said in published remarks that the investigation into Aiyana's killing is still "ongoing," and would not comment on the possibility of charges being brought against Off. Weekley.

Detroit youth Arthur Bowman, the grandson of the local leader of the same name, said he and others visited the neighborhood where Aiyana's family lived.

"A lot of people are blaming the man who lived in the upstairs flat, who was arrested for the earlier killing of a 17-year-old, and they are trying to link Aiyana's father in as well," young Bowman said. "But wouldn't there be a reason for a system of dirty cops to try and blame her father to take attention away from the fact that they threw a flash grenade through the window and shot a seven-year-old child to death?"

The June 26 and national marches were endorsed in the Alliance's founding flier by Allison, Rev. Omar Wilks of Unison Pentecostal Church and Rev. Darryl Young of the Siloam Presbyterian Church in New York, Jaylaco Media, The Native Detroiter magazine, and Salaam Ismial, president of the National United Youth Council & Street Organizing Coalition.

Speakers at the rally which concluded the march included Rev. Wilks, Detroit poet Aurora Harris, Ron Scott and Sandra Hines of the DCAPB, Abiyomi Azikiwe of the Michigan Emergency Committee against War and Injustice, and Carl Dix of the New York-based Oct. 22 Coalition Against Police Brutality, Repression and the Criminalization of a Generation.

(For further information call, Jewel Allison, president of International Aiyana Alliance (I.A.A), at 212-615-6877 or e-mail stealingpeace@aol.com.)

Family tells story of police invasion

BY DIANE BUKOWSKI | LAST UPDATED: MAY 28, 2010 - 11:02:03 AM

http://www.finalcall.com/artman/publish/National_News_2/article_7001.shtml

(Also published in The Michigan Citizen—photos below are some of those used in both the Michigan Citizen and The Final Call.)



DETROIT (FinalCall.com) - “As soon as they hit the window, I hit the floor and reached for my grandbaby. I saw the light go out of her eyes and blood coming out of her mouth. I had never seen anything like that before: My beautiful, gorgeous granddaughter. I can't trust them; I can't trust the Detroit police.”

Mertilla Jones, 46, weeping in the arms of her daughter LaKrystal Sanders, described how Detroit police killed seven-year-old Aiyana Stanley Jones during a military-style assault on their home, on May 16. Ms. Jones spoke at a press conference held by Attorney Geoffrey Fieger May 18 as he announced the filing of two lawsuits in the case.

Ms. Jones said she and Aiyana were asleep on a couch in the lower flat's front room at about 12:30 a.m. when police tossed an incendiary stun grenade through the window directly

above the couch. Atty. Fieger said Aiyana was severely burned and then shot in the head and neck by an unidentified police officer standing on the porch. He said the scene is shown in a videotape he and other attorneys watched.

Ms. Jones said she and her son, Aiyana's father Charles Jones, were forced to lie on shattered glass on the floor as police grabbed Aiyana and rushed her to a police car. The family, including three other children, Carlos, four, Pierre, two, and three-month-old Krystal, were held in the home for hours after the killing, they said. No one was allowed to accompany Aiyana to the hospital.

“My brother (Charles) was crying and begging to go with his daughter, but they wouldn't let him,” Ms. Sanders said. “The police kept telling me my niece was OK.”

Grandmother arrested

Mertilla Jones said police handcuffed her before she could take her blood pressure medication, then dragged her off to Detroit Receiving, where she was tested for drugs and later at police offices for gunshot residue. She said she believed she was held for eight hours.

“All that time, I couldn't be with my family,” she said sorrowfully.

Assistant Chief of Police Ralph Godbee claimed at a press conference May 16 that Vertilla Jones had confronted or “had contact” with the officer who shot Aiyana, causing his gun to go off accidentally. He would not release the names of any officers involved.

Police Chief Warren Evans has been “out of the country,” but was being continually briefed, Asst. Chief Godbee said.

Asst. Chief Godbee said the officers, from the department's Special Response Team, had a warrant to search both the upper and lower flats in the 4000 block of Lillibridge for a suspect in the May 13 killing of 17-year-old JeRean Blake at a nearby store.

Chauncey Owens, 34, who lives in the upper flat with a separate entrance, was arrested without resistance after Aiyana's death, said Atty. Fieger. Mr. Owens is engaged to Ms. Sanders.

Atty. Fieger disputed Asst. Chief Godbee's account, saying officers had a warrant only for the upstairs address and had to go back to get a warrant for the downstairs flat after the child's death. He said a police undercover vehicle was parked outside the home all day watching as children played outside, until Mr. Owens came out of the upper flat. Then the vehicle left, Atty. Fieger said, perhaps to get the first warrant for Mr. Owens' arrest.

At the scene of the tragedy early May 16, family and neighbors gathered outside the flat, with children's toys strewn in the front yard, expressing their sorrow, shock and anger.

Cousin warned cops that children were in home

Charles Jones cried in agony in the arms of family members, sitting next to the blood-soaked couch on which his daughter died. His family had moved it to the porch.

“It hurts so bad,” he said. “I just lost my baby, she was so beautiful.”

Mr. Jones, an independent contractor, said Aiyana was the second oldest of his seven children, and his only daughter.

“She was an honor roll student and very artistic,” Charles Jones said. “She loved her family and friends and was very popular in school with her classmates. She loved Disney characters but lately she's been getting into Hannah Montana and Justin Bieber. She loved to dance.”

Diamond Howard, seven, Aiyana's classmate, shyly displayed her photo.

“We were good friends,” she said. “We played and studied and did our work together.”

Mr. Jones said he was in a back room when the grenade and gunshot went off. He ran out to see what was going on, only to be forced to kneel on broken glass as police carried out Aiyana and her favorite Disney blanket, both burnt. He said that he believes if his mother had confronted a police officer as Asst. Chief Godbee claimed, she would have been dead too.

Aiyana's cousin Mark Robinson said the police detained him outside before the home invasion.

“They threw me on the ground and put their knees in my back,” Mr. Robinson said. “I screamed at least eight times that there were kids in the house, before they threw the grenade and knocked the door down, yelling ‘police.’”

Altogether, 12 people were in the house, including the four young children.

‘Cops didn't show warrant until hours later’

Aiyana's great aunt Joann Robinson said, “I heard the boom and came out there. I had to ask a whole bunch of times for the search warrant. They didn't show it until way afterwards, about 4 or 5 a.m. as they were driving away.”

Family members reported there were no weapons in the house.

Ms. Sanders said that police knocked down the upper and lower flat doors, which are on either side of the building, at the same time.

“There ain't no way this was an accident. They came here prepared to kill,” said a neighbor who asked to be identified as “Michelle.” “Where's the mayor; where's Warren Evans? Why is no one showing remorse to this family? They are grieving.”

According to Michelle, the scene was not roped off with yellow police caution tapes or otherwise secured. Michelle said a firetruck came by earlier and washed the street down to get rid of Aiyana's blood, but spots of it could still be seen on the sidewalk.

“The mayor has publicly extended his condolences to the family, as well as responded to this tragedy,” said Karen Dumas, chief of Mayor Bing's communications office. “He plans to reach out to the family at an appropriate time. However, our ability to respond is now impeded by the pending lawsuits.”

At a press conference, Asst. Chief Godbee said police were too wary to come back to the area, fearing neighborhood anger. Told that the family needed money for funeral expenses, he was non-committal about police assistance. Atty. Fieger said the Rev. Al Sharpton was expected to speak at Aiyana's funeral, to be held at a local church that has offered to finance it. (See related on page 3.)

Media grills grieving family

Daily media reporters relentlessly grilled Vertilla and Charles Jones and Mark Robinson about details of the event during the press conference, eventually producing an angry outburst from a relative listening in the gallery.

Atty. Fieger advised the three not to respond to many questions. When reporters asked him if he had the name of the police officer responsible for Aiyana's death, Atty. Fieger shot back, “Why don't you get it? Isn't that your job?”

Reporters spent most of the conference asking Atty. Fieger how he obtained the videotape. He said a man came to his office May 17 with his attorney and ran the videotape on the camera which took it. He said the man feared the police and would not give Atty. Fieger a copy. Atty. Fieger said the man was local, not from A&E's “The First 48” crew which allegedly accompanied police during the raid.

Atty. Fieger said he knows the man's name but will not reveal it. He said it is possible the man is either a Detroit police officer or associated with the department.

“I just hope that this video doesn't end up deep-sixed,” Atty. Fieger said. “If the Detroit police get it first, then they will do one of two things, either destroy it or move to exclude it from court testimony as prejudicial.”

But he said he will question the 15 police officers on the raid team in court, and they will either tell the truth or lie about what happened. He called on them to show the “milk of human kindness” and tell the truth, and called on Chief Evans and Mayor Bing to acknowledge what had happened.

‘We don't want this city to explode’

“Please don't let this child have died in vain,” he asked. “We don't want this city to explode.”

Atty. Fieger said the family was having an independent autopsy performed by Oakland County Medical Examiner Mark Spitz, the son of the internationally-renowned Werner Spitz, before funeral arrangements are made.

Atty. Fieger has also had his own investigators at the scene.

The lawsuits charge Officers “John Doe and Robert Row” with killing Aiyana, and then filing false reports to cover up what happened. They say neither Aiyana, her grandmother nor any other occupants of the house posed a threat to the officers.

The Detroit police have handed the investigation of the incident over to the Michigan State Police. Asst. Chief Goodbee claimed they want to assure an “independent” investigation.