



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on November 28, 2014

Was Murdered Ferguson Man a Grand Jury Witness?

The murder bore some earmarks of a hit. The young man was found behind the wheel of his white Pontiac Grand Prix, shot to death through the driver's side window. There also was possibly something unique about him:

That he might have witnessed the Michael Brown shooting.

The young man was 20-year-old DeAndre Joshua, widely reported as the first casualty of the Ferguson riots. He was found dead Monday night mere yards from where robbery suspect Brown was shot in self-defense by Officer Darren Wilson on August 9. And Joshua's alleged status as a possible witness to that fateful summer incident is raising some eyebrows.

The implication is that someone rubbed him out because he talked — or because it was thought he did. As UniversalFreePress.com's Dave Gibson [wrote](#), "While officials would not say if Joshua was in fact, a witness to the shooting death of Michael Brown, nor if he actually provided testimony to the grand jury which ultimately cleared Officer Darren Wilson of any wrongdoing in the shooting, his murder does point to a retribution-type killing." Gibson closes his piece pointing out, "As the gangland saying goes: 'Snitches get stitches!'"

Yet the argument for this motive is far from unassailable. While it's not generally reported that Joshua was robbed, a woman (identified as a friend or relative) quoted in [this Daily Mail](#) article made passing reference to that being the case. The paper also writes that the young man's grandmother, Renita Towns, "said that he graduated Beaumont High School and that he was working in Wal-Mart. Family member Brian Joshua, 45, added: 'He was a good kid, he's gone to high school, he's got a job, he's not into drugs or any of that stuff.'" On the other hand, one website [claims](#) that DeAndre Joshua was "in fact, a drug dealer, according to both law enforcement sources and his Facebook page" (it doesn't provide much evidence for this allegation, however). He was also a friend of Brown's accomplice during the August 9 robbery, Dorian Johnson, who is currently [under protection](#). The point is that there could be reasons for Joshua's murder other than his being a possible "snitch."

Yet while the picture surrounding Joshua's murder is fuzzy, the reason why some suspect a retribution killing is airtight:

It's now known definitively that many black Ferguson grand-jury witnesses were afraid to testify — often fearing retaliation from those in their own community.

As *Time's* Tina Susman [wrote](#) on Thursday, opening her piece with one anonymous individual's story, "This witness was scared. He had Googled himself and found the phrase: 'Snitches get stitches.'" She explained that the witness was frightened "that black neighbors would find fault with his description of





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what happened” when Officer Wilson shot Michael Brown. Another witness, wrote Susman, “who described Brown as charging toward Wilson, said he felt uncomfortable walking into the Ferguson police station ‘past all the protesting going on,’ but felt it was his duty to tell what he had seen.” She writes of yet another “who testified that Brown ‘might have been punching’ Wilson through his car window” as having stated “I’m shaking and I’m nervous right now and I’m scared, you know.”

Other witnesses expressed fears many would describe as paranoid, such as concern over retribution by the Ferguson Police or KKK. (Given that the KKK’s membership is down to a couple thousand members nationwide, with [as many as 10 percent being FBI informants](#), this boogeyman may be reminiscent of how 19th-century British mothers would once warn their children to “be good or Nappy will get you” — even after Napoleon Bonaparte’s death.)

But the fears, realistic and unrealistic both, may explain why it took the Ferguson grand jury so long to render their decision. As Susman also wrote, quoting Kathi Alizadeh, an attorney presenting evidence:

[S]he said there were about 15 eyewitnesses or other people with potentially valuable information still to question, and some were resisting.

“Some of them have frankly said there is no way I’m coming in, no way I’m going to testify,” Alizadeh told the jury. In those cases, she said the only option was to serve them with subpoenas. “But if you knock on the door and nobody answers, we have no right, you know, to kick in the door,” she said.

Of course, witness fear is nothing new — it has long served to deter those who would testify against organized crime and is why the witness-protection program exists. Yet fear and intimidation have had enough of an effect in the Ferguson fiasco to lead many to believe that, to an extent at least, the rule of law had broken down. While the United States certainly isn’t yet like Colombia — where criminals could once intimidate officials with the policy “silver or lead” (accept bribes or face bullets) — even Ferguson police officers and their families have gone into hiding due to death threats, as *The New American* [reported](#) recently.

Given this, it’s no surprise that the possibility of retribution was also a factor for the grand jurors. In fact, St. Louis County prosecutor Robert McCulloch had warned them to safeguard their anonymity and “not wear their juror badges as they entered the justice building in Clayton, Mo., lest news reporters or others spot them,” wrote Susman.

Reflecting this breakdown in rule of law, a police officer had [warned](#) anonymously prior to the Ferguson grand-jury decision, “We will not be able to protect you or your family... If you do not have a gun, get one and get one soon.” After witnessing Monday’s burning and looting and the murder of DeAndre Joshua, it seems this was sound advice that, just perhaps, the Ferguson witnesses who courageously spoke the truth may want to heed themselves.



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