



Ohio Attorney General's Office
Bureau of Criminal Investigation
Investigative Report



2021-0957
Officer Involved Critical Incident – 3171 Legion Lane, Columbus,
OH (L)

Investigative Activity: Investigative Correspondence
Involves: Jeanene Hammonds (W)
Date of Activity: 06/04/2021
Author: SA Matthew Collins, #151

Narrative:

As of June 4, 2021, or the date of this report, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agent Matt Collins (SA Collins) has not yet received any communication from Jeanene Hammonds.

Attached to this report is a copy of a letter which was sent to Jeanene Hammonds by certified mail on or about May 17, 2021. SA Collins was made aware an agent of the addressee signed for the letter on May 19, 2021. The receipt related to service was placed in the case file under Item #3, original documents. The purpose for the attempted communication is outlined in the letter and supported by the attached news article, where Hammonds is quoted as providing a statement to The Washington Post.

No further attempts will be made to contact Hammonds.

Attachments:

Attachment # 01: Letter to Jeanene Hammonds_5.17.2021
Attachment # 02: TWP_Jeanene Hammonds



DAVE YOST
OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL



Bureau of Criminal Investigation
Office (740) 845-2000
Toll-free: 855-BCI-OHIO

To: Mrs. Jeanene Hammonds
2329 Randy Court
Columbus, OH 43232

From: Senior Special Agent Matt Collins

Date: May 17, 2021

Mrs. Hammonds,

You are in receipt of this letter due to you being a witness. You were either a witness to some portion/s of the events involving Ma'Khia Bryant and other individuals or ultimately the incident involving Ma'Khia Bryant and members of the City of Columbus-Division of Police (CPD) on April 20, 2021. Investigators believe you have relevant information in regard to those events.

I am the lead agent or lead investigator, who is conducting a criminal investigation into the incident involving members of the CPD and Ma'Khia Bryant. Special Agent Supervisor Kevin Barbeau and myself have made multiple attempts to reach you by phone (614) 439-7763. Whereas, calls are either going unanswered or were disconnected upon agents identifying themselves. For the purpose of conducting a thorough and complete investigation of the incident cited above, investigators wish to obtain your statement related to your knowledge of the events on April 20, 2021. Please respond to this letter by either phone or email, provided below. Thank you.

Respectfully,

SA Collins

Matthew Collins
Senior Special Agent
Bureau of Criminal Investigation
Major Crimes-Special Investigations Unit
Ohio Attorney General's Office
Cell: (216) 218-2380
Email: matthew.collins@ohioattorneygeneral.gov

Cc: Special Agent Supervisor Kevin Barbeau

Ma'Khia Bryant's family remembers her as loving, affectionate: 'She didn't even have a chance to live her life'

Relatives and others are mourning the loss of the 16-year-old, killed by police this week

By **Randy Ludlow, Paulina Firozi, David A. Fahrenthold** and **Derek Hawkins**

April 22, 2021 at 8:00 p.m. EDT

CORRECTION

An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated that Ma'Khia Bryant's grandmother believed Bryant called 911 to request assistance Tuesday. This version has been corrected.

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Ma'Khia Bryant beams at her mother in a TikTok clip, then throws her arms around her neck. As Beyoncé's "Dance for You" plays in the background, the teen lip-syncs the lyrics: "I'ma take this time to show you how much you mean to me, 'cause you are all I need."

It's an intimate moment between mother and daughter, who were working hard to reunite after Bryant was placed in foster care, family members said.

"They had a close bond," said Don Bryant, a cousin of Ma'Khia's mother. "Ma'Khia was just an all-around good person."

On Tuesday, 16-year-old Ma'Khia Bryant was fatally shot by a Columbus police officer responding to a call for help at her foster home in the city's southeast. Body-camera footage released by police shows Bryant swinging what appears to be a knife at two people during an altercation outside the property before an officer arrives and fires four shots at her torso.

On Thursday, family members struggled to make sense of the killing, at least the third fatal shooting by Columbus police this year.

Don Bryant said he had a hard time recognizing the teen seen in the police video lunging at others. He does not "condone any violence," he said, but he called the officer's decision to open fire disproportionate.

"There are other disengagement techniques that police could have used here," said Bryant, who has served on the Mansfield, Ohio, city council. "I'm a supporter of police, as former city councilor. I understood their moves, their tactics, what they do. I just don't understand what happened here."

Ma'Khia Bryant was loving and affectionate with family, Don Bryant said. When he ran in a recent election for mayor

of Mansfield, she texted periodically to see how his campaign was going, he said.

She was also a budding cosmetologist, fond of trying out hairstyles and posting them to TikTok. Her account appeared to have been taken down Thursday, but a search of her name on the platform showed others honoring the 16-year-old by stitching videos from her account with messages calling for justice.

Two videos show her smiling and vibrant, dancing as she styles her hair. In one, she shows off her pulled-back locks topped off with a beaded headband. In another, she mouths along to Beyoncé as she pulls her curls into pigtails. She places her hand under her chin, showing off her completed look with a smile.

“She laughed a lot,” said Ila Bryant, Ma’Khia’s great-grandmother, adding that the teen did well in school.

“Intellectually, she was very intelligent,” she said.

“But she didn’t even have a chance to live her life or make decisions,” Ila Bryant said. “Justice was not done.”

The body-camera footage released by police Wednesday shows a chaotic scene, with several people in the yard. A White officer can be seen emerging from his vehicle as Ma’Khia Bryant appears to chase someone who falls onto the sidewalk.

The teen then turns toward someone else wearing a pink sweatsuit and takes a swing at her head, with what appears to be a blade briefly visible in her hand. The officer yells “Get down!” multiple times before firing four shots at the girl, leaving her sprawled next to a car in the driveway.

In the 911 audio released Wednesday, a woman’s voice can be heard talking to the dispatcher. “We’ve got these grown girls over here trying to fight us, trying to stab us, trying to put their hands on our grandma,” the person says. “Get here now!” Police said they had not determined who the caller was.

Ma’Khia Bryant’s grandmother Jeanene Hammonds said she raced about 10 minutes to the Columbus foster home after receiving a call from her upset granddaughter late Tuesday afternoon. She said Bryant told her that an adult woman who used to live in the home had returned for a visit and an argument had ensued over the house being messy.

Both Bryant and the woman were holding knives, Hammonds told The Washington Post in an interview. Investigators have not commented on whether anyone on the scene other than Bryant had a weapon or was threatening anyone.

Hammonds said she was devastated by the shooting of her granddaughter. “This was a 16-year-old child,” she said, “a sweet, loving person.”

Officials identified the officer who fired shots as Nicholas Reardon and said he has been taken off street duty while the investigation proceeds.

Reardon, 23, appears to be the son of retired Columbus police sergeant Ted Reardon, an Air Force veteran and longtime basic-training instructor at the department’s training academy. When Ted Reardon retired last year, the department posted a [tribute video](#), with speeches from high-ranking officers interspersed with photos of Ted Reardon screaming, drill-instructor-style, into the faces of recruits.

“Officers across Central Ohio will remember Sgt. Reardon for many things: his get in your face training, his heart, his devotion, his passion and his love of Hallmark movies,” the police department wrote in a tribute on [Facebook](#).

Nicholas Reardon was a high school wrestler at Columbus’s Bishop Watterson High School. The wrestling team’s [Twitter feed](#) showed him posing with his father as a senior in 2016.

The wrestling team's [Twitter account](#) said Nicholas Reardon was planning on studying political science at Bowling Green State University. The university said he spent only one semester there, in the spring of 2017. Instead, Reardon followed a career path similar to his father's. He joined the Ohio Air National Guard in 2015, according to the Defense Department. He remains a staff sergeant, part of a security forces unit, and has spent two six-month stints on active deployment.

Nicholas Reardon joined the Columbus Police Department in December 2019, just months before his father retired. Columbus police did not respond to a request for comment about Reardon. When a reporter called his cellphone Thursday, the person who answered said, "I'm sorry, sir, please leave us alone."

The shooting immediately ignited debate about whether deadly force was warranted. Speaking about general policy rather than the specific incident, interim police chief Michael Woods said at a news conference that police can use deadly force "when faced with someone employing deadly force."

He also said officers are trained to shoot "the largest part of the body available to them."

Criminologists and experts in use of force told The Washington Post that Reardon appeared to have followed police protocol.

"From a training standpoint, it's textbook," said James Scanlon, who spent 33 years with the Columbus Division of Police.

He said there was not enough "time nor distance nor barrier ... where the officer would have time maybe to use a Taser or to use a baton or to use mace."

Bowling Green State criminologist Philip M. Stinson said there may have been "split seconds away from the other girl in pink being seriously bodily injured or killed."

"He had to act according to his training, and in my view, preliminarily, he did so appropriately and effectively and tragically," Stinson said.

But many in Columbus say the officer should have done more to de-escalate and questioned whether the department needs to overhaul its training.

Nana Watson, president of the Columbus chapter of the NAACP, acknowledged that the officer who shot Bryant faced a

Nana Watson, president of the Columbus chapter of the NAACP, acknowledged that the officer who shot Bryant faced a split-second decision but said, “I do not believe she had to die.”

“Did he have to get out of that car ready to shoot?” she said. “Something else could have been done differently.” Columbus needs to upgrade de-escalation training and policies for officers, she said.

“These killings in the Black and Brown communities keep happening,” Columbus City Council member Elizabeth Brown said Thursday.

“It’s a tragedy we lost a 16-year-old child,” said Brown, a Democrat and daughter of Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio). “We may not have every answer for what happened on Tuesday, but the vision we all should have is one where every person involved in that altercation is still alive.”

Brianna Baker, founder and executive director of Justice for Black Girls, said she hoped that as people remember Bryant, “we capture the fullness of her Black girlhood.” Too often, she said, “Black girls are stripped of their innocence and childhood.”

“Everything about Ma’Khia’s death and the reaction to her death shows we don’t believe Black girls and children have the ability to make mistakes,” Baker said.

“They are still worthy of protection,” she added.

Firozi, Fahrenthold and Hawkins reported from Washington.
