DEATH BY THE STATE

POLICE KILLINGS AND JAIL DEATHS IN ST. LOUIS

ARCHCITY DEFENDERS | JANUARY 2021
About The Authors

ArchCity Defenders (ACD) is a holistic legal advocacy organization that combats the criminalization of poverty and state violence, especially in communities of color. ACD’s foundation of civil and criminal legal representation, social services, impact litigation, policy and media advocacy, and community collaboration achieves and inspires justice and equitable outcomes for people throughout the St. Louis region and beyond.

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This report could never have happened without the support of several St. Louis families whose loved ones were killed by St. Louis police or who died while in custody in a St. Louis jail.

- The family of Jason Moore, killed by a Ferguson, MO police officer in September of 2011;
- The family of Cary T. Ball, Jr., killed by St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department (SLMPD) officers in April of 2013;
- The family of Tyler Gebhard, killed by an off-duty St. Louis County police officer in July of 2016;
- The family of Germane Robinson, who, according to his family, was taken out of a police car by SLMPD officers and left on the ground, barely clinging to life, on September 24, 2016, and later died at St. Mary’s Hospital on October 4, 2016;
- The family of Isaiah Hammett, killed by the St. Louis SWAT team and SLMPD in June of 2017;
- The family of Louis “Lyen” Payton, who died in the St. Louis City Medium Security Institution, better known as “the Workhouse,” in August 2018.

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ArchCity Defenders identified at least 179 people who were killed by police or who died in jail custody between 2009 to 2019 in the St. Louis Region. We remember these individuals and stand with the families and loved ones who have been impacted by their loss.

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Every few years, a brutal police killing, often of an unarmed Black civilian, forces the country to reckon with the issue of Fatal State Violence in the United States.

Whether it was the 1966 shooting of 16-year old Matthew “Peanut” Johnson in San Francisco which led to the three-day Hunter’s Point Uprising and the eventual founding of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, the 19 of 41 shots fired at Amadou Diallo in 1999 by New York City Police Department officers that struck and killed Diallo while he stood outside his home, or the more recent, merciless killings of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, these moments inspire our country to rise up in outrage only for many to seemingly forget again until the next violent death.

Throughout these lulls in our collective consciousness, hundreds more are killed by police each year and, for most, we never hear their stories. The surviving family members of those taken by the state are left to address the aftermath alone or – in some cases – with the help of activists and others who continue to fight when the cameras have gone.

St. Louis is no exception. In 1970, a local grassroots organization named ACTION released their report, *Thugs in Blue Uniform*. The report uncovered stories of people killed or otherwise victimized by police in St. Louis from 1965 to 1970 and identified demands to challenge police practices.

In 1983, the Coalition Against Police Crimes and Repression (CAPCR) was formed “as a united front to secure justice for Marilyn Banks,” a woman who was killed by a St. Louis City police officer, Joseph Ferrario. CAPCR’S campaign achieved the indictment of Officer Joseph Ferrario and his eventual removal from the force. Decades later, a different “ACTION” — Action St. Louis— “was founded by activists politicized after the killing of Michael Brown and the Ferguson Uprising.” Action St. Louis was an integral part of the movement to oust Bob McCulloch, the former St. Louis County prosecutor “who declined to bring charges against Darren Wilson, the white police officer who shot Brown.” Our research and this report builds upon ACTION’s, CAPCR’s, Action St. Louis’s, and countless others’ efforts to address the violence and harm caused by the state in St. Louis.

According to Mapping Police Violence, the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department (SLMPD) has the highest rate of police killings by population of any police department of the 100 largest U.S. cities. Our research uncovered no less than 132 people who were killed by police between 2009–2019 within four counties of the St. Louis region. We also identified at least 47 different people who died while in jail custody during the same period.

While these statistics are overwhelming, the
lives lost are so much more than numbers. We spoke in depth with those most impacted by Fatal State Violence, the families of those killed. We learned about their hopes, experiences, and frustrations after losing a loved one. We learned firsthand how family and friends suffer after their loved one is killed by police or inside of a jail. Their pain and grief are often compounded by callous responses from local government and police departments, inaccurate news media coverage that villainizes their loved one and defends the State, the costs associated with pursuing accountability and closure, and the difficulty of attaining justice and change from the legal system.

This report offers an introduction to the issue of Fatal State Violence (FSV) in St. Louis, Missouri. It begins with stories from several surviving families of people killed by the State. Their experiences anchor our work. From there, the report dives into the data on killings by police and in custody jail deaths, the coverage of FSV incidents by local news media, the officers involved in FSV incidents, and the associated costs of FSV incidents.

While limited by the many challenges inherent in uncovering wrongdoing by police and other State actors, our findings confirm that Fatal State Violence is a multifaceted and significant concern for the St. Louis region.
1. From 2009–2019, at least 179 people have been killed by police (132) or while in jail custody (47) within four counties of the St. Louis region (St. Louis County, St. Louis City County, Jefferson County, and St. Charles County).

2. People Killed By Police
   • The overwhelming majority of people killed were men: 92%.
   • Of the 132 people killed, 72% were Black.
   • The youngest person killed was 12 years old and the oldest was 68.
   • Of the 31 police departments implicated in incidents of Fatal State Violence, SLMPD of St. Louis City killed the most people—amassing 69 killings (or 53%).

3. People Who Died In Jail Custody
   • Of the 47 people who died in jail custody—38 were men and 9 were women.
   • The youngest person to die was 20 years of age, and the oldest person was 62.
   • Of the 47 people who died, 20 were Black, 21 were white, and 6 were of an unknown race.
   • The average age of death was 35.

4. Media Analysis
   • Articles consistently prioritize police statements over those made by the victims’ families, if families’ statements are even recorded.
   • The media criminalizes the majority of victims, and Black victims are criminalized more frequently than white victims.
   • Articles rarely contextualize the person’s death within a larger structure of anti-Blackness, racial oppression, and/or State (especially police) violence.
   • Articles overwhelmingly protect the identities of police officers while exposing victims and their families.

5. Police Who Killed People
   • We found names of 80 different officers directly involved in the deaths of people in the St. Louis region. They include officers who engaged in vehicular chases to the death, officers who shot and killed, officers who
tased people to death, and even an officer who pushed a man down the stairs to his death.

- Identifying information on police reportedly responsible for fatalities was laborious and required time and access to multiple sources of data.

>> To view and download ACD’s datasets — People Killed by Police, People Who Died in Jail Custody, and The Officers, visit: archcitydefenders.org/fatalstateviolence
What is Fatal State Violence?
ACD characterizes Fatal State Violence (FSV) as the instances in which State-sanctioned institutions—like police departments, jails, or certified private security—and their respective actors, such as police officers and jail staff, become deadly. FSV is rooted in a broader culture of prejudice, brutality, and injustice that disproportionately impacts Black people, other people of color, people with disabilities, and poor people. FSV is an oppressive status quo maintained by the legal system, mainstream news media, and public misconception, which individually and collectively devalue and misrepresent Black lives and the lives of others living at the margins in America today.

Why Focus on Fatal State Violence?
ACD’s approach to this issue and work is rooted in our practice of combatting state violence and the criminalization of poverty through direct representation, civil litigation, community collaboration, and media and policy advocacy. Since 2014, ACD has provided representation in civil suits for individuals harmed and terrorized by state violence as well as families who have lost loved ones to police killings and in-custody jail deaths. Beyond ACD’s legal representation, stories from impacted families have demonstrated a clear pattern of how pervasive, severe, and unaddressed this issue is.

FSV in St. Louis represents a microcosm of a much bigger picture. In 2020, the police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and many others have returned this systemic issue to the national stage, prompting local and national uprisings. These moments
have renewed public focus on lesser known killings, like that of 23-year old Elijah McClain, and sparked long overdue policy and budget conversations about defunding an inherently racist and oppressive system of policing.⁷ Data from the Washington Post suggests that approximately 1,000 people are killed by police every year.⁸ As previously noted, SLMPD in St. Louis City has killed the most people per population of any police department in the largest U.S. cities.⁹ For the surviving families of people killed by the State, a web of state and federal laws limit access to critical records or resources to get more information about what happened to their loved ones. Criminal prosecutions of police officers who kill are rare. When families are able to pursue civil litigation, legal barriers like the judicially-created doctrine of qualified immunity hinder their chances of accountability through the civil legal system.¹⁰ Furthermore, the news media overwhelmingly demonizes and criminalizes families’ loved ones and unquestioningly assigns authority and legitimacy to law enforcement. In sum, impacted families often must grieve the tragic loss of their loved one while confronting systemic barriers to their healing and desire to seek accountability. These barriers include a lack of access to information and answers, the limitations of the legal system, one-sided news reporting, and misconceptions about this issue by the general public.

Prior research has examined the discriminatory way police target and inflict excessive harm on communities of color, and the profound effects of these abusive practices on health and the ability of community members to improve their quality of life.¹¹ Due to data limitations, only a small body of studies have specifically documented basic estimates and determinants of police killings and police-involved deaths.¹²

This report advances our understanding of this problem in two ways. First, it provides sorely needed databases of FSV incidents (killings by police and in-custody jail deaths) and of the officers who have reportedly killed¹³— topics on which there is still very little research despite growing public awareness.¹⁴ Second, by pulling together a wide range of materials (numerical data, interviews, content analysis, etc.), this report demonstrates the wider impacts and ramifications of FSV in St. Louis, specifically for communities of color. More than just momentary incidents, FSV perpetuates an ongoing cycle of harm against Black lives and the lives of the poor. As media reports legitimize police violence and dehumanize its victims, families fight to wrest information from callous bureaucracies to vindicate their loved ones, and violent police officers get shielded from accountability and shuffled into new jobs in the wake of killings.¹⁵

In order to cast a vision for a world without Fatal State Violence and its extensive impacts, we must understand the complex web of interconnected issues.
For years, ACD has built relationships with families impacted by FSV to learn about their experiences following the loss of a loved one. Centering their experiences guides our understanding of the problem of FSV and our approach to addressing it. To better understand this issue, we conducted secondary research to uncover what efforts could create meaningful and systemic change for these families and others impacted by Fatal State Violence in St. Louis.

This preliminary report provides a summary of our findings based on the following research:

A. **Family Interviews**
ACD uncovered the questions, challenges, hopes, and concerns impacted family members faced in the (short term and long term) aftermath of losing their loved one.

B. **FSV Incident Database**
ACD systematically reviewed news media clips, internet searches, and public records requests to identify incidents in which someone was killed by the State in St. Louis City, St. Louis County, Jefferson County, and St. Charles County between 2009 and 2019 (including in-custody jail deaths). ACD’s research also included documentation and analysis of the demographic data of those killed.

C. **Media Analysis**
ACD conducted a coded news media content analysis to understand how a mainstream St. Louis news source reported FSV incidents over the decade.

D. **Identification of Repeat Offenders/Officer Outcomes**
ACD identified the law enforcement officers, and their respective departments, responsible for these FSV incidents through review of news clips, public records requests, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch’s public salary database, Missouri Peace Officer Standards & Training (P.O.S.T.) rosters and legal databases. ACD also traced the legal outcomes of FSV incidents and professional consequences for repeat offenders.

E. **Cost Analysis**
ACD identified the law enforcement officers, and their respective departments, responsible for these FSV incidents through review of news clips, public records requests, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch’s public salary database, Missouri Peace Officer Standards & Training (P.O.S.T.) rosters and legal databases. ACD also traced the legal outcomes of FSV incidents and professional consequences for repeat offenders.
Overview

In 2018–2019, ACD conducted a series of in-depth interviews with six impacted families about their hopes, experiences, and frustrations after losing a loved one to Fatal State Violence. We learned firsthand how family and friends suffer after their loved one is killed by police or inside of a jail. Their pain and grief is often compounded by callous responses from local government and police departments; inaccurate news media coverage that villanizes their loved one and defends the state; the costs associated with pursuing accountability and closure; and the difficulty of attaining justice and change from the legal system.

We believe that understanding the issue of FSV in St. Louis requires understanding these families’ stories as a small sample of the numerous stories throughout this region.
Dr. Elizabeth Johnson is the sister of Jason Moore. On September 17, 2011, Moore was suffering from a psychological disorder when Brian Kaminski, a Ferguson, Missouri police officer, repeatedly tased him. Kaminski, however, did not act alone. Ferguson police officer, Michael White, arrived and reportedly held Moore while Kaminski continued tasing him. Moore subsequently died of a heart attack.

The St. Louis County Medical Examiner’s office said that Moore’s cause of death was “agitated delirium,” not the repeated tasing. Johnson, a nurse practitioner, refused to accept the medical examiner’s story. The diagnosis of “agitated delirium,” also known as “excited delirium,” is not recognized by the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, or the World Health Organization, and is not listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5). As researchers with the Brookings Institute have written, “agitated delirium” has racist roots and “is a misappropriation of medical terminology, used by law enforcement to legitimize police brutality and to retroactively explain certain deaths occurring in police custody,” especially deaths of Black people.

Though no criminal charges were brought against Kaminski, Moore’s mother and wife filed civil lawsuits on August 19, 2014. In 2016, a federal jury awarded the family $3 million in damages. However, the city of Ferguson appealed the verdict. Prior to the appeals court ruling, the city of Ferguson agreed to pay $3 million to Moore’s family.

“I was grateful with the outcome, but I wasn’t satisfied... He [Kaminski] was just transferred to another police department,” said Dr. Johnson.

Public records indicate that Kaminski was hired by the Arnold Police Department in Jefferson County in August 2016 and that White started working at St. Louis County PD in August 2015. Dr. Johnson explains that this represents the inherent lack of accountability among State officials after incidents of Fatal State Violence.

“People start[ed] losing their jobs but they [were] actually getting replaced and just moved around. Oh my God, you say you fired somebody or let them go? But yet they over here working... That hurt too, as a family.”
FAMILY OF
ISAIAH HAMMENETT

Gina Torres is the mother of Isaiah Hammett. Isaiah was the primary caretaker of his grandfather, Dennis Torres, a disabled veteran and ACD client. On June 7, 2017, Hammett was home with his grandfather when officers with the St. Louis SWAT team and St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department executed a no-knock search warrant. The officers shot up the home, killing Hammett. Following his death, Torres, like many other families who have lost someone to Fatal State Violence, struggled to get information from the police department. Documents such as death certificates, autopsy reports, and incident reports can be almost impossible for the family to obtain. She told us,

“It took me a long time to get his autopsy. It took me a couple months before I could get it. And I had to sign to get that. I can’t show nobody. I can’t speak of it. It was an autopsy. Like all that’s under protective order. Which is crazy.”

Information such as this can be crucial for a family like Torres’ to bury their loved one, let alone begin to gain closure in the aftermath of their death. Initially, Torres was not even allowed access to her son’s body after he was taken from her.

“I didn’t have a chance to touch my son and tell him goodbye,” she said. “I had his funeral four months later. I couldn’t—they didn’t let me see my son...I could see him a few seconds. When I did see my son, what I’ve seen of my son, they had the covers all the way up around his face, in like a pillow. Like that does not seem normal. Like I didn’t see nothing.”

Years later, the home still sports bullet holes, a constant reminder of the violent killing. Torres still does not know exactly what happened to her son and why police came to her father’s house in the first place.

“They’re just trying to hide it so much and cover up what they did,” she said. “You know, if you guys did no wrong, you shouldn’t be worried about showing information.”
Marlene Gebhard is the grandmother of Tyler Gebhard, a biracial 20-year-old who was shot and killed by an off-duty St. Louis County police officer in July of 2016. Beginning several hours after her grandson’s death, Mrs. Gebhard experienced how little regard the State and the media had for her family’s well-being.

“Tyler’s death was on television before we were even able to notify the family,” she said. “He was killed at 5:30, sometime between 5:30 and 6, and I wasn’t even told until 9:30 that night, and it was on the 10 o’clock news.”

In addition, the story on the news told a version of events that favored police and turned Gebhard into a criminal. The family was overwhelmed by the repeated message that their loved one deserved to be killed. Mrs. Gebhard went on to explain that years after her grandson’s death, she hesitates to answer calls from unknown numbers in case it is someone from the media.

“What the police do when you speak out is use that information to criminalize the victim. And try to, for lack of a better term, make their case in the media to support the police violence in these cases…”

Mrs. Gebhard got choked up as she explained the impact this had on her family, especially on her other grandchildren:

“The day after Tyler died, I found my 15-year-old grandson, who’s Tyler’s cousin, in the closet, laying on the floor, crying. And I said, ‘Vince, are you okay?’ And he goes, ‘I’m just sad, Grandma.’ And I said, ‘I know you’re sad,’ and I grabbed him in a hug, and I said, ‘We’ll get through this. We will get through this.’ And he said to me, ‘They’re saying really awful things about Tyler.’ And I said, ‘What do you mean?’ And one of the articles out there about you know what Tyler was supposed to have done, some cretin put out there that ‘if [he]... had broken into my house, I would have shot him in the head.’ This is the stuff my grandchildren were reading.”
FAMILY OF CARY T. BALL, JR.

Toni Taylor is the mother of Cary T. Ball, Jr., who was shot and killed by SLMPD officers on April 24, 2013. In describing the loss of her son, Toni Taylor shared:

“It knocks the wind out of you. It leaves you feeling empty and confused and really don’t know where to go... Birthdays are the roughest. Cause it’s birth. You once shared that same heartbeat with your child. It’s a lot to endure.”

Initial news reports of Ball, Jr.’s death parroted the police narrative, painting him as violent and a threat, which both the family and witnesses dispute. Ball, Jr. was an honor student with a 3.86 GPA, majoring in human services at Forest Park Community College where he had been celebrated as an “emerging scholar.”

“We definitely don’t need to talk to the press no more. Because that’s a terrible thing, [especially with] racial profiling. Because that’s what happened to [Cary]. He was leaving Seven Eleven. Didn’t do nothing.”

Ball, Jr.’s family eventually filed a civil lawsuit, which was settled out of court. Taylor remains committed to fighting for justice for her son and other families. Ball, Jr.’s family founded the Cary on the Ball Organization through which they honor his memory and travel around the country to support other families who have lost loved ones at the hands of police. The organization launched a new website on November 10, 2020, geared towards providing resources to trauma-impacted children five to twelve years of age.

“I can’t see myself walking away from this, because it just seems like if the tables were turned, I feel like Cary would be sitting on somebody’s porch like ‘You did know that was our mom, right?”
While each family’s experience was different, the following issues were raised as common concerns:

**Accessing Information**
- Getting access to the body; getting death certificates, autopsy reports, and other pertinent records; limited access to the police or government agency to uncover the circumstances of their loved one’s death

**Seeking Justice**
- Holding the people who killed their family member accountable; vindicating their loved one’s rights in court; changing government policies and/or practices; changing the public narrative of their loved one

**Getting Support**
- Financial costs associated with activities like making/affording funeral arrangements; getting documentation; obtaining legal representation or pursuing a civil case; training and community support to counter problematic news narratives and call out injustice

The interviews with families culminated in a ‘know-your-rights’ guide, authored by Emanuel Powell to help families anticipate issues they are likely to face after losing a loved one to FSV and access resources available to them. This guide is forthcoming and will be published in 2021. Emanuel also published the journal article *Unlawful Silence: St. Louis Families’ Fight for Records After the Killing of a Loved One by Police.*

²⁷
Despite a 1994 federal law requiring the acquisition of “data about the use of excessive force by law enforcement officers” and a 2014 federal law “compelling states and federal agencies to fully report fatalities of people they had sought to arrest or detain,” the federal government has largely failed to track incidents of killings by police or state in custody deaths.²⁸

Given the lack of reliable data, news media, activists, and researchers have created alternate systems of tracking killings by police. These include databases by the Washington Post, the Guardian, Mapping Police Violence, Fatal Encounters, and others.²⁹

The following analysis offers a review of FSV incidents in the St. Louis region from 2009 to 2019 based on ACD’s review of news stories, internet searches, and public records requests, which resulted in a database available to the public at ACD’s website.³⁰ The database almost certainly lacks some FSV incidents given the dearth of reliable data from the state of Missouri or federal government. Despite this reality, ACD’s aspiration is that this database will provide a starting point to understand the size and scope of the problem in the region and will be updated as ACD’s work in this area continues to evolve.

**People Killed by Police**

Between January 1, 2009, and December 31, 2019, in the St. Louis region, 132 people were killed by police from 32 different local and state police departments in four regional counties—St. Louis City, St. Louis County, Jefferson County, and St. Charles County. To contrast, a 2014 Daily News Investigation found approximately 179 people were killed by the New York City Police Department for an entire 15-year period starting in 1999. New York City’s population is more than 4 times larger than that of the St. Louis region.³¹
The overwhelming majority of people killed were men. Across gender lines, 121 out of 132 people killed were men (92%), eleven were women (8%), including one transgender woman.

The youngest person killed was 12 years old, and the oldest was 68. The average age of a person killed was 31. The average age of a Black person killed was 29, the average age of a white person killed was 41.

Of the 132 people killed, 95 were Black (72%), 25 were white (19%), seven had an unknown/undisclosed race (5%), four were Asian (3%), and one was Hispanic (1%).

In the past few years, multiple studies have documented how Black people are disproportionately more likely to be killed by police than whites. A 2020 Harvard study of nearly 5,400 police-related fatalities in the U.S. from 2013–2017 found that Black people were on average three times more likely to be killed by police than white people. The overrepresentation of Black people killed by police—a reality reflected both in our findings and in national data—is rooted in a historically racist criminal legal system.
In our study across the St. Louis region:
- 51% (67) of all 132 people killed by police were Black men between the age of 15–34, by far the largest group represented.
- Of the 67 Black men aged 15–34 killed by police, 44 (66%) were killed by SLMPD.
- 33% (44) of all 132 people killed by police were Black men aged 15–34 killed by SLMPD.

The deadliest zip codes included:
- 63118 in South St. Louis City which covers Benton Park and Benton Park West, Dutchtown, Gravois Park, Marine Villa, and Tower Grove East neighborhoods;
- 63113 in North St. Louis City which includes Kingsway East, The Ville, and parts of Academy/Sherman Park, Fountain Park, Grand Center, Jeff-Vander-Lou, Lewis Place, and Vandeventer;
- 63147 in the North Eastern border of the City which includes Baden, the Near North Riverfront and North Riverfront areas that are largely industrial;
- 63136 in St. Louis County just north of the City border which covers Castle Point, Country Club Hills, Dellwood, Flordell Hills, Jennings, Moline Acres, and Walnut Park West.

Out of the 31 police departments implicated in these incidents of Fatal State Violence, SLMPD of St. Louis City killed the most people, amassing 69 killings or 53% out of the total 132. St. Louis County police killed 24 people during this same period (18%).

Ferguson, a St. Louis County municipality that has become notorious following the tragic killing of Michael Brown, Jr., had one other documented police killing during the period.

### Deaths in Jail Custody

While this report emphasizes the problem of fatal police violence, the problem also extends into local jails where 47 people have died between 2009 to 2019 while in custody.

Of these 47 deaths, 38 were men and 9 were women. The youngest person to die was 20 years of age, and the oldest person was 62. The average age of death was 35. Of the 47 people who died, 20 were Black, 21 were white, and 6 were of an unknown race.

Regionally, the St. Louis County Jail and the Workhouse have been the focus of public scrutiny and litigation in recent years.
According to an investigative report done by the Huffington Post, the St. Louis County Justice Center ranked among the top ten jails in the United States with the most in-custody deaths between 2015 and 2016. In that timeframe, six people were reported to have died in custody. In 2019, five men died in the Justice Center.

In June 2019, 31-year-old Daniel Stout became the fourth detainee from the St. Louis County Justice Center to die within a six-month period. Angela Malcich, Stout’s mother, filed a lawsuit in June 2020 alleging that Stout’s death was preventable. Malcich’s lawsuit also names one detainee who died after her son, Jo’Von Mitchell (31), and the names of three detainees who died before her son did, Larry “Jay” Reavis (51), John M. Shy (29), and Lamar Catchings (20). The Reavis family also filed a lawsuit against the county in October 2019 related to jail deaths.

In November 2017, ArchCity Defenders filed a federal class-action lawsuit on behalf of clients who survived inhumane conditions and inadequate access to medical care at the Workhouse. The suit is currently pending. In August 2018, Louis “Lyen” Payton (48) died in the Workhouse of an opioid overdose. He was greatly loved and cherished by his family. Detained pretrial for months, he never received his day in court. ArchCity Defenders filed a lawsuit on behalf of the Payton family in June 2020, alleging that his death was preventable. In August 2019, just one year later, Christopher Brown (35) also died in the Workhouse of an opioid overdose.

In July 2020, after two years of organizing and advocacy led by the Close the Workhouse campaign, St. Louis City’s Board of Aldermen voted to shutter the jail by the year’s end. Despite the overwhelming political will and historic vote, some City leaders have resorted to complacency and even retracted support, reactivating the campaign’s organizing efforts.

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**LOCATION** | **NUMBER**
--- | ---
Des Peres PD Holding Cell | 1
Jefferson County Jail | 7
Jennings Municipal Jail | 2
Pagedale Municipal Jail | 1
Richmond Heights Jail | 1
St. Charles County Jail | 5
St. Louis City Justice Center | 10
St. Louis City Workhouse | 7
St. Louis County Jail | 12
St. Louis Metropolitan PD Holding Cell | 1

**GRAND TOTAL** | **47**
When Michael Brown was killed by Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri on August 9, 2014, news outlets across the world began reporting on the story and the Ferguson uprising in St. Louis.

With headlines such as “Darren Wilson explains why he killed Michael Brown” and articles that characterized protests as “looting, vandalism and attacks on police officers,” media coverage in many cases furthered the police narrative, villainizing Brown and those who protested his death.⁴³

In August 2019, Michael Brown’s mother, Lezley McSpadden, was a guest on ACD’s and Action St. Louis’ Under the Arch podcast, and shared:

“The news was saying that anything that was bad happening was a Michael Brown protest, but when it was nice and peaceful it was a Ferguson protest. I definitely felt like the weight of the city was on my shoulders. They made me feel responsible for an entire city at one point. The more lies that I heard, the more I had to say. I just couldn’t allow them to demonize my son any more than they had already done... when it comes to securing his legacy, I’m not going to let just anybody destroy that.”⁴⁵

In recounting the Ferguson events, the media provided audiences with a framework through which to judge Brown, Wilson, and the protestors...the media committed itself to perpetuating both racialized and racist constructions of Blacks—even those engaged in legitimate dissent.”⁴⁴

The 2017 Dangerous Distortion of Our Families Report found that, across the board, media sources overrepresent Black families in stories of criminality, poverty, and family instability, whereas whites are underrepresented in those stories.⁴⁶ The overrepresentation of Black people as criminals in print, online, and television media stories perpetuates destructive and ineffective ‘tough on crime’ policymaking and exacerbates racial profiling that puts Black people and people of color further at risk of violence and exploitation by State systems.

>> Read Color of Change’s 2017 Dangerous Distortion of Our Families Report at colorofchange.org/dangeroustorsion/

The concerns raised by impacted families and ArchCity Defenders clients about the inaccuracies and myriad of ways news reports disparaged their loved ones underscores the need for research and analysis to counter this misrepresentation and distortion.
Methodology

In Summer 2019, ACD conducted a media content analysis of 115 St. Louis Post-Dispatch articles published immediately after victims’ deaths by police between 2009 and 2019.

We coded for 56 quantitative and qualitative variables that were divided into the following categories:

Summary of Key Findings

1. Articles consistently prioritize police statements over those made by the victims’ families, if families’ statements are even recorded.
2. The media criminalizes the majority of victims.
3. Articles rarely include alternative, positive characterizations of victims.
4. Black victims are criminalized more frequently than white victims.
5. Articles rarely contextualize the person’s death within a larger structure of anti-Blackness, racial oppression, and/or State (police) violence.
6. Articles overwhelmingly protect the identities of police officers while exposing victims and their families.
1. **Articles consistently prioritize police statements over those made by the victims’ families.**
   - Out of 115 articles, only 27% contain quotes and 33% include paraphrased statements from the victim’s family, while 67% of articles include direct quotes and 99% incorporate paraphrased statements from police officers, chiefs, or spokespersons.
   - The total word count of police officers’ quotes throughout 10 years of articles is 2951, nearly twice the total family quote word count of 1458 words.
   - Articles not only spent more space on police viewpoints, but physically prioritized their words within articles. Quotes by police appeared in the articles an average of 4 paragraphs before quotes by family members.

2. **The media criminalizes the majority of victims.**
   - Regardless of the situation and initial catalyst for police engagement with a victim, articles often include the victim’s entire history of contact with law enforcement. 23% of articles mention previous crimes of which the victim had been convicted and, more notably, 8% of articles mention crimes of which the victim had only been accused.
   - Articles also use repetitive mentions of guns and drugs as buzz words to continue vilifying victims, for example, 68% of articles allege that the victim had a gun, and in these articles, the presence of a weapon is mentioned an average of 5 times.
   - When focusing only on the victims of police shootings and other instances of direct physical violence, the criminalization becomes clearer compared to victims who died in car crashes while being chased by police. Articles involving victims of police shootings were more than two times as likely to print that the victim was in possession of drugs and almost four times more likely to include previous crimes that the victim was convicted of or allegedly committed.

3. **Articles rarely include alternative, positive characterizations of victims.**
   - Only 10% of articles include the victim’s level of educational attainment and only 15% mention the victim’s employment status.

4. **Black victims are criminalized more frequently than white victims.**
   - 31% of the articles that feature a Black victim mention previous crimes for which they have been accused or convicted while only 21% of articles featuring white victims include similar mentions of previous criminal activity.
   - Reflections from white families held more article space than Black families. The average word count
of family quotes in articles about white victims is 67 words while the average family word count in articles about Black victims is 46 words.

5. **Articles rarely contextualize the person’s death within a larger structure of anti-Blackness, racial oppression, and/or State (police) violence.**
   - Of the 115 articles, only 21% provide context for the instance of Fatal State Violence (i.e. mention someone else killed) while the other 79% fail to make a connection between the individual incident and the larger flawed model of public safety in St. Louis. Additionally, the vast majority of articles—81%—are published in the ‘Law & Order’ section of the Post-Dispatch.

6. **Articles overwhelmingly protect the identities of police officers while exposing victims and their families.**
   - Over the last 10 years, we identified only 8 instances in which the names of officers appeared in the articles immediately following incidents of Fatal State Violence.
   - When background information on an officer is provided, which occurs in 64% of articles, the information 100% of the time pertains to their age, experience and tenure on the force.
   - The very articles that protect the identities of officers frequently fail to do the same for the victims and their families. 84% of articles reveal the name of the victim and 75% give information about where the victim lived, primarily the block they lived on and, at times, their full address.
After Jeremiah Henderson and Darrell Williams, Jr. were killed by SLMPD in November 2009, Henderson’s mother, Martha Claiborne, and Williams, Jr.’s grandmother, Delores Henry, wanted to know the names of the police officers responsible. The Associated Press reported in 2009 that they “both tried for weeks to learn the names but were spurned in phone calls and visits to headquarters.”

For years, SLMPD refused to release names of officers involved in shootings. After the Post-Dispatch inquired, the department said it would change and release names of officers involved in shootings. A longstanding department rule had required police to withhold any information that the Missouri Sunshine Law said it could. According to a department spokesperson, then-Chief Dan Isom ordered lawyers to modify that policy in 2009.

Yet, from the media content analysis, it’s clear that SLMPD (and other police departments) have maintained a practice of withholding officer names from news reports on police killings. We were only able to identify eight officers named within the 115 initial articles written about incidents. When police statements are made, they are often prefaced with “authorities say,” positioning readers to infer that law enforcement’s narrative is fact.

**Kee Kee Jackson**

In October 2019, twelve-year old Akeelah “Kee Kee” Jackson was struck by a St. Louis County police officer speeding 59 miles per hour in a 30 zone without lights or sirens on. Kee Kee died a few weeks later. As is often the case, the officer’s name was withheld from the news coverage.

For years, impacted loved ones and witnesses to police killings and jail deaths have questioned the State’s one-sided narratives.

**Mikel Neil, Sr. & Townsal Woolfolk**

After Mikel Neil, Sr. and Townsal Woolfolk were killed by St. Louis County police in August 2018, Mr. Neil’s brother, with the help of Zaki Baruti of the Universal African People's Organization, got video footage which refuted the County’s first statement, that they did not chase the victims. While not an exhaustive list, other examples of discrepancies identified in police narratives can be found in the case of Kajieme Powell, Terry Tillman, and Tyler Gebhard.
In June 2020, the Associated Press published an article, “Video evidence increasingly disproves police narratives,” documenting several incidents in which police made “misleading or incomplete statements that painted their actions in a far more favorable light.”

Author and former SLMPD officer, Terrell Carter, wrote that “[w]e were in control of the narrative that was being shaped about our experiences with citizens and criminals. It was up to us to write in such a way that made us out to be the heroes and whoever we were dealing with as the villains. Even a casual observer of the relationships between police and civilians, particularly civilians of color, can see how this type of mindset can lead to trouble.”
THE
OFFICERS
As discussed in the Media section, the names of officers who reportedly killed or were otherwise involved in incidents of Fatal State Violence can be hard to come by. This section serves to shed light on the many men and women alleged to have taken lives while serving as police officers in the St. Louis region.

A basic understanding of St. Louis geography provides context to better understand the many challenges to accessing information on officers reportedly involved in FSV incidents. In 2014, Patrick Gauen, former Public Safety Editor of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, wrote:

What did it mean to have policing divided among 123 jurisdictions in the six counties of metropolitan St. Louis? Eleven years ago, Post-Dispatch reporters Heather Ratcliffe and Trisha L. Howard, and photographers Andrew Cutraro and David Carson, spent six months finding out.

Backed by a crew of graphic artists and editors, they delivered a five-part series called “The Law in Disorder,” which ran Nov. 30–Dec. 3, plus Dec. 7, 2003. It described a disjointed law enforcement system fraught with understaffing, unqualified or unfit officers and a scarcity of professional standards and policies. Ratcliffe, Howard and Cutraro have moved on to other pursuits. But many of the problems they identified remain, and provide valuable context in the debate over the Aug. 9 killing of Michael Brown by Ferguson Officer Darren Wilson.⁵⁸

The “law in disorder” across the St. Louis landscape has been a historic issue. Across the four neighboring counties we researched, there are currently 87 law enforcement agencies.⁵⁹

The patchwork of jurisdictions further complicates the efficacy of obtaining thorough records on not only police killings and culpable police, but in-custody jail deaths. Requesting records is a detailed, lengthy and sometimes expensive process that does not always guarantee complete information. Additionally, as highlighted in the Media section, individual names of State employees are rarely made public in news media reports.
While this report defines Fatal State Violence as both police killings and in-custody jail deaths, our research to create a database of implicated officers focused on police killings alone due to limited resources and the challenges inherent today in accessing public records. Our hope is to include additional research covering in-custody jail deaths in future reports.

Based on our research, the names of many of the officers reportedly responsible have not been publicly released even up to ten years after an incident of Fatal State Violence. Acquiring these names without formally requesting the original police records is, in many cases, impossible. Under Missouri’s Sunshine Law, we attempted to request fatal incident records from nine police departments across the St. Louis metro area and began tracking officers who are responsible for incidents of Fatal State Violence. Of those police departments, we received records from six agencies, and one agency, St. Ann’s Police Department, just never responded.

Noting the difficulty of ascertaining accurate, complete details on FSV incidents, our team poured through records available online via Fatal Encounters, Washington Post’s Fatal Force, and The Guardian’s The Counted. While these directories provide more information and transparency than there has been in the past, there are still limitations. For example, The Counted is limited to findings from 2015 and 2016, and Fatal Force only includes fatal police shootings, not fatal vehicle crashes.

LaShonda White

In August 2010, Lashonda White was killed in a car crash after her family had gone to a Family Dollar store in Hazelwood, MO to get fabric softener and detergent. After leaving the store, Ms. White, Anthony Minor, and their two children were chased by Hazelwood police. Someone had called 911, alleging the family had stolen $40.50 of laundry products. The family’s car crashed during the chase, tragically killing Ms. White, who was 35.

**Ms. White’s death was not on ACD’s radar until we sunshined records and read the incident report in detail**

Our team researched digital news reports on FSV through NewsBank and online news searches. Given the issues previously outlined in the Media section, part of our methodology involved puzzling together pieces of information to build on and verify the records we have made public. To decipher some information on individual police officers, our team looked through USA Today’s Police Discipline Records, employment...
information published by the Post-Dispatch, and data available through P.O.S.T., a regulatory program with responsibility for licensing law enforcement officers in the State of Missouri.\textsuperscript{61}

While we were able to generate key findings in the section below, more investigation needs to be done in this area, particularly identifying police and correctional officers reportedly responsible for deaths of people and their professional and legal outcomes. Additionally, work is needed to further identify in-custody jail deaths within municipal jails throughout the region as well as jail staff allegedly implicated in these fatalities.
We found names of 80 different officers reported to be directly involved in the deaths of people in the St. Louis region. They include officers who reportedly engaged in vehicular chases to the death, officers who shot and killed, officers who tased people to death, and even an officer who pushed a man down the stairs to his death.

Given the challenge with compiling data on the demographics and accountability of officers, this section provides a general overview of outcomes using narratives about different officers.

**Repeat FSV Incidents**

One of the more disturbing findings from this research was the identification of at least six officers alleged to be involved in multiple FSV incidents.

**Charles Woodcock**

Woodcock’s first reported FSV incident was the killing of 19-year-old Jordan Walls in March 2012. Along with five other SLMPD officers, Woodcock allegedly responded to a call of a shooting at the 4900 block of Terry Avenue in St. Louis. The officers were told that someone driving a gold car was responsible for the shooting. The officers chased down the gold car and—according to the police report—when the two men inside got out of the car armed, the police started shooting, supposedly fearing for their safety. Jordan Walls died from the gunshots, while the other man was later treated for a gunshot wound and charged with Felony Resisting Arrest, among other charges.

Woodcock’s second FSV incident was the death of Terence Anderson. Anderson allegedly killed his estranged girlfriend and was caught by Woodcock and Officer LaFeal Lawshea while trying to drive away. The officers claim Anderson raised his gun about 20 feet away from where they were stopped behind him. They fired several shots at him, and then Anderson shot himself.

**Mark McMurry**

McMurry along with five other officers were reportedly involved in the killing of Jordan Walls in March 2012.

McMurry’s second FSV incident was in October 2013. McMurry was with a group of officers responding to a call about a man standing outside on the street with a semiautomatic rifle. The man, Damon Cortez Hall, ran as the officers converged around him. According to the police report, officers claimed that Hall pointed the gun at them, and “fearing for their lives” they shot him dead in the street.

**Jason Chambers**

On January 17, 2012, Deandra Pye allegedly “brandished” a gun toward the front of a store. According to local news reporting, the police officers—including Jason Chambers—
thought they were interrupting a robbery or assault when they ordered Pye to stop and surrender. When Pye turned around, the officers alleged he pointed the gun at them, so they began shooting at him. They kept shooting as he ran away, eventually killing him.

A little over a year later— on April 24, 2013— Chambers chased down and killed Cary Ball, Jr. Cary’s mother, Toni Taylor, would later share her story for this report.

Rich Berry

Both FSV deaths involving Rich Berry were reportedly the result of vehicle chases. In August 2010, he chased down Anthony Minor after receiving a 911 call. Minor’s crime was stealing “$40.50 in fabric softener and laundry detergent from a Family Dollar Store in Hazelwood.” Unfortunately, Minor’s children and the mother of his children were also in the car when he crashed, killing the mother, Lashonda White.

Two years later, another passenger of a car being chased by Berry and other officers died when the car crashed – Ricky Nelson.

Kyle Chandler

On December 12, 2009, Kyle Chandler and other officers responded to a call of a burglary happening at what would later be identified as the apartment of Antonio Hogans. When Hogans allegedly came out into an alleyway with his gun where Chandler and the other officers had recently arrived, they shot him dead. Police claimed they believed he was about to fire at them.

In 2015, Chandler was named as the officer who fired the fatal shot that killed 18-year-old Mansur Ball-Bey. Ball-Bey was killed when officers came to serve a warrant at a home in the Fountain Park neighborhood of St. Louis. While the officers alleged Ball-Bey “brandished a gun at them after he fled,” a later lawsuit by the family alleged that he was unarmed and shot in the back while he ran away.

Matthew Karnowski

The killing of Harold Bobbitt was Officer Karnowski’s first known FSV incident. It was 2009 and Bobbitt was “wanted on assault and unlawful use of weapon charges” when he was spotted by Karnowski and other officers. The officers chased Bobbitt in his vehicle and, after he tried to run on foot, shot Bobbitt dead after he allegedly “turned and pointed a gun toward pursuing Detectives.”

That same year, Karnowski along with another officer shot and killed Jeremiah C. Henderson and Darrell H. Williams, Jr. The officers had reportedly chased the two men, resulting in a crash where the car turned over. The officers alleged that the two men reached for weapons while in the overturned car and the officers shot them dead. The two families filed a lawsuit alleging that Karnowski and the other officer “opened fire on the helpless and immobile occupants of the said automobile with their pistols like shooting fish in a barrel.”

The case filed by Williams’ family members highlights the challenges surviving families can face using the civil legal system. In January 2010, Williams’ grandmother filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the officers who killed her grandson. However, under Missouri law, his grandmother did not have the right to file the lawsuit since Williams’ parents were both alive (even though they were both incarcerated at the time). In 2014, Williams’ grandmother voluntarily dismissed her case and his mother filed a lawsuit. The defendant officers claimed that the statute of limitations had passed on the mother’s suit and the courts agreed.
Generally, a Missouri law called the “savings statute” would have allowed the mother’s suit to move forward, but the law did not apply since Williams’ mother was not party to the grandmother’s lawsuit and the grandmother did not have a right to file the suit in the first place.

Williams’ father eventually filed a lawsuit from prison claiming that his due process rights were violated by not being able to intervene and join the lawsuit. He asked to be allowed to file a new lawsuit against the officers. His case was appealed all the way to the Missouri Supreme Court after the lower court agreed that his due process rights had been violated. The Missouri Supreme Court dismissed his case because, among other things, he failed to send his letters asking to intervene to the officers as required under Missouri’s rules. While the Missouri Supreme Court recognized the case as “tragic” it decided against the father based on these procedural technicalities.

### Criminal Cases

**SPECIAL NOTE:**
ArchCity Defenders is committed to revolutionary justice. We believe that the law is not the final arbiter of justice, and in our work with clients, partners, and each other, we strive toward abolition—meaning we believe in fighting for a world without prisons, police, and other systems of punishment, incarceration, and State violence. This includes the system of criminal prosecution. However, there are limited alternatives for accountability of State actors in the current system, and for many, the criminal legal system has been a primary means through which families and communities struck by FSV have sought accountability. Accordingly, we share what we have learned about the ways officers are or, more accurately, are not held accountable under the criminal legal system in St. Louis.

In St. Louis, like the rest of the country, police officers who have killed people are rarely charged, let alone convicted of criminal charges. Philip Stinson, researcher and author of *Criminology Explains Police Violence*, writes on the national context:

“By my count, in the past fifteen years there have been 107 nonfederal sworn law enforcement officers who have been charged with murder or manslaughter resulting from an on-duty shooting. Of those 107 officers, to date only 38 have been convicted of a crime (16 by guilty plea, 22 by jury trial, and none convicted by a bench trial). In cases where an officer has been convicted, it is often for a lesser offense and only four officers have been convicted of murder as a result of one of these on-duty police shootings. The criminal cases for 46 of the officers ended in a non-conviction: 24 were acquitted at a jury trial, eight were acquitted at a bench trial, four cases were dismissed by a judge, eight cases were dismissed by a prosecutor, one officer received a deferred adjudication, and in one instance no true bill was returned from a grand jury. The criminal cases for 23 of the officers are still pending today.

Within the ten–year time frame of this report, we were able to identify only three officers in the St. Louis region who were criminally charged, convicted, and incarcerated as a result of killing someone.
Christine Miller

In March 2009, Christine Miller, a Sunset Hills police officer at the time, drunkenly hit another car, killing Satya Chinta, Anitha Veerapaneni, Anusha Anomulu, Priya Muppavarapu—who were all in their 20s—, and seriously injuring a fifth. Miller was charged with and pleaded guilty to four counts of involuntary manslaughter, plus one count of second-degree assault for injuring a fifth person in the car. She was sentenced to eight years in prison in March 2011.

Andrew Ringeisen

In March 2010, former Overland police officer Andrew Ringeisen pushed Ken Hamilton, a 49-year-old white man, down a flight of steps, which resulted in his death. Ringeisen was charged with involuntary manslaughter before the end of March, pleaded guilty in May 2011, and was sentenced to three years in prison in June 2011.

Nathaniel Hendren

In January 2019, former SLMPD officer Nathaniel Hendren fatally shot fellow officer Katlyn Alix in a game of Russian roulette while he was on duty. Hendren pleaded guilty to first-degree involuntary manslaughter and armed criminal action in February 2020 and was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

While our research identified criminal investigations and indictments of some officers, more work is needed to track this information. Familiar to many St. Louisans are the criminal legal trajectories of two well-known officers who killed, Darren Wilson and Jason Stockley.

In November 2014, former St. Louis Prosecuting Attorney Bob McCulloch announced that a grand jury would not bring charges against Darren Wilson, former Ferguson police officer who killed Michael Brown in August 2014. The non-indictment influenced the long trajectory of the Ferguson uprising, as hundreds and thousands of people continued to protest the injustice of Brown’s death and the systemic devaluation of Black lives. In the 2018 election, Wesley Bell defeated McCulloch, ousting him from his 27-year position, following significant activist and community outcry about McCulloch’s handling of the Brown/Wilson grand jury. In July 2020, Bell again announced no charges would be brought against Wilson.

For many, this news has unearthed painful memories and reopened still-unhealed wounds. In a moment during which many thousands of people are taking to the streets to demand we build a society in which Black lives matter, we are reminded yet again that all too often, in the eyes of our criminal legal system, they do not.

— excerpt from statement released by ArchCity Defenders and partners following Wesley Bell’s announcement.
In December 2011, former SLMPD officer Jason Stockley killed Anthony Lamar Smith, a 24-year-old Black man and father. Stockley was charged with first degree murder in May 2016, with a $1 million bail which was reduced to 10 percent and paid by the St. Louis Police Officers Association. In September 2017, a federal judge acquitted Stockley for killing Anthony Lamar Smith. In a widely circulated audio clip of a dispatch call moments before Stockley shot and killed Smith, Stockley was reported saying, “I’m going to kill this mother******, don’t you know it.”

Civil Cases

Outside of criminal prosecution, families also seek accountability through civil lawsuits. While it is impossible to place a value on a lost life, civil lawsuits provide surviving family members an opportunity to recover monetary damages for their loved one’s lost life. Civil lawsuits also create the opportunity for policy change – such as the recent settlement in the case of the killing of Breonna Taylor. The city of Louisville, Kentucky not only paid out one of the largest settlements in recent history— $12 million dollars— but also agreed to 12 different reforms purportedly to prevent future killings.

From our work with surviving families, we have found that it can be challenging to find private attorneys to take cases following a killing in St. Louis. Even when families can find an attorney, the cases are exceptionally challenging to win, given Supreme Court precedent and special protections, like the doctrine of qualified immunity, that work to keep officers from being held accountable in civil lawsuits. The following provides examples from some families in the St. Louis area.

Lamont Aikens

Lashanna Snipes was killed when a 16-year-old driver, being chased by auxiliary officer Lamont Aikens and Sgt. Janet Riley of Uplands Park Police Department, hit her car. The officers were allegedly pursuing Derion Henderson for alleged speeding. The officers initially claimed they stopped the chase at St. Louis Avenue. However, witness statements contradicted the police version of events. Aikens and Riley later said they resumed the chase after Henderson hit a witness’ car. An attorney for Snipes’s family said that claim was only made after the officers learned of the witness statement. Henderson, who was sentenced to 17 years after pleading guilty to second-degree murder and vehicle tampering, said the police cruiser bumped him from behind, sending him into Snipes’s car. Prosecutors charged Aikens with acting as a police officer without a valid license, a misdemeanor. In 2013, Circuit Judge Dennis Smith acquitted Aikens. In June 2012, a St. Louis jury returned a $3.1 million verdict against Uplands Park for Snipes’s death.

Brian Kaminski and Michael White

In September 2011, Jason Moore (31) was experiencing a mental health episode when he was reportedly held and tased to death by Michael White and Brian Kaminski, both Ferguson police officers at the time. Details on the legal outcome and the actions of Kaminski and White are described above in the Stories from St. Louis Families section.

Matthew Karnowski and Paul Piatechek

In February 2009, 23-year-old Harold Bobbitt was shot and killed by SLMPD officers, including Matthew Karnowski.
Darrell Williams, Jr. (21) and Jeremiah Henderson (26) were reportedly shot and killed by Paul Piatchek and Matthew Karnowski in November 2009. Neither officer faced disciplinary action or criminal charges. As previously discussed, Mr. Henderson’s family tried to file wrongful death lawsuits against the officers that all eventually failed, largely due to technicalities. Karnowski was hired by SLMPD on July 11, 2005 and, as of August 2020, is a Sergeant. Piatchek retired as a Lieutenant with SLMPD in September 2019 after more than twenty years on the force. He currently works for Emerson’s Uniformed Security Division.

Decommission

Of the 80 officers who reportedly killed people, only two had their license revoked—Christine Miller and Don McGhee—based on available P.O.S.T. data.

Christine Miller
Refer to the Criminal Cases section for more information on Miller.

Don McGhee
Don McGhee, a former SLMPD officer, was off duty when he reportedly shot at 28-year-old Terrell Beasley on December 19, 2014. Hours later, Beasley’s body was found in a burning car. In April 2015, McGhee pleaded guilty to conspiracy to possess a firearm in relation to a drug trafficking crime, and was sentenced to two years in prison in June.

Officer Tracking: the “St. Louis Shuffle”

Back in 2003, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported about a phenomenon it called the “muni shuffle.” According to the Post-Dispatch, numerous officers with histories of violence and other complaints would bounce from St. Louis municipality to municipality. The following narratives highlight examples of officers who found new homes after voluntarily leaving one department or being fired subsequent to killing someone.

Ellis Brown
Ellis Brown, a police officer with the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, reportedly killed Kajieme Powell on August 19, 2014. In 2017, he was allowed to resign by Chief Dotson after chasing a vehicle and failing to aid the occupants after the vehicle caught fire. He was hired by St. Ann, Missouri Police Department on February 16, 2017, and is currently a Sergeant.

Jonathan Foote
Former SLMPD officer Jonathan Foote reportedly resigned after he initiated a traffic stop that ended in a fatal crash in which a bystander was killed. According to reporting by the Post-Dispatch, St. Louis police policy forbids officers from chasing suspects except for serious felonies. He was hired by St. Ann PD in June 2019 within two weeks of his resignation from SLMPD. Foote worked in the detective division while employed with the St. Ann PD. Today, he is reportedly “no longer a police officer in Missouri.”

Mark Jakob and Alex Malloy
Mark Jakob and Alex Malloy are former
St. Louis County police officers accused of lying to superiors about an August 2018 police chase that ended in the deaths of Mikel Neil, Sr. and Townsal Woolfolk. According to news reports, “the department first told the media that officers never chased the car, keeping with department policy to chase only for major offenses. But surveillance video released by activists showed the officers speeding after the vehicle and prompted an investigation and a Missouri Highway Patrol report.” Jakob and Malloy were fired “for misleading investigators about a deadly chase” in November 2018. Jakob was hired in January 2019 as a patrolman in St. Ann, but left the department after a few months.

James Little
Little worked as a St. Louis police officer from 2002 to 2007. SLMPD said he left for personal reasons. In 2011, Little, a Beverly Hills police officer at the time, was off duty when he reportedly shot and killed Jaleel Jackson, a 16-year-old who was allegedly trying to enter Little’s home. After the incident, Little faced no disciplinary action, and the Beverly Hills police department released a statement that lauded his “exemplary performance” with the department and said he had not been involved in any other shootings. Little’s killing of Jackson was deemed a “justifiable homicide,” citing Missouri’s “castle doctrine” law which passed in 2007. In 2013, Little was working as a security officer for Metro and as a reserve officer in Pagedale when he reportedly shot and killed his ex-girlfriend’s fiancé, William Dupree. In 2015, he was acquitted of murdering Dupree.
TAKEAWAYS:
NOT A “BAD APPLE” PROBLEM

The systemic lack of consequences and accountability among officers as well as the difficulty of identifying officers involved in incidents demonstrates the culture of insulation within St. Louis area police departments, jails, and prisons. Failing to hold individuals accountable for incidents of Fatal State Violence sends a message of immunity to State officers and bolsters the power of police over the community, allowing unjust and violent policing to persist unchecked.

Fatal State Violence is not the result of a few “bad apples.” In Against Innocence: Race, Gender, and the Politics of Safety, Jackie Wang notes that “posing the issue in terms of personal prejudice feeds the fallacy of racism as an individual intention, feeling or personal prejudice, though there is certainly a psychological and affective dimension of racism that exceeds the individual in that it is shaped by social norms and media representations.”¹³³ The frequency of deaths at the hands of the State can only be adequately addressed when understood as a systemic problem.

Former St. Louis police officer Terrell Carter similarly speaks about the culture of insulation and defensiveness within police departments. “If you decide to do what's right,” he says, “you do it at your own peril because if you bring one person down, it’s likely that others will do anything they can to protect themselves and the system that’s currently in place.”¹³⁴ This culture of insulation must be acknowledged if Fatal State Violence is to be extinguished and the perpetual assault on communities of color halted. In order for that to happen, however, State officials at every level must be visibly held accountable and their violent actions must be exposed and condemned by their superiors, their peers, and the public.
In a 2017 report, Law for Black Lives documented how over the last 30 years, national and local governments have dramatically increased their spending on criminalization, policing, and mass incarceration while drastically cutting investments in basic infrastructure and slowing investment in social safety net programs. Despite media scrutiny and federal investigation, the St. Louis County Police Department budget has increased by 45 percent since Michael Brown’s death.

For this section, we focus on the cost of policing for the most lethal police department in this report, SLMPD in St. Louis City.

The City’s budget for Fiscal Year 2021 is approximately $1.1 billion, and derives from local taxes, fees, grants and contracts. Taxpayers mainly contribute to the General Fund (GF) portion of the City’s budget, which totals $481.6 million and is allocated to departments and services. Of the $481.6 million, the City invests $172.3 million from the GF budget on policing. A majority of these funds come through the “Public Safety” Department and finance SLMPD, the police pension fund, City Marshals, and Park Rangers. General Fund dollars from the General Government and Board of Public Service Departments finance the City Counselor – Police Unit and Facilities Management and Equipment Services respectively.

In a City of approximately 300,000 people, the City budgets for 1,871 full time positions within the police department—essentially creating a landscape in which there’s one SLMPD employee to 160 residents.
To put this in perspective, findings from Governing’s calculation of 2016 FBI Uniform Crime Reporting data on cities with populations exceeding 200,000–500,000 residents averages 24.5 police to 10,000 residents; however, given St. Louis City figures, the ratio reflects 62 police to 10,000 residents.

With the budget and personnel so weighted on policing, there is far less money allocated to basic services and resources to combat systemic issues like poverty, racism, and segregation. From the City’s General Fund budget, $1.3 million is allocated to the “Human Services” Department, and $0 is allocated to Homeless services.

This over-funding of policing, rather than funding basic services, subsidizes the proclivity for State violence that has fatal consequences, particularly for people with marginalized identities. For example, research by the Treatment Advocacy Center found that “[p]eople with untreated mental illness are 16 times more likely to be killed during a police encounter than other civilians approached or stopped by law enforcement.”

Julius "Jules" Graves

In 2006, Julius “Jules” Graves was pepper-sprayed, shocked with a Taser and beaten by police during a mental health crisis. He ended up in the ICU, then jail, charged with assaulting officers. The incident so shocked and outraged mental health advocates that they demanded changes in the way police interact with the mentally ill. And they thought they had a deal.

But in the nearly 13 years that followed, Graves was arrested at least twice more and shocked at least five more times with a Taser. He was jailed four times, and involuntarily hospitalized seven times as his caregivers struggled to keep him on antipsychotic medication.

Graves’ final encounter with police, on April 13, 2019, led to up to three more Taser shocks, a struggle with police and the forced medication of Graves with a sedative and an antipsychotic drug.

- St. Louis Post-Dispatch, September 2019
CONCLUSIONS & TAKEAWAYS

GENERAL
The problem of systemic racism and brutality in policing is twofold. On the one hand, it dehumanizes and destroys the lives of so many of society’s most vulnerable individuals and families. On the other hand, it also prevents the collection of data necessary to combat it because police themselves record, classify, and control access to pertinent information. This report takes an important step toward addressing these problems. It builds on a growing body of research aimed at making information about Fatal State Violence more accessible to the public. While there is still much to learn, the findings reported above help to illustrate the kind of data collection efforts that can better educate public audiences, aid the work of advocates and activists, and bring about more accountability.

More broadly, this report provides a new, panoramic view on the problem of Fatal State Violence in St. Louis. Given the lack of research on this topic, the records that exist are mostly police reports and media accounts. Both of these types of records decontextualize violent police encounters, capturing the picture of Fatal State Violence in a single, distorted frame. The findings reported here, however, demonstrate why we need to more thoughtfully consider the issue of Fatal State Violence. We must examine how fatal police encounters set off a chain of events that ripple through the lives of affected families, shield police from meaningful consequences, and ultimately ensure that the process repeats itself and ensnares new victims.

This report also sheds light on the daily work undertaken by ArchCity Defenders. As a holistic legal advocacy organization, ACD concerns itself not only with formal legal representation around specific incidents of State violence, but also in helping clients to navigate the equally-dehumanizing relationships and processes that they encounter outside the courtroom. We welcome your support of this mission, as it sustains ACD’s ability to carry out this panoramic vision of legal advocacy on a sustainable basis.

FOR SPECIFIC AUDIENCES
Advocates/Activists
This report’s findings can inform the strategies taken up by advocates and activists who serve communities affected by fatal police violence. One implication is that fatal police encounters are as much a starting point as an end point. Affected families need considerable support not only in managing grief, but also in navigating the aftermath of these incidents—from speaking to the media to accessing information from police departments and medical authorities. Given our findings, ACD is working with local activist organizations, Faith for Justice and the Coalition Against Police Crimes and Repression (CAPCR), to revamp CAPCR’s rapid response program to train and mobilize teams who can quickly handle these challenges.
Policymakers/Officials
This report’s findings can also better inform the decisions of policymakers and officials. These findings reveal that impunity is built into the policing system and fuels a repeating cycle of oppression against communities of color. Until police are held accountable, and prevented from easily being shuffled into new jobs and jurisdictions, other reform strategies will prove ineffective. Budgeting for public resources must be done in a way that both re-envisions public safety and ceases unquestioning investment into policing.

Researchers/Data Analysts
Finally, these findings can also guide the activities of researchers and analysts. Most existing studies highlight either the determinants of police brutality – or, more rarely, Fatal State Violence – or its various effects at the individual and neighborhood levels. This report shows how these effects are rooted in an ecology of relationships and processes that involve more than just the offending police officer. By sketching out this ecology, our findings provide a map to guide data collection efforts. More research is needed, for example, on the interactions between affected families and media professionals, between affected families and police bureaucracies, and also the dynamics of how police are shuffled into new jobs and jurisdictions. Further research can help us to understand what kinds of advocacy tactics and policy options will be most effective in addressing these problems. Additionally, this report also suggests certain areas where researchers may be helpful to the advocates and activists who serve affected communities, such as filing records requests to obtain medical information about deceased loved ones.
CALL TO ACTION

This report represents ACD’s preliminary findings on the issue of Fatal State Violence in St. Louis. As an organization dedicated to addressing state violence and the criminalization of poverty, we see it as our duty to support the families of those killed by the State and to collaborate with others to realize a different future, characterized by a system of public safety that does not kill those it has sworn to protect. We do not have all the answers, but we are committed to finding them in concert with others. We hope you join us on this journey.

You can reach us via email at stateviolence@archcitydefenders.org and can learn more at our website archcitydefenders.org/fatalstateviolence. To follow this conversation on social media, use #JusticeforThemAll and #fatalstateviolenceSTL.

Have you lost a loved one to Fatal State Violence? If you have, and wish to get in contact with us, email stateviolence@archcitydefenders.org

2 An electronic copy of ACTION’s report was provided by historian Mark Loehr, Missouri Historical Society. A copy of the report is on file with ArchCity Defenders.


This report purposely uses the term “killing by police” and phrases like “officers who kill” in an effort to shift to using plain language rather than the euphemisms of “officer-involved shooting” or other terms originating in media and law enforcement terminology. As others have noted, the use of “officer-involved” obfuscates the actual event, namely the taking of a person’s life by the actions of a law enforcement officer. To the extent the term “officer-involved” is relevant – for example when officers were merely on the scene of a killing by another officer instead of actually pulling the trigger – this report will use the term.


Carol D. Leonnig and Kimberly Kindy, ‘At least 5 Ferguson officers apart from Brown shooter have been named in lawsuits’, The Washington Post, 30 August 2014 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/at-least-6-ferguson-officers-apart-from-brown-shooter-have-been-named-in-lawsuits/2014/08/30/535f7142-2c96-11e4-bb9b-997ae96fad33_story.html>.


³⁰ archcitydefenders.org/fatalstateviolence.


³² Some initial news reports by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch indicated the victim’s race as unknown. After cross referencing the data with records we’d requested and received, we still were unable to determine the race of 10 people killed by police from 2009–2019.


After Two Years, Close the Workhouse Campaign Is Victorious as St. Louis City Government Votes to Shutter Notorious ‘Workhouse’ Jail in 2020 (Close the Workhouse Campaign, 17 July 2020) <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ada6072372b96dbbb234ee99/t/5f120f1eb483cb5dd94e9c/1595019038312/CtW+VOTE+-+Press+Release+-+Draft+%281%29.pdf>.

Close the Workhouse Campaign Calls on Lyda Krewson, Lewis Reed, and the Board of Aldermen to Make Good on Their Promise (Close the Workhouse Campaign, 20 November 2020) <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ada6072372b96dbbb234ee99/t/5fb829706233b3512c8cf4ee/1605904753103/>.


St. Louis Post-Dispatch was studied because it has the largest newspaper circulation in the region.

Special thanks to Emma Klahr, who led this research. Emma is a 2020 graduate of the University of Cambridge with a degree in English Literature.


ibid.

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57 Terrell Carter, Police on a Pedestal: Responsible Policing in a Culture of Worship (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2019); ‘In Latest Book, Former St. Louis Cop Writes How Problems with Cops Starts with the Stories They Tell’, The St. Louis American, 10 July 2019 <http://www.stlamerican.com/entertainment/living_it/in-latest-book-former-st-louis-cop-writes-how-problems/article_fe1c0ff6-a30c-11e9-b241-971e810fe3dd.html?bclid=1wAR3hVf0z9ScieieK4m01_GYp-_NwzguwZeiVAgcGONMIj-1fr8EqsMgqo>.


63 St. Louis Metropolitan Police Incident Report, CN 12–012534, p. 10 (on file with ArchCity Defenders).


65 St. Louis Metropolitan Police Incident Report, CN 13–010561 (on file with ArchCity Defenders).

66 St. Louis Metropolitan Police Incident Report, CN 12–012534, p.10 (on file with ArchCity Defenders).


68 St. Louis Metropolitan Police Incident Report, CN 13–053873 (on file with ArchCity Defenders).


70 St. Louis Metropolitan Police Incident Report, CN 12–002692 (on file with ArchCity Defenders).


ENDNOTES
Hazelwood Police Department, Missouri Uniform Accident Report, 2010–03202 (on file with ArchCity Defenders).


St. Louis Metropolitan Police Incident Report, CN 09–082799 (on file with ArchCity Defenders).


ibid.


St. Louis Metropolitan Police Incident Report, CN 09–008840 (on file with ArchCity Defenders).

St. Louis Metropolitan Police Incident Report, CN 09–073939 (on file with ArchCity Defenders).


ibid.


ibid.


ENDNOTES
ENDNOTES
ibid.


109 ibid.


116 ibid.


119 ibid.

120 ibid.

121 ibid.

122 ibid.
