

**When Black lives don't matter**

**THE DPD CHOICE: TO APPREHEND OR TO KILL**

MOURNING BROTHER HAKIM LITTLETON

By Gloria Aneb House

**Excessive police force**

Excessive police force – a long-standing characteristic of the Detroit Police Department (DPD), and one of the reasons the Department was brought under 13 years of federal monitoring. Another instance of excessive force by the DPD on July 10, and another young man is dead. No future for this young man, in which he might have grown into maturity, perhaps created a family and a fulfilling life in the city of his birth.

A 19-year old -- disoriented, irrational, possibly traumatized by the sudden appearance of the police, judgment clearly impaired – a young man digs for his gun, fires it at a policeman, is tackled by that policeman, the gun falls from the young man's hand as he is pushed to the ground. The police video shows the young man on the ground on his stomach. The gun is no longer in his reach. He is still alive. The video shows that he raises his head, appears to look around. Three police officers are standing over his body. An arrest by the police at this point would have permitted the young man to continue his life, hopefully to find better, wiser days.

**How credible is the police chief's report?**

At a press conference held July 10 at 7:30 p.m., the Detroit police chief showed three videos. In the first we see a shot fired by the young man towards policeman #1. Policeman #1 rushes the young man and tackles him to the ground. We see policeman #1 standing over the young man's body, and we see two other officers approach with their guns. Now three police officers are seen standing over the young man's body, which is flat on the ground. At this moment, there is no threat to the officers. The young man has dropped his gun during the tackle. The three officers are capable now of restraining him, pulling him up from the ground and carrying out an arrest. The young man is still alive. We see him raise his head.

What happens from that moment on? The police chief said a total of eight shots were fired in the incident, four by the young man and a total of four by the three officers. When did the policemen fire those shots, from what angle, what range? When and how might the young man have fired four shots, since he dropped the gun as he was being tackled? How credible is the police chief's report concerning the number of shots fired and by whom? Given the police legacy of misinformation and cover-ups of misconduct, let's wait for an impartial investigation and the facts about how many shots were fired, when and by whom.

**A Black life that didn't matter to the DPD**

At what point is the young man first struck by a gunshot? Was he shot as he was falling from the tackle? Was he shot by officers at close range after he fell and was lying there on the ground? Was he shot in the back? Where was he struck, how many times? Perhaps an autopsy will answer these questions, but whatever the answers, what appears true according to the videos we were shown is that the young man was still alive as he lay on the ground. The three policemen involved had an option available to them other than the one they chose. Did they choose to kill rather than apprehend – someone who wasn't even the suspect they were trailing? Our community has lost yet another young Black life, and we, along with Hakim Littleton's family, are grieving deeply.

This is an opportunity for community-based legal teams and institutions to bring their expertise and clout to demanding an investigation of this killing, thereby providing support to the Littleton family, and joining with thousands in Detroit to bring an end to police killings.