

The Project News

Looking back at 2024



As we look Back at 2024 and the headlines that captured our attention. These tragic events sparked nationwide conversations and movements aimed at fostering change and justice across the country. We also reflect on our criminal justice system that continues to fail our communities by feeding this prison industrial complex with people of color.



To serve and protect



Memphis Scorpion squad

Being a complex and deeply emotional topic. There are indeed many dedicated and honorable law enforcement officers who work tirelessly to protect and serve their communities. However, it's also true that there are instances of misconduct and corruption that can undermine public trust.

It's important to acknowledge both the positive contribution and the need for accountability and reform to ensure that all officers uphold the highest standards of justice and integrity. Balancing respect for the law enforcement with a safer and more just society.

Every city has its own department of killer police officers inflicting unwanted pain and death on its citizens without justification. This cruel and dehumanizing interaction often leads to death of the victim.

Poor communities and Black and Latino people often fear the police due to a combination of historical and ongoing systemic issues. Studies have shown that Black individuals are five times more likely and Latinos four times more likely to fear police brutality compared to whites. This fear is rooted in the higher rates of police misconduct, use of force, and racial profiling experienced by these communities. Additionally, Black Americans have seen a rise in police threats and mistrust in recent years. These disparities contribute to a pervasive sense of fear and mistrust towards law enforcement among marginalized groups.

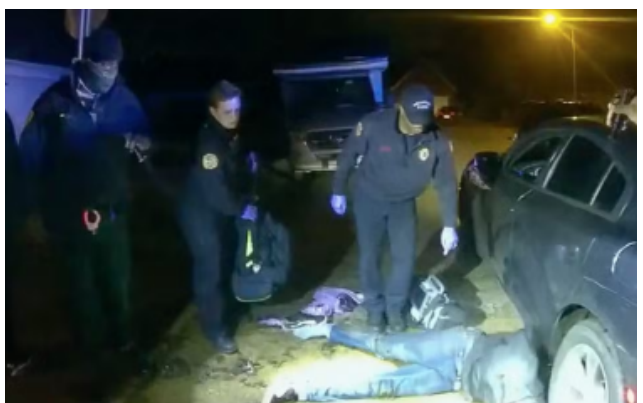
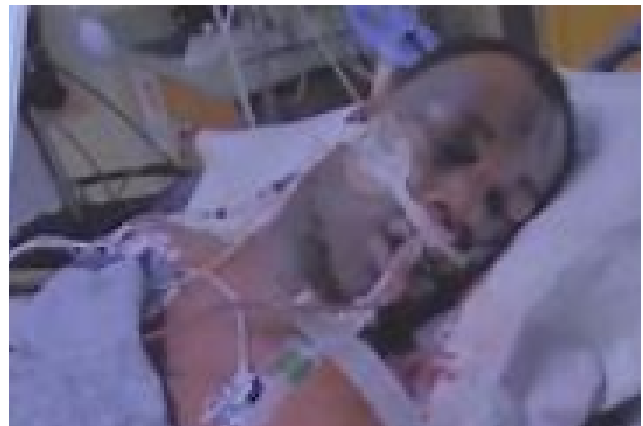
Let's revisit Memphis infamous **Killer Scorpion Squad**. *Tadarrius Bean-Demetrius Haley-Justin Smith-Emmitt Martin-Desmond Mills*. They are shown in the photo above and should always be remembered as the reason why most communities will never fully trust the police officers across the country.

Tyre Nichols

They were charged and convicted of beating Tyre Nichols to death after being stop for a traffic violation. His cries for help went unanswered. Fellow police officers that were also on the scene failed to intervene or offer medical help to Mr. Nichols during the brutal attack and attempted to cover it up after the attack. He was less than one mile from his mother's home and attempted to flee homeward but to no avail he was beat to death in the streets just blocks from his home. With his last breath he called out to his mother as he suffered punch after punch and kicks to the head and body which lead to his death.

When facing a life-and-death situation, and the outcome is known to end in death, people often call out to their mothers. This is a primal instinct embedded in us all. This same primal instinct was displayed in George Floyd's last words before his death, as he cried out for his mother.

This instinctual cry for maternal comfort and protection is deeply rooted in our human nature, reflecting our innate need for safety and reassurance in moments of extreme fear and vulnerability. It underscores the profound bond between a child and their mother, a connection that remains powerful even in the face of imminent danger.



911 - Please Help Me



Sonya Massey, a 36-year woman called for help on July 6, 2024, not knowing that she was signing her own death certificate with those who were supposed to **serve and protect**. Officer Sean Grayson, from the Sangamon County Sheriff's office entered her home with a hostile attitude, constantly yelling and giving orders to Sonya while she stayed in the kitchen, to finish cooking her meal. During their interaction, those moments escalated into fear.

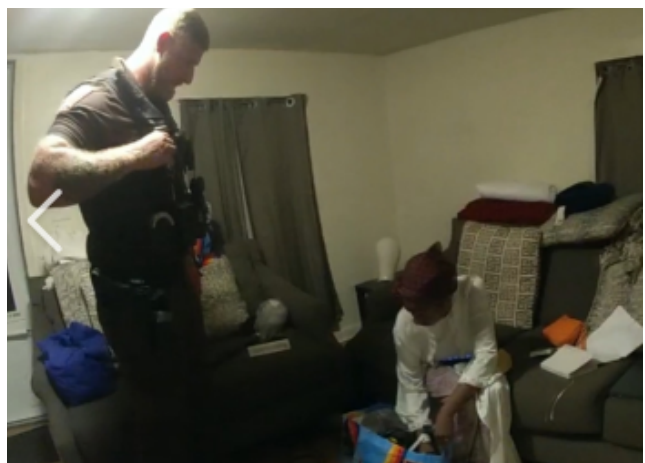
Officer Grayson, and another officer entered Sonya Massey home to make sure it was safe. Officer Grayson, continued to ask question and requested to see her identification. She replied and continued her efforts in the kitchen to cook her dinner.

Ms. Massey was later asked to remove the pot of boiling water over the stove that she was cooking her dinner. She lifted the pot off the stove and said, ***"I rebuke you in the name of Jesus"*** People often respond in this manner when the other person is acting silly for no reason in a normal setting. It's a defense tacked taken as to not fall into stupidity with the other person.

Officer Grayson threatened to shoot her and drew his service pistol. He continued to yell at Massey to drop the pot. Massey apologized and put her hands in the air. How did a call for help from a young mother to 911 turn so deadly within minutes of arriving at her home.

Looking at three stages of a deadly encounter between Massey and officer Grayson just solidifies our fears of trusting law enforcement. This pervasive fear reflects a broader social issue that requires significant reform and accountability within the justice system.

For many Black mother's, the fear is not just about the immediate safety of their kids but also, about the potential for a tragic outcome, as seen in numerous incidents where routine calls for help have ended in unnecessary violence or death. Ms. Massey circumstances leading to her death continues to echo these fears throughout our communities across the country.





This unprovoked shooting of Sonya Massey not only shakes our core of understanding our humanity as a people but also the value we place on someone's else's life. Sonya Massy was shot three times and hit in the head area.

The autopsy shows Sonya Massey was killed by a gunshot under her left eye. This sad encounter is heartfelt. This mother leaves behind a son Malachi and a daughter Summer. Her family remains shaken and find it hard accepting their personal lost under the circumstances and facts surrounding this case.



Sonya Massey



Shoot To Kill



On March 21, 2024, **Dexter Reed**, a 26-year-old African American man, was shot and killed by officers of the Chicago Police dept. (CPD) in Humble Park, Chicago. Reed allegedly had fired his illegally owned gun and injured a police officer during a traffic stop. Policer returned fire with a number of rounds at Reed striking him multiple times.



Who was Dexter Reed? As with any young man growing up in Chicago there are setbacks and adjustments for young people. He tried to make those adjustments and find his footing to become the man his family saw him to be.

He was an excellent student and love to play basketball. He graduated from Westinghouse in Chicago and attended Morton College.

As with most young gunshot victims' recovery is not a walk in the park. the healing process is physical as well as mental.

Reed had been shot in August 2021 and later started to experience **PTSD**. Other complications soon followed with short-term memory loss, slurred speech, and blindness in one eye.

On March 21,2024 Dexter Reed was pulled over for a traffic violation by plainclothes tactical unit for allegedly not wearing a seat belt but later justifying the stop by stating he had illegally tinted windows. An officer told Reed to roll down his car window. He initially did and then rolled them back up.



Excessive force is a double edge sword to shoot to kill. According to the Civilian Office of Police Accountability, Reed shot at the police during the escalation of not following orders to roll his windows back down on his vehicle.

As a result, the police officers return fire. The police officers unleashed 96 shots at Reed in a total span of 41 seconds. This aftermath resulted in Reed and four other police being taken to the hospital. Reed was shot 13 times and died from those gunshot wounds. A gun was located on the passenger's seat of Reed vehicle with 11 spent bullet casing.



Was **Shoot to kill** the correct response and justified by police officers. Over kill is an action word with deadly consequences. Looking back on the police shooting of teenager Laquan McDonald, November 24, 2015, who was shot 16 times after being stop on the streets in Chicago. Officer Jason Van Dyke was convicted of second-degree murder in the shooting and four other officers charged for covering up the shooting.

Was **shoot to kill** a deep-rooted system reaction towards young black men that continues to today. The 2024 year has been a year of tears and pain in our communities across the country. How will we correct this fear and lack of trust looking forward into 2025.



A Mother's Pain
Ms. Nicole Banks





Close All Doors



Despite numerous efforts and new legislation aimed at criminal justice reform in Illinois, significant traction has been elusive. **Legislative stagnation** seems to be the order of the day for incarcerated individuals seeking justice and freedom for 2024.

Political Resistances, regarding political justice reform often faces opposition from various political factions. 82% of all House and Senate Bills addressing criminal justice reform were defeated, and some never made it to the floor for a vote. Public perception and misinformation can also hinder reform efforts.

Here are several major **BILLS** that did not pass in the Senate and House for 2024 that would have shown mercy to the aging population within the IDOC



HB5219: This bill, proposed by Rep. Barbara Hernandez, aimed to shorten prison sentences by allowing inmates to earn a day of credit for each day served. Despite its potential to significantly reduce incarceration periods, the bill did not gain enough support to pass

SB2334: This Senate bill sought to eliminate mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent offenses. It faced strong opposition from some lawmakers and law enforcement groups, ultimately failing to advance out of committee.

SB4567: This bill proposed comprehensive police reform measures, including increased accountability and transparency in law enforcement practices. It faced significant resistance from police unions and did not make it through the legislative process.

Silence, The PRB Office



The Prison Review Board Members went silent in 2021 to 2024 and stop paroling a class of inmate that were sentence in the early 1970's. These inmates are referred to as C-Numbers inmates as a result of Illinois changing their sentencing scheme in 1978.

This class of inmates are political prisoners that has served 40 years to 60 years in prison and are now geriatric senior citizens in there 70's and 80's hoping to one day to return home to live out what time they have left with family and loved ones.

The silence and closed doors to freedom was headed by Donald Shelton during these years. The focus of the PRB was to keep all C-numbers locked up due to the political winds of Chicago politics. The year 2024 will be remembered as a vindictive year towards humanity, mercy and grace.

About The Project News

The Project News is the Newsletter for the Project Sound Off Organization. This paper was conceptualized by Johnnie Veal and created by Jocie Jackson and Jazmine Salas. We amplify news about the criminal justice system and stories from individuals affected by mass incarceration and justice impacted. We are seeking writers, photographers, and content creators to submit pieces for the Project News. Contact us at the following email address office@Projectsoundoff.org and J.Jackson@Projectsoundoff.org to get involved.