

## Three Chicago Cops Indicted for Conspiracy in Shooting of Laquan McDonald



***Summary:** Three former Chicago police officers have been charged with conspiring to cover-up the truth in the shooting death of Laquan McDonald.*

Three Chicago police officers involved in the shooting of Laquan McDonald have been indicted for allegedly conspiring to cover up for the officer responsible for shooting the 17-year-old. Officers claimed that McDonald ignored repeated calls from Van Dyke to drop the knife, posing a threat to others. Police had been called to the area after reports of someone breaking into vehicles came in. Toxicology results found PCP in McDonald's blood and urine.

Officer Jason Van Dyke's partner on the night McDonald was shot in 2014, Joseph Walsh and fellow patrol officer Thomas Gaffney, as well as detective David March, were charged with conspiracy, official misconduct, and obstruction of justice.

Special prosecutor Patricia Brown Holmes said, "The indictment makes clear that these defendants did more than merely obey an unofficial 'code of silence,' rather it alleges that they lied about what occurred to prevent independent criminal investigators from learning the truth."

Dashcam footage of the shooting showed the teen being shot 16 times as he walked away from officers while brandishing a knife in his hand. Van Dyke started shooting the moment he got out of his patrol car, not stopping when McDonald fell to the ground. Van Dyke was charged with first-degree murder in November 2015, the same day the police dashcam video was released to the public. He is still awaiting trial with a not guilty plea.

The accounts of what happened that night differed greatly between the dashcam footage and the officers. The indictment claims that the lead detective, March, as well as Walsh and Gaffney made false police reports, obstructed justice and ignored contrary evidence in an effort "to shield" Van Dyke from the criminal investigation and possible prosecution.

March has already left the department when a report by the city inspector general accused him of falsely telling the Cook County medical examiner's office that McDonald lunged at Van Dyke as well as giving other false statements. He had been with the department for over 30 years. March claimed that his own investigation determined that the officers' actions were "absolutely proper," emphasizing that the department's stance only changed after the video was released to the public.

The inspector general's investigation determined that Walsh made a number of false statements and material omissions in his interview with police and the Independent Police Review Authority. Overall the inspector general found that all three wrote up police reports just hours after the incident. Their false statements included that Van Dyke had been injured by McDonald, who was swinging a knife "in an aggressive manner."

The men are also accused of failing to find at least three witnesses that would be able to present a different version of the events. March specifically "failed to locate, identify, and preserve physical evidence ... including video and photographic evidence."

Walsh and Gaffney had been with the department for around 20 years each. Walsh has also left the department. Gaffney is "suspended because of the felony indictment, according to the department."

Holmes was appointed nearly a year ago to look into whether officers were trying to cover up or lie about Van Dyke's actions. She added, "Officer Van Dyke's case is totally separate from this case. This grand jury investigation is a totally separate grand jury investigation from Office Van Dyke's case. This case stands alone."

Do you think a "code of silence" is a norm in any job? Tell us in the comments below.

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