

Autopsy: Cops killed man, shot him in back

Special to Sentinel-Voice
NEW ORLEANS (NNPA) - A Black man killed by New Orleans police in the aftermath of Hurricane

Katrina was shot in the back, according to an autopsy report CNN obtained.

That autopsy finding appears to raise questions about

the police department's conclusion that its officer used deadly force because his life was in danger.

Danny Brumfield, 45, was

shot outside the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in the early hours of September 2, 2005, after he stepped in front of a patrol car. He

wound up on the car's hood with shears or scissors in his hand.

Police said the officer fired in self-defense. Orleans Parish District Attorney Eddie Jordan has closed out any criminal investigation, and told CNN last week that the shooting has been ruled a justifiable homicide.

According to the autopsy report, Brumfield was struck in the back of the left shoulder by a single shotgun blast that entered his body in a "back-to-front" trajectory with "little deviation from top-to-bottom."

When shown those words from the autopsy report, an attorney for Brumfield's family, Robert Jenkins, questioned the official police report that said the officer in the passenger seat of the patrol car fired when Brumfield, lying on the hood, made a stabbing motion at him through his side window.

"It almost means he [the police officer] was standing right behind him when he fired," said Jenkins, who had not seen the autopsy before. "How can he be in the car and shoot somebody in the back?"

The autopsy report's pages are ink stamped with all-capital letters, "This Document Not To Be Reproduced," at the top of each one, as well as over the pathologist's signature, which is something Jenkins says raises flags about a possible cover-up.

The report indicates that Brumfield was autopsied Sept. 12, 2005, when all autopsies of people found dead after Hurricane Katrina were being supervised by state medical examiner Dr. Louis Cataldie. It has yet to be determined whether the autopsy report was stamped by an employee in the Orleans

Parish coroner's office or by a staff member of the disaster morgue.

John Gagliano, chief investigator for the Orleans Parish coroner's office, told The Associated Press recently that the instruction is standard procedure.

"It's a legal document and should not be reproduced."

Jenkins, however, showed news reporters another autopsy report last week without the stamp on any page. "I don't think anybody has done more murder cases in this city than I have. I've never seen it," he said.

The Brumfield autopsy was released to CNN in the past several days after Jordan's office closed out its investigation of the shooting. The family has filed a civil lawsuit against the New Orleans Police Department in regard to the shooting.

Jenkins said he had asked for an autopsy report soon after the Brumfields retained him, and was told an autopsy had not been performed.

Gagliano refused to provide a copy of the report to The Associated Press, explaining that CNN "got it by court order. That's the only way we would do it, by court order."

Jordan said the only question raised by the autopsy is how Brumfield was shot in the back. The district attorney suggested that, perhaps, Brumfield was turning or falling off the patrol car at the time, but added that the case was complicated by a lack of witnesses to the shooting.

"I don't believe that autopsy alone is sufficient to create a situation where we would be able to carry our burden of proof," Jordan added.

Brumfield's daughter told CNN last week that she was

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Gangs form positive collaboration

By Leonard Sparks
Special to Sentinel-Voice
BALTIMORE (NNPA) - Clayton Guyton, director of East Baltimore's Rose Street Community Center, faces the group of 20 youths and 17 men in the day's pre-dawn darkness at a row house on E. Madison St.

On the wall behind him are drawings of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr. and Sam Cooke. Pinned to a bulletin board is an obituary for Marcus Keith McDowell, who was 16 when he was gunned down in the city on Jan. 8.

"Stop using the n-word," Guyton says, admonishing one of the youths. "The NAACP buried that word a month ago."

It is 4 a.m. and time to clean. Several days a week, East Baltimore teenagers and men in Rose Street's transitional housing program gather while most of the city sleeps to efface sidewalks and alleys of trash.

For 12 years, Rose Street

has been an alternative to the streets along the E. Monument St. corridor, streets where even at 4 a.m. drug dealers emerge from the shadows yelling "dope and coke."

"We started because there was a lot of violence in the neighborhood, shootings and homicides," Guyton said. "One particular homicide, where a young girl was sitting on the steps and she was pregnant and she got shot... that was one of the ones that really just ticked me off."

What started with the takeover of a drug corner at Rose and Ashland streets has blossomed into an after-school program, transitional housing for ex-offenders and an afternoon problem-solving group where gang members ventilate about their conflicts.

"Instead of 'you're a Blood or a Crip,' it don't mean ya'll have to shoot each other, because some of ya'll grew up with each other," Guyton said. "Whatever ya'll

got going on, let's work this out."

It's not unusual, Guyton said, for Bloods and Crips to play basketball together.

"Basically, most of them don't want it to go to that next level," he added. "I mean, they will, because they have a reputation to uphold."

Gang members are also found among the teenagers who participate in the cleaning crews.

"They're working together," Guyton said. "You keep them in each other's presence so they can communicate when there's differences. No communication, you get problems."

This morning, prayer is followed by reminders about a coming cooking contest, a funeral for a youth who was part of the program and the difficulty of finding a job while "smoking weed every night."

Afterward, the young people are paired with residents of the transitional houses. Toting garbage cans,

brooms and dustpans, they head as far south as Patterson Park Avenue and as far east as Edison Highway.

Although the pay — \$20 for a few hours work — is minimal, Guyton said the morning cleanups are as much about family.

Rose Street, he says, is a fallback when the kids are hungry or when their parents are facing eviction. The hunger, he adds, extends to a yearning for a normal family environment in the face of adult unemployment, addiction and incarcerated parents.

"They know that we're going to help them, we're going to be there for them," Guyton said. "We're like the daddy, or the uncle or the granddaddy. When they do something wrong, they know we're going to get on them. When they do something right, they know we're going to reward them. When it's their birthday, they know we're going to celebrate."

Many of the youths,
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Vote

(Continued from Page 1) drama." He continued, "[Black people] should not be so predictable in our voting pattern."

Columnist Dwayne Wickham responded to Watkins' plea for Black votes on behalf of the GOP by saying, "It is okay to be predictable in voting patterns if the candidates support the core values of your interest."

Shannon Reeves, chair of the Republican National Committee African-American Leadership Council, said he would use his newly appointed position to help bridge the divide between the GOP and African Americans.

"What's important for Black voters to know is that I am a Black Republican — not a Republican who is Black," he said.

"I'm sure there are Black people in both parties who don't want to be associated with our community," Paul Brathwaite, political commentator and entrepreneur, said the key to not having votes taken for granted "is to be involved in every issue."



Sentinel-Voice photo by Wiley Price/St. Louis American

Republican National Committee spokeswoman, Tara Wall, claims Republicans will improve in diversity as civil rights activist Rev. Al Sharpton says they should be punished.

"We have to ask, 'Where is our part of this?' on all issues."

NUL President Marc Morial moderated the panel and asked Tara Wall, director of the RNC office of public affairs, why Republican candidates' campaigns lack diversity.

She said, "Strides are being made," to make cam-

paigns more inclusive and also throughout the Republican Party.

"I'm working to make sure our campaigns are diverse. It's early. What you see now may not be the whole picture."

She said Democrats have in the past "put up wallpaper out there right before the election," and she is bringing

the message to Black voters that "we have options, we have choices."

Sharpton criticized the candidates who turned down invitations to take part in a panel on Friday, July 27.

He concluded, "I wish more GOP candidates had showed up. Those that don't show up for this competition need to be punished."

Alvin A. Reid writes for the St. Louis American.

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