

137 Shots—The Whole Damned System Is Guilty! **Cleveland Judge Lets Cop Involved in Murder of Timothy Russell and Malissa Williams Walk!**

by Carl Dix

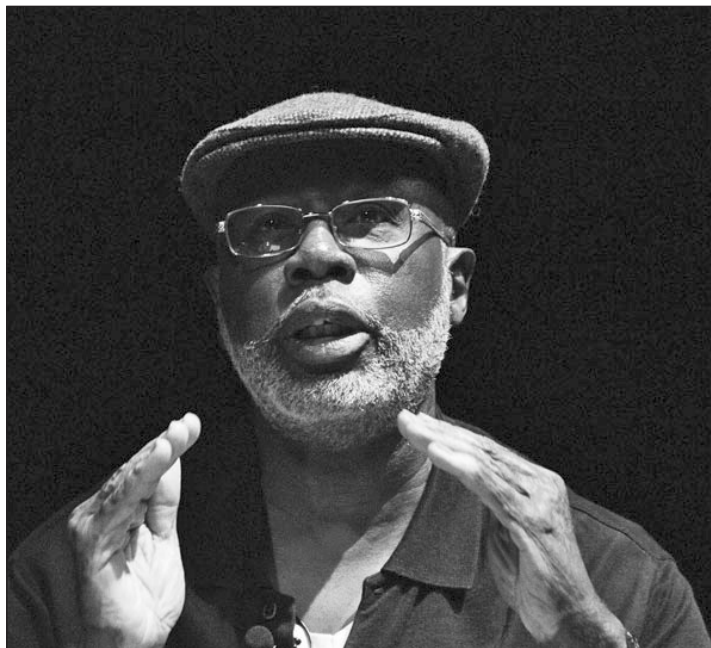
Another killer cop walks—Michael Brelo, a Cleveland cop, was pronounced not guilty on May 23 by Judge John O'Donnell. Brelo was one of about 100 Cleveland area cops who, on November 29, 2012, pursued the car Timothy Russell and Malissa Williams were in after cops heard the car backfire and decided shots had been fired at police headquarters in downtown Cleveland. He was one of 13 cops who together fired 137 shots—yes, they fired 137 shots—at Russell and Williams, who were unarmed. Brelo fired 49 shots during the chase, the last 15 of them while standing on the hood of the car.

Brelo was the only cop charged for the killing of Russell and Williams, but he was only charged with manslaughter. And now he has been exonerated.

In letting this cop walk, Judge O'Donnell drew from the playbook the system uses to exonerate killer cops again and again, AND wrote some new pages for that book. The judge accepted the magic words cops always use when they kill someone—"I was in fear for my life." In accepting this justification, the judge said this fear was reasonable because the shots fired by the other 12 cops could've led Brelo to think Williams and Russell were firing at him. (To do this, the judge had to conclude that someone in fear for their lives would reasonably climb onto the hood of the vehicle of people who were shooting at him to fire at them.)

The judge also said he couldn't convict Brelo for manslaughter because he couldn't determine beyond a reasonable doubt that either Russell or Williams would've survived if Brelo hadn't shot them. In other words, the judge let this cop get off for killing two people because other cops were also shooting them! On top of this, the prosecution put a use-of-force "expert" on the stand who testified that Brelo was wrong to shoot at Russell and Williams from the hood of their car—not because he was shooting at unarmed people, but because in doing so he was putting himself in harm's way, which may have meant that other cops would have to risk their lives to save his if he got shot!

This amounts to the system saying that its modern-day enforcers have a free rein to inflict the same kind of torture, brutality, and murder on Black people that the slave chasers used to inflict on runaway slaves.



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What can you say about a system that has cops out there who fire 137 shots at unarmed people, whose prosecutors can't build a case against these killer cops, and whose judge thinks all this is reasonable and justified?

That it's no damned good; has been around too damned long; and needs to be gotten rid of as soon as possible in the only way this can really be done—through revolution.

We should live in a world where those entrusted with public security would sooner lose their own lives than kill or injure an innocent person. It will take revolution, nothing less, to bring that world into being, and we in the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), and our leader, Bob Avakian (BA), exist to bring that revolution about.

This society gives cops the benefit of the doubt when they kill or brutalize people. All they have to do is say they were in fear for their lives, and they get a pass for their murderous deeds. Darren Wilson used this to justify the murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson. Matt Kenny, a Madison, Wisconsin, cop, used it to justify the murder of Tony Robinson. And now Brelo uses this and walks for the murder of Timothy Russell and Malissa Williams.

This is outrageous, and it must not be tolerated. City officials and “responsible leaders” have called for people to respect the judge’s ruling. NO! This ruling invites disrespect. Everybody should respond to it with scorn and outrage. In Cleveland and all across the country, if you were enraged when the cops murdered Russell and Williams, and are enraged anew by the system letting one of those killer cops walk, you need to take to the streets and deliver a clear message that these kinds of horrors will not be accepted! People have to throw themselves into building up massive, determined resistance to these horrors whenever and wherever they occur. And we must bring our outrage and determination together into a powerful and growing nationwide movement of resistance, numbering in the millions, that is aiming to STOP this shit.

And if you’ve had it with hearing again and again that cops have gotten away with murdering somebody and want to see it ended, you need to get with the movement for revolution the RCP is building. Run with us as we fight the power, and transform the people, for revolution. Watch the DVD of the dialogue between Bob Avakian (BA) and Cornel West, *REVOLUTION AND RELIGION: The Fight for Emancipation and the Role of Religion*. Get into *BASICS*, the book of quotations and short essays from the work of BA. Be part of getting ready and in position to make revolution when the time is right and bring a totally different and far better way for people to live into being.