

Death of Black Boys: At the Hands of Police

Contributed by [Leora Falk](#)

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[Thousands join Al Sharpton and Tamir Rice's mother, Samaria, at 'Justice for All' march against police violence](#)

By Sabrina Eaton

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WASHINGTON, D. C. - The mother of Cleveland police shooting victim Tamir Rice took to a national stage on Saturday to call for justice for her son and thank the nation for its support during her time of bereavement.

Samaria Rice joined family members of Michael Brown, Eric Garner and other black males who were killed by police officers to lead a Washington, D.C. march that called for government action to address police brutality. Thousands of people from across the country attended, including several busloads from Northeast Ohio.

"I have one thing to say to the police force: Don't shoot. Our children want to grow up," Rice said before the march. "And to all the families experiencing the same pain as me, we will have justice of a God of our understanding."

A Cleveland police officer fatally shot Rice's 12-year-old son, Tamir, on Nov. 22 as he played with a toy gun outside the Cudell Recreation Center. A 9-1-1 caller who reported the boy pointing a gun at people told dispatchers the [gun was "probably fake"](#) but that detail wasn't relayed to the officers who responded to the call, Timothy Loehmann and Frank Garmback.

Loehmann shot the boy moments after their police car pulled up to the gazebo where he played.

Participants in the march and rallies cited Rice's shooting and a litany of other deaths as they called for national reforms in how police officers are investigated after they use deadly force, and how information in those cases is presented to grand juries. They also urged other reforms, including use of police body cameras.

"We're not anti-police, but we're anti-brutality," Rev. Al Sharpton, who organized the march, told the crowd.

In a speech after the protesters marched down Pennsylvania Avenue, Rice cited an [autopsy report](#) released yesterday that declared her son's death a homicide. She called for arrest of the officer who shot her son, and for him to be brought before "a criminal jury so he can get the opportunity to prove his innocence."

"My son was 12 years old," she told the crowd. "Just a baby. My baby. The youngest out of four. He is here with me right now and this is what he would want me to do. I want to thank the nation and the world for the support, because that's the only way I'm standing up right now. The only way."

Rice's attorney, Walter Madison, noted that Cleveland police hired Loehmann despite an [assessment by his past employer, the Independence Police Department](#), that Loehmann's handgun performance was "dismal" and he shouldn't stay on the job.

"They hire a person with poor records in training and he deviates from all training and he escalates the situation with a small child," Madison said. "He ends up gunning down this child in 1.5 seconds. In a blink, he makes a decision to open his holster and empty bullets into the belly of this baby."

Madison accused police-friendly prosecutors of skewing evidence presented to grand juries in police brutality cases to prevent officer indictments. He called for changes in a process that he said gives police officers "paid vacations" while they're being investigated for possible felonies, that gives them long periods of time to collaborate with police union lawyers so the officer can tell his story to a grand jury "from his counsel's perspective."

Protesters at the march repeatedly chanted slogans such as "No Justice, No Peace," and "All Lives Matter, Black Lives Matter." They waved signs that pictured Tamir Rice and other black youths killed by police, including [John Crawford III](#), who was shot in a Beavercreek, Ohio, Wal-Mart as he held an air rifle he obtained from a store shelf.

A Greene County grand jury declined to charge the officers who shot Crawford, but the U.S. Department of Justice opened a civil rights investigation into the case.

Ohio Rep. Alicia Reece, a Cincinnati Democrat who heads the Ohio Legislative Black Caucus, attended the event with Crawford's family to draw attention to their plight.

"These incidents are happening across the country," said Reece. "Thousands of diverse citizens, black, white, Latino, young and old are out here marching across the country. And many have lost faith in the entire justice system."

Several busloads full of protestors from the Cleveland participated in the event.

"We're hoping this energizes and motivates us to go home and make changes in our own neighborhoods," said Rev. Michele Humphrey, the pastor of Imani United Church of Christ in Cleveland, who attended with a group from her church.

Church member Marril Boose, a personal trainer from Cleveland Heights, said he has personally experienced racial profiling many times.

"If you see a white person pulled over by police, he is treated fine," said Boose. "I'm told to get out of the car, turn the engine off and put your hands on the roof. We are all supposed to be protected and served and treated equally."

Camille White, an Akron native who who works as a doctor for a government contractor in the Washington, D.C. area, said police need to be held accountable for their actions.

"This is about the fact that murderers are getting off," added Susan Schnur of Cleveland, who attended the march with a group dedicated to the legacy of Cleveland's first African-American mayor, Carl Stokes.

"It is not all policemen," she continued. "But when these crimes happen around the country, nothing ever happens. When police officers are killed on duty, their killers get convicted. These families want justice."

Two protests took place in Greater Cleveland on Saturday, one inside the West Side Market and one outside the Beachwood Place mall. One protester outside the mall, Raven Evans, said she wanted to remind people about Tanisha Anderson, who died in police custody on Nov. 13. "People don't realize black women are being killed too," Evans said.