

## What is a Black Life Worth?

Written by Jeffrey L. Boney, Associate Editor  
Wednesday, 09 January 2013 00:00

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If you take a minute to look back on the history of African-Americans in this country, you will learn a lot about its painful past; a past that consists of the malicious murders and the deliberate neglect of a people, who endured this treatment for several centuries.

During those tragic times, the atrocities that plagued Blacks were primarily carried out by their White oppressors and slave masters.

Fast forward to 2012, and you will find that Black people no longer need the help of their White oppressors to carry out the mass genocide of its own people; they are doing a masterful job of contributing to their own demise by themselves.

### **OWN WORST ENEMY**

The U.S. Department of Justice released a report in November 2011, showing that Black people have been responsible for committing the most intraracial murders in the entire country from 1980 to 2008.

In the Bureau of Justice Statistics report entitled "Homicide Trends in the United States," statistics show that from 1980 to 2008, 93% of Black victims were killed by Black offenders.

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These statistics are startling, considering that the overall percentage of Black murder victims during that same timeframe was 47.4% and the overall percentage of Black offenders during that time was 52.5%. Blacks are disproportionately represented among homicide victims and offenders, compared to any other ethnic groups in the country.

In 2008, the homicide victimization rate for blacks (19.6 homicides per 100,000) was 6 times higher than the rate for whites (3.3 homicides per 100,000).

Most of the people who are murdered and those who are committing the murders are young Black men. Many live in inner-city neighborhoods, where poverty is a significant factor in high homicide rates, gangs and the drug epidemic.

In major cities like New York, Los Angeles, Boston and Chicago, elected officials have chosen to commit a significant number of their law enforcement professionals to police areas of their cities that have a high propensity for violent crime, in order to stem the violence.

Some cities have adopted a zero-tolerance approach to addressing and policing juvenile crimes, while others partner with community groups and churches to provide community centers and after-school programs for the youth.

Without a dedicated approach to addressing this issue, every city across this country will continue to be plagued by this epidemic.

### **LAID TO REST**

This level of violence is no respecter of persons.

Joshua Dorrell Woods, 22, was laid to rest this past Saturday, January 5th at a service held at

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Fallbrook Church in Houston, Texas.

Woods is the young African-American man who was senselessly murdered last month over some Nike Air Jordan XI 'Bred' sneakers. The shoes, which retail for about \$185.00 in the U.S., first released 11 years ago, have a retro look dating back to 2001 and had only become available to the public in the U. S. the morning that Woods was shot.

According to reports, Woods was in the passenger seat of a car driven by his friend prior to being shot by several armed gunmen. The gunmen, who were seeking to rob them, followed both men home from Willowbrook Mall after Woods and his friend purchased several pair of the shoes that morning.

After being shot, Woods managed to slide behind the steering wheel and away just before crashing the car in between two houses and hitting a gas line, according to the Harris County Sheriff's Office. Woods was taken to Houston Northwest Hospital with life-threatening injuries, where he later died as a result of the gunshot wounds.

Woods' parents and many of his family and friends attended the funeral, to pay their respects to a young man who meant so much to them. Woods' parents have relied heavily on their faith and the positive memory of their son in order to deal with this tragedy.

Woods' mother, Dazie Williams, shared her thoughts on the memory of her son and how she and her family are coping with his murder.

"Today (Monday) is the first day that I have come back to the gravesite since my son's funeral and I must admit that it was hard," said Williams. "I came with my daughter (Joshua's sister) and I know that he could feel the raindrops from our tears hitting on the top of his casket this morning. Not hearing his voice and seeing him come through my front door is going to be difficult for me to deal with."

Woods was a hard-working young Black man, who worked two jobs, one in the evening and another overnight, to take care of his family and his responsibilities. He was a responsible

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young man who was raising his 6-year old son, Javon M. D. Woods.

Dozens of employees from Joshua's two jobs were in attendance to remember their fallen colleague and to share their memories of Woods with his family and attendees.

Williams was extremely pleased at the outpouring of the support that her family and her son have received.

"I miss my son so much and I want to thank the Houston Forward Times and the entire community for everything you all have done to keep the memory of my son alive," said Williams. "Every time someone reads the article that you wrote about my son, along with all of the phone calls and positive messages that people have made concerning my son, gives us the strength that we need to carry on."

### **THREE TEENAGE SUSPECTS ARRESTED**

Prior to last week's story in the Houston Forward Times entitled "Joshua Woods....Another Life Taken over Jordans," no arrests had been made concerning Woods' murder.

Since that story ran, authorities have arrested and charged three African-American teenagers with Woods' murder.

Anthony Quinn Wade, 19, Neal Bland, 18, and Keagin Arrington, 19 have all been charged with capital murder as a result of the crime. Arrington had already been behind bars on an unrelated charge, and Bland and Wade were arrested prior to New Years Day.

According to the sheriff's office, these three young men pulled up in a green four-door car, and stopped their car directly in front of the car that Woods was in. It was at that time that one of the armed young men jumped out of their car and demanded the newly purchased shoes from both men. As a result of the melee, Woods was eventually shot and murdered.

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Police are still trying to sort out fully what happened, but we do know that all three suspects have been arrested and investigators are looking into a possible fourth suspect.

Arrington, who has admitted to being in the car that followed Woods and his friend home, appeared in court last week where Harris County Assistant District Attorney Kelli Johnson read the charges against him. While Arrington claims that he was in fact in the vehicle at the time of Woods' shooting, he claims that someone else fired the fatal shots that killed him.

According to sources, it appears that neither Woods nor his friend knew any of the three suspects.

### **CAPITAL MURDER CHARGES**

All three of the suspects have been charged with felony capital murder and appear to be providing authorities with conflicting stories, according to reports. One of the stories that investigators are still looking into involves there possibly being a possible fourth suspect, but that has not been confirmed at this time.

The only crime for which the death penalty can be assessed is capital murder, which is what all three suspects will be facing. Once the investigations are complete, the shooter and his accomplices are all viewed the same according to Texas law.

In the State of Texas, the Texas Penal Code declares that any person can be convicted of a felony, including capital murder, "as a party" to the offense under its "law of parties." "As a party" means that while a person did not personally commit the elements of the crime, he or she is still responsible for the conduct of the actual perpetrator as defined by law; which includes:

- soliciting for the act,
- encouraging the act or commission ,
- aiding the commission of the offense,
- participating in a conspiracy to commit any felony where one of the conspirators commits

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the crime of capital murder

Although a person may not have committed murder; if it is proven that a person was involved with someone else while a felony act was being committed and as a result of that felony act a murder is committed, that person can be charged with and convicted of capital murder, and thus eligible for the death penalty.

In Texas, as in any other state, people who are under 18 at the time of commission of the capital crime or are deemed mentally retarded are precluded from being given the death penalty by the Constitution of the United States.

Woods' mother is distraught behind the prospect of what these young men are facing and what their families will have to endure, but truly hopes that they will learn from their mistakes.

“Even though they killed my son, as a mother, all I wanted was justice for Joshua and I just didn't want any other mother to go through what I am going through right now,” said Williams. “I want the young men that murdered my son to know that I forgive them and that I don't hate them for what they did. I know that their families have a long road ahead of them and I pray for them as they go through this process, having to deal with the consequences of what they have done.”

The issue of gun violence and Black-on-Black violence is a serious issue that must be addressed before it is too late. The Houston Forward Times will be following the case and keep you updated as more details emerge.{jcomments on}