

EARLY ON THE MORNING OF MARCH 13, 2020, SEVEN LOUISVILLE METRO POLICE DEPT. OFFICERS EXECUTED A SEARCH WARRANT AT THE APARTMENT OF BREONNA TAYLOR, SEARCHING FOR DRUGS.



POLICE BATTERED DOWN THE DOOR. IN THE DARKNESS AND CONFUSION, TAYLOR'S BOYFRIEND, KENNETH WALKER, FIRED ONE SHOT FROM INSIDE THE APARTMENT. THREE OFFICERS RETURNED FIRE 32 TIMES.



THE EXCHANGE LEFT TAYLOR DEAD AND A POLICE OFFICER SHOT IN THE THIGH.



IN SEPTEMBER, A GRAND JURY INDICTED ONE OF THE OFFICERS FOR SHOOTING INTO AN ADJACENT APARTMENT, BUT ISSUED NO INDICTMENT IN TAYLOR'S DEATH.



KENTUCKY ATTORNEY GENERAL DANIEL CAMERON ANNOUNCED THAT HIS OFFICE CONDUCTED AN INVESTIGATION.



(THE OFFICERS) WERE JUSTIFIED IN THEIR USE OF FORCE.

AND THE OFFICIAL VERSION MAY WELL HAVE BEEN THE END OF THE STORY HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR REPORTERS AND EDITORS AT THE LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL AND OTHER NEWS OUTLETS THAT USED KENTUCKY'S SUNSHINE LAWS TO PAINT A MORE COMPLETE PICTURE OF WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED.



SUNSHINE LAWS "REQUIRE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND BODIES TO ALLOW THE PUBLIC TO ATTEND THEIR MEETINGS AND HAVE ACCESS TO THEIR RECORDS."




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THE LAWS VARY GREATLY FROM STATE TO STATE. THEY ALLOW ANYONE - NOT JUST NEWS ORGANIZATIONS - TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON INSIDE OUR GOVERNMENT.

AFTER THE SHOOTING, THE POLICE DEPARTMENT'S PUBLIC INTEGRITY UNIT LAUNCHED AN INVESTIGATION, BUT THE DEPARTMENT AND CITY DID NOT WANT TO HAND OVER INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT WAS UNCOVERED.




WE WERE GETTING AN INITIAL NARRATIVE FROM THE POLICE ON WHAT HAPPENED IN BREONNA TAYLOR'S APARTMENT THAT TURNED OUT TO BE MUCH DIFFERENT THAN WHAT ACTUALLY DID HAPPEN.




IT WAS CLEAR THE POLICE WERE TRYING TO PUT THEIR BEST LIGHT ON HOW THEIR OFFICERS ACTED.

MIKE TRAUTMANN
NEWS DIRECTOR, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL

REPORTERS AT THE NEWSPAPER FILED DOZENS OF REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION UNDER THE STATE'S OPEN RECORDS LAW.



THE PAPER USED THE SERVICES OF TWO FIRST AMENDMENT ATTORNEYS TO LITIGATE DOZENS OF REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION. UNDER THE THREAT OF LEGAL ACTION, THE CITY ALSO RELEASED THE MASSIVE PUBLIC INTEGRITY UNIT REPORT.



(THE POLICE) MADE A REAL EFFORT NOT TO TELL ANYBODY...THEY DIDN'T GIVE OUT ANY INFORMATION...THEY DIDN'T WANT ANYBODY TO KNOW. AND THE MAYOR DIDN'T WANT ANYBODY TO KNOW ABOUT IT.

JON FLEISCHAKER
ATTORNEY, KAPLAN, JOHNSON, ABATE AND BIRD

- THE PAPER'S REPORTING REVEALED THAT:
- LOUISVILLE POLICE HAD ISSUED A NEARLY BLANK INCIDENT REPORT OF THE SHOOTING THAT CONTAINED INACCURATE INFORMATION SUCH AS LISTING TAYLOR'S INJURIES AS "NONE" DESPITE THE FACT SHE HAD BEEN SHOT TO DEATH AND THAT POLICE CHECKED "NO" ON THE "FORCED ENTRY" BOX EVEN THOUGH THEY USED A BATTERING RAM TO KNOCK IN HER FRONT DOOR.
 - ONE OF THE OFFICERS INVOLVED IN THE SHOOTING ENTERED THE CRIME SCENE AFTER TAYLOR'S DEATH.

- THE DETECTIVE WHO OBTAINED THE WARRANT FOR TAYLOR'S HOME ADMITTED TO INVESTIGATORS IT WASN'T WORDED PRECISELY AND MAY HAVE BEEN IN ERROR.
- A POLICE MAJOR INTERVENED IN THE INTERNAL INVESTIGATION OF THE TAYLOR CASE AND ACKNOWLEDGED SHARING INFORMATION FROM INVESTIGATORS WITH OFFICERS UNDER HER COMMAND WHO WERE BEING INVESTIGATED.




THE ONE NEIGHBOR WHO SAID HE HEARD POLICE ANNOUNCE THEMSELVES BEFORE THEY FORCED OPEN TAYLOR'S DOOR CHANGED HIS STORY. HE INITIALLY STATED HE HADN'T HEARD POLICE ANNOUNCE.

AS A RESULT OF THE REPORTING, THREE POLICE OFFICERS WERE FIRED, ONE OFFICER WAS CHARGED AND CHARGES AGAINST TAYLOR'S BOYFRIEND HAVE BEEN PERMANENTLY DROPPED.



CITIES AND STATES ACROSS THE U.S. ARE TAKING UP VERSIONS OF BREONNA'S LAW PASSED IN LOUISVILLE THAT WOULD BAN, CURB OR SCRUTINIZE NO-KNOCK SEARCH AND ARREST WARRANTS.



WITHOUT ROBUST SUNSHINE LAWS, REPORTING SUCH AS THE COURIER-JOURNAL DID IN THE CASE OF BREONNA TAYLOR, WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE. THE PUBLIC WOULD NOT GET A FULL AND ACCURATE PICTURE OF WHAT HAPPENED AND WOULD NOT HAVE THE MEANS TO HOLD OUR GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABLE. BRINGING THE FACTS TO LIGHT IS A POWERFUL SAFEGUARD FOR OUR DEMOCRACY.

MARIBEL PEREZ WADSWORTH
PRESIDENT/NEWS GANNETT MEDIA & PUBLISHER/USA TODAY