



THE BLACK POLICE EXPERIENCE

May 22, 2021

The Brutal Killing of Ronald Greene Brings Forth Memories of 1964 America

Ronald Greene, a 49-year-old Black man from Monroe, Louisiana, was driving a vehicle involved in a high-speed pursuit with Louisiana State Troopers, for an unspecified traffic violation. After he stopped, he was stunned with a taser before he left his vehicle and after he was on the ground. He was choked, punched, beaten with a flashlight, and drug across gravel on his stomach by his shackled legs, while handcuffed behind his back. He was called foul names by the troopers as he was beaten.

Mr. Greene pleaded with the troopers, "I'm sorry. I'm scared. I'm your brother." His pleas were ignored. The beating continued until he was no longer conscious. According to [AP reporting](#), the troopers did not render medical aid to him for more than nine minutes. This was reminiscent of the more than nine minutes Derek Chauvin knelt on the neck of George Floyd while no officer on the scene rendered aid.

Mr. Greene was already deceased when he was taken to a nearby hospital, extensively bruised, bloodied, shackled to a gurney, and with the prongs of a taser sticking out of his back. The troopers told hospital staff that the man had died when his car crashed into a tree. The emergency room doctor noted that the incident "does not add up." The autopsy report indicated, "cocaine induced agitated delirium complicated by motor vehicle collision, physical struggle, inflicted head injury, and restraint."

Later, as the troopers made casual comments about the incident, one described how he "beat the ever-living f---" out of Mr. Greene. He talked about choking Mr. Greene until the man suddenly went limp. No administrative or criminal investigation was initiated against the troopers for several months.

This sequence of events sounds like what could have been a scene from the movie "Mississippi Burning," but it was not. These are the facts surrounding the death of Ronald Greene while in the custody of Louisiana State Police on May 19, 2019.

In the movie "Mississippi Burning"—and in the FBI case of that name—three young men, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner were killed by a group of White men because they were in Mississippi acting as civil rights workers. The car of the three men was stopped for speeding, and they were abducted and shot to death at close range.

Chaney, who was Black, was brutally beaten before being shot. Certainly, they were all called foul names. They probably pleaded for their lives. Their abductors likely laughed and joked about their involvement in the killing of the three. They lied about the murders and tried to cover it all up, even as the FBI arrived in Mississippi to investigate. The incident sparked outrage around the world. The person who conducted the traffic stop was Deputy Cecil Price, a law enforcement officer, who also happened to be a member of the Ku Klux Klan. His boss, Sheriff Lawrence Rainey, was also implicated in the murders. The year was 1964.

On May 19, 2021, the Associated Press released police body camera footage of Ronald Greene's encounter with Louisiana State troopers, showing circumstances surrounding his death. It is now clear that the brutal nature of Mr. Greene's death was hidden, and that the troopers who stopped him that fateful night were likely complicit in his brutal death and further, lied about the details of the encounter. The body camera footage was withheld from the public for almost two years, while investigations against the troopers, triggered by a lawsuit filed by Mr. Greene's family, languished for months.

The circumstances surrounding the death of Ronald Greene, George Floyd, and others who have died by police violence, show similarities to the abuses of slavery. The brutal treatment endured by slaves was legal—the brutality that the public is experiencing in encounters with the police today are usually deemed justified. Slaves likely pled for their lives as the whip came down, just as Mr. Greene did as the flashlight came down and George Floyd did when the knee came down. While slave patrols were created for the oppression and control of slaves, the idea that the humanity of Black people is not worthy of respect, safety, or life-saving measures appears to have been drawn forward through more than 400 years of racial strife, to become the legacy inherited by 20th Century policing.

The FBI has been investigating Mr. Greene's death. Some of the troopers have been found to be involved in other acts of brutality against Black people. Perhaps the involved troopers will be held accountable after what appears to be a blatant coverup, and I pray for a full and appropriate reckoning for Mr. Greene's family and loved ones. Brutality, lying, and lack of accountability and transparency should not be a hallmark of policing in America. Nor should the ghosts of past police transgressions and danger still haunt the community, nor cost another Black man or woman their lives.

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