

There was a march and rally of 150 to 200 people in the rain today, May 21, 2016 from Woodruff Park to Olympia City Hall and back. We took the streets. This is the text of my talk in front of City Hall.

A Year Later! The Struggle for Justice Continues!
Peter Bohmer, May 21st, 2016

Today is a sad anniversary because of what happened a year ago! Let us turn it into a positive and good day. I want to thank all of you who are here and the organizers.

A year ago, two young black men, Andre Thompson and Bryson Chaplin were shot by white police officer, Ryan Donald. They had attempted to shop lift beer from Safeway and were returning home after dropping the beer inside the store. Officer Donald saw them and claimed he felt threatened by their skateboards. He shot them many times in the spine and torso. Bryson Chaplin is in a wheel chair. In a very overt display of racism among the police chief, other law enforcement agencies who investigated the shooting, the City Council and City manager, and County Prosecutor Tunheim, they charged Bryson Chaplin and Andre Thompson with felony assault, and totally cleared Police Officer Ryan Donald. Donald is still a danger to the community, especially to young Black people as he continues as a police officer.

I know the brothers, Andre Thompson and Bryson Chaplin, their sister, and mother Chrystal; they are a real asset to Olympia. Andre and Bryson are the opposite from how many people who do not know them think of them. Many with no knowledge have called them thugs which is a racist term. They are two decent young men.

We need to put forward a different narrative and do our own investigation about what happened a year ago because otherwise too many people accept the police narrative which is designed to be a total cover up for Ryan Donald. Many lawyers will advise not discussing evidence. I disagree. Giving a true version of what happened, putting holes in the police propaganda will build support for Bryson and Andre and can create a climate that will increase the chances that the jury will acquit them or that charges will be dropped.

I have lived in Olympia almost 30 years and helped raise my daughter and three sons here. Many people I know say a police shooting of innocent young black people could not happen in Olympia; these shootings happen someplace else but not in our "liberal progressive" city. Sadly Olympia and its mayor and city council and much of the population here are not progressive when it comes to challenging racism and being inclusive around race, class and sexual identity. They are not progressive when it comes to treating the homeless population with respect and making housing affordable for all, nor progressive for a \$15 an hour minimum wage and paid sick leave, not progressive about taxing upper income people to pay for the first year or two of college, not progressive when it comes to ending our port's complicity with the military and the war machine. Let us connect these issues and build a bold and inclusive mass movement that makes racial justice a core principle that challenges poverty in Olympia and beyond, that makes the connections among these interrelated issues including climate justice and will not accept meaningless proclamations of concern. Let us add to our numbers in our organizations and in the streets and win these changes and not stop there.

This is not the first time in Olympia that young people have been shot by the police who should not have been. This is not an isolated case. Danny Spencer was killed by the Olympia police in 1989 for being high on LSD; Stephen Edwards was tasered to death for shoplifting in 2002; Jose Ramirez-Jimenez was shot and killed by the police in 2008.

In each city where police shootings or killings have taken place, e.g., Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, Freddie Gray in Baltimore, Akil Gurley in Brooklyn, John Williams in Seattle, Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Antonio Zambrano-Montes in Pasco, Washington, Daniel Covarrubias in Lakewood, Washington, and Bryon Chaplin and Andre Thompson here, the claim is always that it was a justifiable shooting or it was an accident. In each of these and other cases, the official story and local officials state that in other places it may be racism or excess police force but not in our town, not in our specific case; that we are innocent and blameless and not racist. Too many people accept this easy out including Olympia by claiming racism and police violence exists in other cities but not theirs. Let us see through this rationale for Olympia and not let Olympia exceptionalism continue, we are part of the United States.

A year ago today in response to the shooting, 800 people rallied and marched from Woodruff Park to Olympia City Hall and stood up against police violence and racism. They were mainly students from the Evergreen State College. This was important and inspiring, but we need to continue to struggle continually not just once a year, against racism and all forms of oppression in Olympia and beyond. Let us demand that: **the charges be dropped again Bryson and Andre, that their medical expenses be paid for by the City of Olympia, that Officer Ryan Donald be fired, for the demilitarization of the police and for a truly independent civilian review board that can discipline cops who brutalize the community.**

It is important we talk to people about this case and attend demonstrations and rallies but this is not enough.

We are living in a period of growing economic inequality, an environmental crisis, a situation where the U.S is waging wars around the world and our government and police and corporations are waging a war at home against working class and poor peoples, especially but not limited to African-Americans, Latinos, Native Americans and Muslims. Hillary Clinton is part of the problem, a representative of the 1%. The Republican Party candidate, Donald Trump, is encouraging white supremacists and fascists to act and creating a climate that helps them build their organizations, many of whom support him. Hopefully, Trump because of his extreme racism is also helping the rise of a militant and bold anti-racist and anti-fascist movement. Let us be a part of this upsurge.

I urge every one of us to think big and to do something every day as individuals and in the groups we form and build, in our communities, workplaces and schools to go beyond business as usual and beyond our normal daily activities. It means listening to and talking to people we haven't talked to before; it means a willingness to take risks and risking arrest, not for the sake of taking risks but because militancy can challenge those in power. Let us make the connections between poverty, racism, Islamophobia, militarism, sexism, homophobia, climate change and meaningless jobs and alienation to the underlying oppressive and destructive global capitalist system that is destroying the planet and us in order to benefit the 1%. Let us create a society based on production for need, a participatory socialist society, where sustainability is real-- a non-class liberated society where poverty, racism and all forms of oppression are ended.

Drop the Charges against Bryson Chaplin and Andre Thompson.

Si Se Puede, Power to the People
Black Lives Matter!
Thank You!