

Most St. Louis police officers who kill civilians are hidden from the public eye

Most of the 79 St. Louis area police officers who killed people in recent years have escaped public scrutiny, going unnamed both in media and department incident reports. Nearly half of them still are active officers today.

In addition, public knowledge of police killings has significantly decreased, despite increased attention to police killings nationwide. In the City of St. Louis, almost all details of police killings are inaccessible to the public.

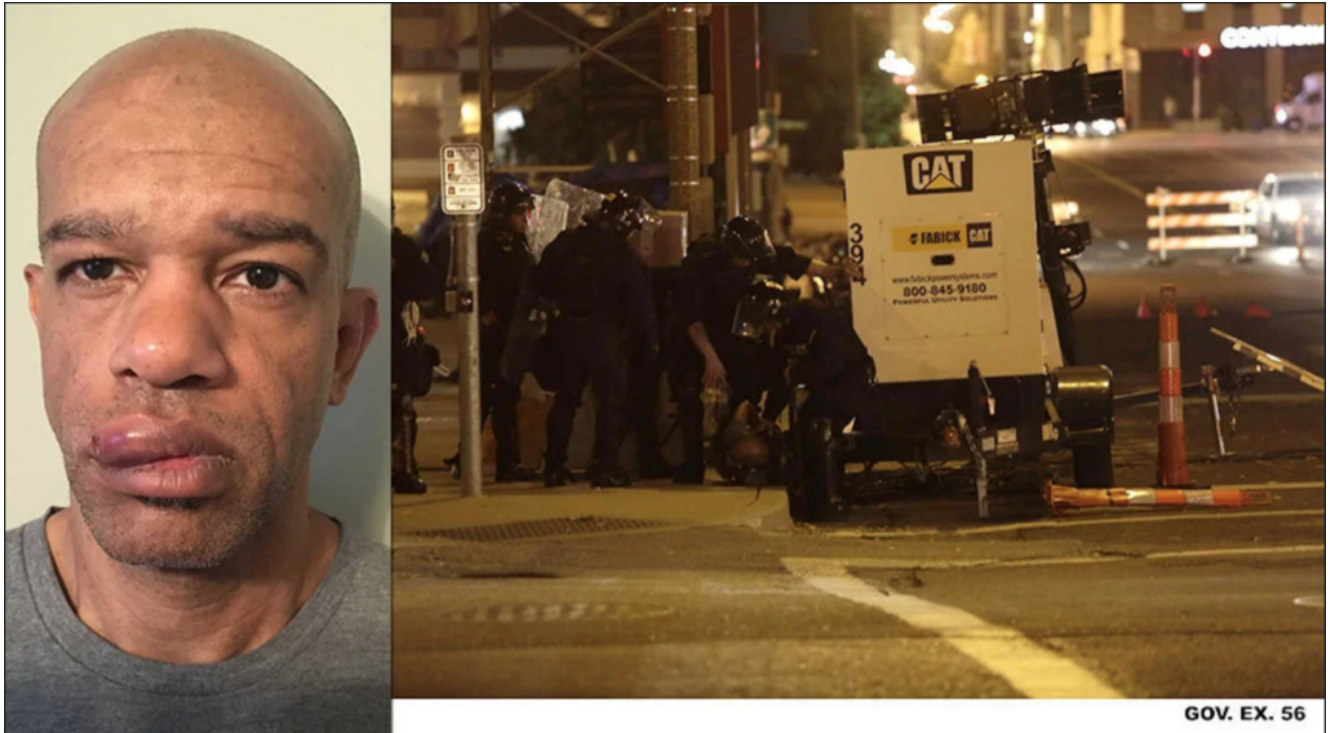
Those are the findings of a Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting investigation based on public records and documents that ArchCity Defenders obtained and made accessible to the investigation. ArchCity is a nonprofit civil rights law organization that gained national attention during and after the Ferguson protests.

The St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department [kills more people per capita](#) than any big city police department in the country, according to an ArchCity report. The department declined to comment on this finding.

Three-fourths of the 79 St. Louis area police officers known to have killed people between 2009 and 2017 were never publicly identified, according to a review of media reports and court records.

In 2010, SLMPD officers Marc Wasem and Joseph Busso attempted to arrest Normane Bennett, a 23-year-old Black man they believed possessed drugs. When Bennett tried to escape, Wasem

fatally shot Bennett seven times, according to the department's incident report. Although Wasem and Busso were named in the department's incident report, they were [not named](#) in media reports until two years later when Bennett's father filed a [federal lawsuit](#) against Wasem. Wasem and Busso are both still employed as SLMPD officers.



Some of the officers who were not publicly identified at the time of their first fatal shooting went on to kill civilians in later confrontations. In 2009, SLMPD officers Chris Lovelady-Armstrong and Kyle Chandler fired six shots and killed Antonio Hogans, a 40-year-old Black man [who may have believed he was firing a shot at an intruder](#). After they killed Hogans, the media referred to [“two police officers.”](#)

Chandler went on to fire the fatal shot that killed Black 18-year-old Mansur Ball-Bey in 2015 after Ball-Bey allegedly pointed a gun at officers executing a search warrant. Chandler's name again was [not included](#) in media coverage at the time of killing, although he garnered media attention when Circuit Attorney Jennifer Joyce announced that he would [not face charges](#) and when Ball-Bey's father filed a [wrongful death lawsuit](#) nearly three years later.

Approximately 60 St. Louis area police officers from 2009 to 2017, whose names were obtained through incident reports or court records, went unnamed in the media immediately following killings. Six of those officers – Matthew Karnowski, Kyle Chandler, Rich Berry, Jason Chambers, Charles Woodcock and Mark E. McMurry – killed more than one person. Karnowski and Woodcock are still employed by the SLMPD.

According to a [media analysis](#) of 115 *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* articles from 2009 to 2019, only eight articles named the officers in coverage immediately following police killings. The articles covering police shootings in [2019](#) and [2020](#) do not appear to name a single officer.

The St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department wrote in a statement to the Pulitzer Center that officer names will not be released unless criminal charges are brought against the officer, but “the age, gender, race, and years of service for the officer involved in the incident are provided for public release, as well as a brief synopsis of the incident.”

Before 2015 most officers were not named in the media, but officers were named in SLMPD incident reports, which are accessible under the Sunshine Law.

This was true in the case of Jordan Walls, a 19-year old Black man who was killed in 2012 by a group of six SLMPD officers: Matthew Wieczorek, Franklin Derby, Thomas Mayer II, Ryan Murphy, Mark McMurry and Charles Woodcock. Responding to a call of a shooting by someone allegedly driving a gold car, the officers chased down Walls and another man. When the six officers saw that the two men were armed, the officers, saying they feared for their safety, started shooting, killing Walls and injuring the other man in the car. All of the involved officers except McMurry work at the SLMPD today.

The six officers were [not named](#) in the media following the killing of Walls. Avoiding public scrutiny, two of the six

officers went on to be involved in other killings.

In 2013, McMurry joined five SLMPD officers in [killing 34-year-old Damon C. Hall](#); the officers said they feared for their safety after Hall pointed a weapon at them.

The same year, Woodcock joined another officer in [shooting 37-year-old Terence Anderson](#) several times before Anderson fatally shot himself. Anderson had been fleeing the scene after killing his estranged girlfriend and wounding her daughter, according to the incident report.

The two officers were again not named in the media in connection with the killings. But they were named in the SLMPD incident reports and details such as the officers' names, badge numbers and a timeline of events were included. Based on the Pulitzer review of incident reports on file with ArchCity, these details were commonly included in department records prior to 2015.

But in 2015, the reports' police narratives were reduced from several paragraphs to one or two sentences. Instead of detailing what happened, the reports simply mentioned that an "Officer Involved Shooting" occurred, omitting the officers' names.

For example, in the police killing of 33-year-old Jaime Robinson in his home in 2017, the incident report simply said "On Friday, May 26th, at 11:00 p.m., the Force Investigation Unit (FIU) was requested to [Robinson's address] relative to an 'Officer Involved Shooting.'"

Nearly 30 reviewed incident reports, acquired by ArchCity and made available to the Pulitzer investigation, had a similar one or two sentence police narrative, with five reports having no narrative included at all.

Although officers were named in incident reports prior to 2015, SLMPD Public Information Officer Evita Caldwell wrote in

a statement to the Pulitzer Center that “names of officers involved in officer-involved shootings are not released unless criminal charges are issued for the incident.”

“This is the same protocol as with any other shooting incident in which a suspect is not named/identified until charges are issued by the Circuit Attorney’s Office,” Caldwell wrote.

While the public can still request incident reports under the Sunshine Law, SLMPD incident reports no longer include the names of officers’ or the details of the fatal interaction.

Instead, the details are included in FIU investigative reports, which are more difficult to obtain. Investigative reports are automatically closed to the public until the investigation is complete, per the Sunshine Law, and investigations have been staying open [for years](#).

Powell said that the lack of details in incident reports is “wrong” and prevents the public from holding officers accountable.

“What we’re seeing isn’t a redaction of names; there’s just literally no information,” Powell said, adding that it is “a more secretive system.”

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