

UNICORN RIOT

St. Paul Police Officers Not Charged in the Killing of Billy Hughes

By Lorenzo Serna, Unicorn Riot ▶ October 5, 2018

St. Paul, MN – Ramsey County Attorney John Choi [announced](#) today that St. Paul Police Officers Vincent Adams and Matthew Jones will not be charged in the shooting death of White Earth tribal member [William \(Billy\) Hughes](#). The police killing occurred August 5, 2018 after police responded to 911 call reporting shots fired. Police encountered Hughes after waiting outside of his apartment door. Hughes, holding a handgun in his right hand, was ordered to put his hands up, and after raising the pistol towards the air, police officers shot him.

Ramsey County Attorney John Choi exonerated the officers after he stated that the use of force by “**Vincent Adams and Matthew Jones was objectively reasonable given all of the circumstances that they knew.**” [Investigation documents](#) sent to Choi from the BCA described police officers responding to a 911 call of shots fired.

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From: [Choi, John](#)
To: [Kelly, John](#); [Dusterhoft, Richard](#)
Cc: [Gerhardstein, Dennis](#)
Subject: Officer Involved Shooting Death of William James Hughes
Date: Tuesday, October 02, 2018 3:54:04 PM

John and Rick,

I have reviewed your memorandum that summarizes the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension's (BCA) investigation and body camera videos that were presented to us for prosecution review. In addition, I have reviewed the written opinions and conclusions of Jeff Noble (dated September 12, 2018) and Michael Quinn (dated September 17, 2018). I appreciate the extra effort both of you took in this review to expedite it and engage independent use-of-force and police procedure experts in coming to your recommendation. I hope people in our community will take time to review your memorandum, along with the attached expert opinions and the evidence compiled in this investigation, as I agree this case should not be prosecuted.

The use of deadly force by Saint Paul Police Officers Vincent Adams and Matthew Jones was objectively reasonable given all of the circumstances that they knew, heard and saw before firing their weapons. The officers' actions preceding and during the fatal encounter are consistent with commonly-accepted police practices and training. I respect and appreciate the independent opinions of Jeff Noble and Michael Quinn, as both experts have a body of work and reputation that is well-known to be fair and objective. Both provided important information for us to consider in evaluating this use of deadly force.

The body camera footage that captured the death of William Hughes is traumatic and difficult to watch. This tragedy is something all of us wish had never happened. My deepest sympathies and sorrow are with the family of William Hughes and all of those who loved him, and also extends to Officers Adams and Jones who were placed in this tragic situation.

Please work with the BCA to coordinate the public release of the entire investigative file, with appropriate redactions, concurrent with the public release of this decision. Please also inform the family of Mr. William Hughes, Chief Todd Axtell, and the officers involved in this shooting incident of our decision before it is released to the public. Please let Mr. Hughes' family know I am willing to meet with them to further explain our decision if they wish to do so.

Also, please express my gratitude to the BCA agents who worked to expedite their investigation and agreed to present us information and evidence as they gathered it.

Thank you,

John Choi

UNICORN RIOT**OFFICE OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY ATTORNEY**

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**MEMORANDUM**

DATE: September 26, 2018

TO: John Choi, Ramsey County Attorney

FROM: John Kelly, First Assistant Ramsey County Attorney and
Richard Dusterhoft, Adult Criminal Division Director *JK RD*

SUBJECT: In the Matter of the Death of William James Hughes
CA File Nos. 0405170 (Officer Adams) and 0405167 (Officer Jones)

I. Summary

On August 5, 2018 at 2:35 a.m., a male called 911 to report that two gunshots had been fired on the second floor of a three-story house located at 905 St. Anthony Ave. in Saint Paul. The 911 caller then hung up without identifying himself. A 911 call center employee called back the telephone number used by the male to make the 911 call multiple times, but no one answered.

At approximately 2:38 a.m., Officers Matthew Jones and Vincent Adams of the Saint Paul Police Department ("SPPD") arrived at the 905 St. Anthony Ave. house. On their way to the house, Officer Adams used the in-squad computer to learn that there had been previous disorderly conduct calls from that property to which SPPD had responded. The officers said that upon their arrival, the house was dark except for a single outside light in front of the porch door and "one little light" from the upstairs. Both officers were dressed in standard issue blue-colored SPPD police uniforms bearing SPPD shoulder patches, badges and duty belts, and both were also wearing body worn cameras ("BWC") positioned on the chest areas of their uniform shirts.

The officers viewed the circumstances of a middle of the night, 911 hang-up call made by an anonymous caller, reporting multiple shots fired from the second floor of a largely darkened house, as suspicious and possibly dangerous. For this reason, they parked their marked SPPD Ford Explorer SUV about one or two houses away, to the east of 905 St. Anthony Ave. and quietly closed the doors of the SUV, so as not to draw attention to themselves as they approached the house. For the same reason, both officers also withdrew their handguns from their respective holsters.

Video from the BWCs worn by both officers shows them first shining their flashlights along the two side yards next to the house. Officer Jones said they did this to make sure that there was no one in those areas who could ambush them. Their BWC video then shows them both

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Body camera footage: St. Paul police shooting of William H...



The door opened and police switch their flashlights yelling a multitude of commands as Billy Hughes walked slowly onto the porch both his hands at his sides. The commands of “**Put your hands up**”, garbled over each other, followed by “**put it down**”. Billy raised his right hand over his head. Police then fired “**21 rounds**” from “**7-10 feet away.**”

After the August 5 police shooting, [protests](#) led by local indigenous community members shut down an intersection in front of the American Indian Center in Minneapolis, and the next day rallied in front of the St. Paul Western District police station before marching to Billy’s home.

Family members have called to question the police actions saying that Billy’s life didn’t need to end that day. Some of Billy Hughes’ family feels there are questions left to be answered, and last Unicorn Riot heard they planned to move forward with a civil suit.

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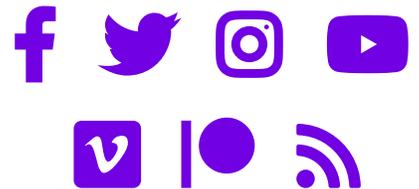
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