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ACTING...OR *RE*-ACTING?

An urgent response proves tragically imprecise



For Police Issues by Julius (Jay) Wachtel. In mid-November the national president of the NAACP and the leader of its Las Vegas branch released [a joint statement](#). Here's how it opens:

When people call 911, they're calling for help — not for a death sentence. If Brandon Durham hadn't called 911, he'd likely be alive today. This case — like too many others before it — reminds us that many police officers do not value Black lives.

Their stern admonition was followed by a “March for Justice” by city hall in honor of the 43-year old local realtor who was fatally shot on November 12. Tragically, his killer, Las Vegas police officer Alexander Bookman — that's him pointing the gun — had gone to Mr. Durham's home in response to his plea for help.

We clipped the photo from Officer Bookman's bodycam video. (Click [here](#) for a release that omits the shooting, and [here](#) for our complete and captioned version.) Mr. Durham — he's on the right — lived in the single-family home with his fifteen-year old daughter. On the left is his assailant, Alejandra Boudreaux, 31, a transgender person with whom Mr. Durham [reportedly once had](#) a sexual relationship.

Mr. Durham had called police on two succeeding evenings: November 10 and 11, 2024. Police reports obtained by Las Vegas TV channels [KLAS](#) and [KTNV](#) indicate that on the first night, November 10, Mr. Durham reported that Boudreaux was in his converted garage and refused to leave. Here's what he told the dispatcher:

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We were friends at first...I need this person — I've got a trespasser — me and my kid are here man, this person won't leave — big old Black guy, kind of crazy.

Officer Bookman was one of the responders. Boudreaux soon left, and there's no indication that any officers entered Mr. Durham's home or interacted with either party. No report was written.

On the following night, November 11, area residents, including Mr. Durham, alerted authorities about gunfire and smashed windows. Here's an extract from [Las Vegas PD's official release](#):

Durham stated multiple people were outside shooting at his residence. He then stated someone had entered through the front and back doors of the house, and he was locking himself in the bathroom.

About 10 seconds into [our video](#) a dispatcher describes the interloper as “medium build, red beanie, wearing a black sweatshirt and dark sweat pants.” That, indeed, was Boudreaux. And this time she was armed with two knives. No gun was observed or recovered, and the reports of gunfire remain unexplained. Here's [an extract from the police report](#) (its image was posted by KLAS):

Officers Romanski, Brogdon and Bookman arrived together, Officer Romanski observed the front window had been broken out and [it] appeared someone made entry. Officer Romanski heard screaming coming from inside the house. Officer Bookman kicked open the door. The officers made entry with Officer Bookman entering first followed by Officer Brogdon and Officer Romanski. Officers Bookman and Brogdon entered the hallway and Officer Romanski covered the living room...Officer Romanski heard Officer Bookman yell to drop the knife. Officer Romanski looked toward Officer Bookman and observed him firing shots. Officer Romanski only had a view of Officer Bookman and not where he was shooting.

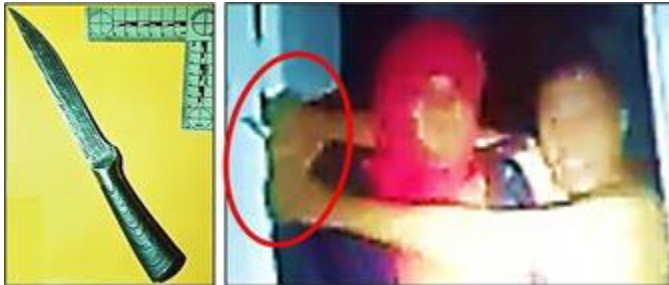
These four images from Officer Bookman's bodycam indicate that less than twenty seconds elapsed between the moment he kicked in the door (left image) and when he encountered the pair. Officer Bookman's voice is indistinct, but according to police



reports, [he instantly ordered](#) they drop the knife. And if you can bear watching the grisly scene, check out the succeeding and final moments (they're at the end of [our video](#).) Following the yelling, Officer Bookman came across the pair at about 1:36. Two seconds later he ordered them to drop the knife. One second later he focused the beam of his pistol-mounted flashlight on the head of the man on the right – Mr. Durham. And a second after that – at about 1:40 – he opened fire on Mr. Durham. Officer Bookman reportedly delivered six rounds in three seconds and kept shooting as Mr. Durham fell. Throughout, Mr. Durham's hands remained clamped on Mr. Boudreaux's wrists, and they plunged to the floor locked in an embrace.

Considering the movement of the light beam and the positioning of his gun, Officer Bookman seems to have purposely fired at the party on the right – Mr. Durham. Clearly, officer Bookman didn't enter the home intending to shoot a lawful occupant. But it doesn't seem that any of the officers were personally acquainted with either Mr. Durham or Boudreaux. So when Officer Bookman encountered the pair, he had to decide which was the interloper. There *were* a couple of clues:

- Boudreaux – the man on the left – was fully dressed. His clothes, including that red beanie, were consistent with the dispatcher's brief description of the intruder's attire.
- Mr. Durham – the man on the right – was only wearing briefs, as though he had been suddenly awakened.



But it wasn't simply about correctly identifying the pair. Which was in fact the aggressor? Close inspection of the video indicates that Boudreaux gripped the knife in his right hand, which was raised as if to strike. Mr. Durham had both arms wrapped around Boudreaux, and his hands grasped his assailant's

right hand and wrist. Even if Officer Bookman realized that the intruder *was* on the left, his physical distance from the pair and the lightning speed of his decision-making may have led him to misjudge what was taking place. After all, if the homeowner was trying to stab someone, that too must be stopped.

Back to those blistering comments by the NAACP. True enough, Officer Bookman is White, while both Mr. Durham and Boudreaux are Black. But there's no question that

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police were there because a Black man – Mr. Durham – had called for help. And his plight was very much real. [Here's what Boudreaux told police](#) after she surrendered:

While on the way back to Durham's house, Boudreaux decided that she was going to die. She explained she had been suicidal for a few days and wanted to be shot by the police...“I wanted the cops to shoot me dead. And I wanted him to live the wreckage that I caused in his house.”

What might have prevented the officer's fatal blunder? “[Speed Kills](#)” described a chaotic July 2018 encounter in Aurora, Colorado, when a home's lawful resident – a decorated Vietnam vet, to boot – was shot dead by patrol officers who mistook him for being the intruder they urgently summoned to apprehend. As we noted then, a prompt response can be lifesaving. But it also “creates risks to innocent victims that cannot be easily dismissed.”

From our earliest posts (see, for example, “[Making Time](#)”) we've repeatedly emphasized that split-second decisions can prove tragic. Ditto, Las Vegas. Slowing down would have given Officer Bookman a better opportunity to gather accurate information. Moving in more closely would have helped him identify the true aggressor and decide how best to respond. What's more, slowing down would have allowed his colleagues to participate. Their presence might have been of substantial tactical or other instrumental value. But it's not only about tactics. Here's another tidbit from “[Speed Kills](#)”:

Officer personality characteristics...typically receive scant attention. Yet all who have worked in law enforcement (including your blogger) know that its practitioners are human: they have quirks, and their behavior can deteriorate under stress.

Officer Bookman is 26 years old and has been a Las Vegas cop since 2021. Had he shot and killed Boudreaux, he would have likely been lauded as a hero. But he didn't, so he wasn't. And influential community members are now [demanding his prosecution](#). In a November 18 [news release](#), Clark County District Attorney Steve Wolfson announced that two reviews are in progress: one is administrative and policy-oriented; the other is a full-bore criminal investigation. When these are completed – the D.A. cautioned it “could take months” – he would decide whether any officers would be charged.

As for Boudreaux, she faces “multiple felony offenses, including Home Invasion with a Deadly Weapon and Assault with a Deadly Weapon.” But of course, she's just an asterisk.