

Youth shot multiple times by police charged as adult on assault charges

Family says it's case of mistaken identity

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COVENANT BLU/GRAND CENTER — A 16-year-old youth who was shot at least eight times by St. Louis police last April, must now face assault and weapons charges against the officers who shot him.

Recently, on Friday, Sept. 28, St. Louis Family Court Judge Jack Garvey upgraded Jerome Johnson from juvenile to adult status. The youth now faces four counts each of first-degree assault and armed criminal action as a adult, and face the potential of spending many years in prison if convicted.

On April 3 undercover narcotics police were conducting arrests in the 4300 block of Lee Avenue when a gunman fired at police from a passing red Ford Escort. Later, upon spotting the car near Carter and Harris avenues, three males ran from the vehicle. Police identified Johnson as one of the suspects who turned a fired at police. Returning fire, police wounded Johnson and then recovered a small, .22-caliber revolver with a spent chamber.

In contrast to the police version Johnson's family said he was not involved in a car whose occupants fired on police on April 3. Instead, the youth was visiting friends a few blocks from his home when he was mistaken for a shooting suspect and fired upon by a man wearing a ski mask who jumped out of a vehicle with his gun drawn and began firing at Johnson.

Police said Johnson exited the Escort, fired at them and then ran. Johnson's family said the youth saw at least one man, wearing a ski mask and holding a gun, exit a car and ran toward him. He turned and ran and was shot several times before hitting the ground and being shot several more times. The family also contends that police kicked and beat Johnson as he lay on the ground. Fifteen eyewitnesses said the youth was unarmed, according to a family statement.

An aunt, Rochelle Moore, said previously that "the whole thing was it was a case of mistaken identity. He was not in the car. He was sitting on the porch of a friend on Red Bud (avenue)."

Rena Johnson, the youth's mother, declined to



Protesters walk in front of the Family Court, Juvenile Detention Center on Vandeventer Avenue recently, to challenge what they call unjust treatment of Jerome Johnson. Family and friends said the 16-year-old was brutally shot at least eight times by police and framed as one of the gunmen who fired upon police officers and then fled the scene where police were investigating another incident.

Photo by Wiley Price

explain why her sister was made guardian of her son. However, the family is unified, she said.

"Our family is close knit," said the mother. "The decision that we make, we make together, as a family."

Friday, the judge noted that Johnson, of the 4200 block of Harris Avenue, had three prior juvenile court appearances, including pleading guilty to unlawful use of weapon and attempted theft in the robbery of a motorist at gunpoint.

Friday, a small group of protesters picketed the Family Court, Juvenile Division, at 920 N. Vandeventer Ave., the morning of the hearing. Prior to their picketing, a security officer ordered the group off city property and onto the public sidewalk. Later, a guard threatened at least one woman with arrest if she return to the facility, said Susie Chasnoff, of the Coalition Against Police Crimes and Repression. She said the police shooting was a good example of why a citizen's review board is needed.

"This is just one more in the long stream of incidents involving police misconduct and police vio-

lence that is not satisfactory to the community," Chasnoff said.

The Coalition Against Police Crimes and Repression, in conjunction with other community organizations, will sponsor The Killing Fields Caravan and Rally. The activity, is a part of the Monday, Oct. 22 National Day Against Police Brutality and in support of the campaign to establish a police oversight board.

The Killing Fields Caravan will begin at 4 p.m. at Chippewa and Jefferson avenues. The caravan will hit three other sites where police victims were murdered and end at the Yeatman Community Center, at 4265 Athlone Ave., for a community rally.

Family members will speak at each site and the memory of the slain will be honored with flowers and other tokens of love. Call 454-9005 or 726-6810 for more information.

Board Bill 71, which calls for forming a civilian oversight board, is pending before the St. Louis Board of Aldermen.