Black Lives Matter Victory: No Grand Jury for Police Killings

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Led by Black Lives Matter activists, Minneapolis protesters have successfully pushed the county prosecutor to forego the grand jury process for police-involved deaths, a decision preceded by months of protests following the killing of 24-year-old unarmed Black male Jamar Clark.

Clark was shot and killed by a police officer on Nov. 15, 2015. Police officers claim he was shot following a "struggle" but eyewitnesses say he was handcuffed and not resisting arrest at the time of the shooting.

Black Lives Matter protesters asked Hennepin County prosecutor Mike Freeman to forgo the grand jury in the decision to indict the two officers who killed Jamar.

Yesterday, Freeman announced his decision to not only drop the grand jury process in the case of Clark, but that he will no longer make use of grand juries for any cases which involve police officers killing civilians.

The grand jury process has been criticized for its lack of transparency and has an abysmal track record when it comes to the indictment of police officers.

In a press conference, Freeman said that his decision is based on the idea “that grand juries may no longer serve the present evolving standards of justice, accountability and transparency.”

The new approach means that 23 members of the general public will no longer decide if the two police officers, Mark Ringgenberg and Dustin Schwarze, face charges. Instead, the decision will fall solely on the country prosecutor.

”I will make the factual determination whether there is sufficient evidence to support a criminal charge against the police officers in the tragic death of Jamar Clark”, Freeman said in a press statement.

Be absolute clear: Mike Freeman didn't do this. Black, Queer, Femme Youth and their allies did this. #NoGrandJury #Justice4Jamar — Black Lives MPLS (@BlackLivesMpls) March 16, 2016

”I will make that determination with the excellent assistance of senior attorneys in our office and the fine work of law enforcement, most notably, the BCA and FBI.”

In the case of Jamar Clark, Freeman plans to make a decision before the end of March.

Black Lives Matter Minneapolis has expressed satisfaction with the decision and thanked all the activists and grassroots supporters who helped bring it about.

Until today, there have been no cases of a Minneapolis officer ever being indicted for committing murder while on duty.

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