

News Roundup

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Date : March 6, 2015

Nationally, the top story once again centers on Ferguson, Missouri. The United States Department of Justice made two announcements there this week. First, it announced that it would not charge former Ferguson officer Darren Wilson with any federal crime in connection with the shooting of Michael Brown. The memorandum explaining the decision is [here](#). It exhaustively examines the available evidence and concludes in part:

Under the law, it was not unreasonable for Wilson to perceive that Brown posed a threat of serious physical harm, either to him or to others. When Brown turned around and moved toward Wilson, the applicable law and evidence do not support finding that Wilson was unreasonable in his fear that Brown would once again attempt to harm him and gain control of his gun. There are no credible witness accounts that state that Brown was clearly attempting to surrender when Wilson shot him. As detailed throughout this report, those witnesses who say so have given accounts that could not be relied upon in a prosecution because they are irreconcilable with the physical evidence, inconsistent with the credible accounts of other eyewitnesses, inconsistent with the witness's own prior statements, or in some instances, because the witnesses have acknowledged that their initial accounts were untrue.

Second, the Department announced the results of its inquiry into the operation of the Ferguson Police Department more broadly. That report is [here](#). It hits hard, including this statement from the summary:

Ferguson's law enforcement practices are shaped by the City's focus on revenue rather than by public safety needs. This emphasis on revenue has compromised the institutional character of Ferguson's police department, contributing to a pattern of unconstitutional policing, and has also shaped its municipal court, leading to procedures that raise due process concerns and inflict unnecessary harm on members of the Ferguson community. Further, Ferguson's police and municipal court practices both reflect and exacerbate existing racial bias, including racial stereotypes. Ferguson's own data establish clear racial disparities that adversely impact African Americans. The evidence shows that discriminatory intent is part of the reason for these disparities. Over time, Ferguson's police and municipal court practices have sown deep mistrust between parts of the community and the police department, undermining law enforcement legitimacy among African Americans in particular.

In other news:

Chief Justice addresses the General Assembly. Chief Justice Martin spoke to the legislature this week. As expected, the address focused on the funding needs of the court system. It seems to have been well received. The text of the address is [here](#).

Massive gold heist on I-95. Three men robbed a truck of \$4.8 million in gold after it broke down on I-95 in Wilson County. Or did it? The possibility that the robbery was an "inside job," conducted with the help of the two men driving the truck for a transportation company, has been lurking in the background since this story broke. It has now been raised publicly as a possibility. [This WRAL story](#) has the latest.

Advocate profiled. *Indy Week* recently ran [this story](#) about Chris Mumma, the Executive Director of the North Carolina Center for Actual Innocence. The story has some interesting background about the development of some of the

innocence-focused institutions in North Carolina. Also, it reveals that Mumma always carries with her a list of inmates she believes are innocent. She has four names on the list right now.

What do you do when a client brings you a dead body? Seems like some serious legal ethics issues might be implicated by [this Florida story](#). The opening paragraph sums it up: “A southwest Florida man put his dead neighbor in the bed of his pickup truck and drove to his lawyer’s office claiming he’d killed the man in self-defense.” Quick, defense attorneys: how should the lawyer have handled the situation?