

Cover

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Suspect Down, Officers Involved

The Death of Brandon Mccloud
By Charu Gupta



Editor's note: The following narrative is based on police and coroner's reports, dispatcher recordings, court records, police personnel files, witness statements to investigators and interviews by Free Times. Except for Brandon McCloud, names of minors have been changed.

First in a two-part series. [Read part 2 here.](#)

AUGUST 31, 2005, 7:06 p.m.

The weather was still warm, and a fan whirled in the window of Brandon McCloud's bedroom, overlooking Jeffries Avenue. It was a typical teenage boy's room, strewn with underwear, dirty socks, sticks of deodorant, plus some cigarette butts and a beer can. Rap CD and DVD covers were perched on top of the window frame. The walls were mostly bare, aside from three letters from Brandon's imprisoned 17-year-old half-brother and a marker-drawn homage to a 6-year-old nephew who'd died in a house fire.

An ironing board blocked the only chair, so Brandon and Jamal, 15-year-old friends from middle school, probably sat on the mattress that dominated the small room when one of them started making phone calls.¹

A boy calling himself "Jamal" phoned Sharlita, a 15-year-old girl who lived on East 86th Street.² They had met two years prior at a skating rink, and had spoken only once before, in a five-minute call more than a year later. At first Jamal made small talk. He asked where Sharlita was going to school now, and suggested that if she didn't like it, she could join him at South High.

He then asked her to call in a pizza order for him, explaining that his friend's grandmother didn't want them using her phone for delivery calls. Sharlita could hear a voice in the background giving instructions on what to tell her. She wrote down the order: one large pepperoni, one large sausage, one order of hot wings.

There were three more calls from Brandon's house to Sharlita's before she finally reached Pizza Hut with Jamal on the line. "He changed his voice," Sharlita recalled later. "He was trying to sound like a white person. I just thought he was doing it to be funny." The pizza was to be delivered to 7917 Jeffries Ave., two blocks from Brandon's house.

Three minutes later, Jamal called his mother from Brandon's line, and was told to come home.

Sonia McCloud was 20 and Demrick Chappell was 24 years old when Brandon was born in 1989. Neither could support their newborn son. McCloud was on welfare and already had two toddlers, ages 2 and 3. So she and Demrick considered adoption until his mother Dorothy Chappell offered to take in Brandon, her first grandchild. He was five months old.

In 1997, Sonia McCloud brought Brandon to live with her and her five other children. Dorothy didn't stop Brandon; it would be good for him to live with his siblings: half-brother Braynell, half-sister Brianna, and a younger brother and sister who also had Demrick Chappell for a father. Brandon attended a middle school near his mother's home on East 135th Street, which is where he met Jamal.

Sonia McCloud continued to struggle financially. By age 16, daughter Brianna had developed a shoplifting habit. In 2002, Brandon decided to move back in with Dorothy. A year later, Braynell started getting into trouble too, getting high, running away, burglarizing neighbors' homes and threatening McCloud, sometimes with a gun. By the fall of 2004, Braynell, then 16, was locked up in juvenile jail for assault and domestic violence.

Over the years, Dorothy had also taken in other grand- and great-grandkids, raising them all in the East Cleveland home in which she'd lived since the '70s. In January 2004 that house burned to the ground, and the fire claimed the life of her 6-year-old great-grandson.

Brandon went to an uncle's place, and Dorothy moved in with her sister for a while. When she bought a new house in November 2004 with her son Melvin Chappell, on Jeffries Avenue in the Corlett neighborhood in southeast Cleveland, Brandon joined

them. Dorothy decorated the cozy one-bath, three-bedroom house with floral prints and lined the cabinets with photos of her large family.

A thin woman in her late 60s, Dorothy had a full head of white hair. Her back hunched slightly and her voice quivered. She still worked, cleaning nursing homes, to keep up with the payments. Her shift started early, and she was usually asleep by 8 p.m.

The night of August 31, 2005, Dorothy was already in bed when Brandon knocked on her door. She told him to enter, then the phone rang. Brandon answered. It was his mother, Sonia McCloud. She was planning a family reunion for Saturday, and she wanted him to be there.

Brandon handed Dorothy the phone.

"Grandma, she told me not to get into trouble."

"Well, she told you just right, don't get into trouble."

"I'm doing everything I'm supposed to do."

8:20 p.m.

The sun had just set when the pizza delivery man rang the doorbell at 7917 Jeffries Ave. No one answered, so he called Sharlita.

"Did you order a pizza?"

"I ordered for my dude. He doesn't have a phone, so I called for him. Is there a doorbell on the door?"

"Yeah."

"You need to ring it."

Again, no answer. The delivery guy asked a passerby to confirm he was on Jeffries.

Suddenly a man in a wolf mask and gray wig was on the porch, coming at him with a long steak knife.

"Give me the money," the wolfman shouted, springing at the delivery man. The Pizza Hut worker threw down a wad of bills from his pocket, dropped the pizzas and backed away. The robber kept approaching, and the deliveryman kept stepping back, until he tumbled over the porch banister. The thief took the money and ran.

Minutes later the robbery was reported on police radio. Cleveland Police Detectives Philip Habeeb and John Kraynik, who'd just started their shift, were struck by the details.

The previous spring they'd interrogated a teen named Brandon McCloud about a string of similar robberies in the same area. The two detectives grabbed Brandon's file, and one on an unsolved August 11 robbery, and headed to Jeffries Avenue.³

Jeffries Avenue was generally quiet, but there were the occasional clashes. A few days before the deliveryman was robbed on August 31, a neighbor, Mark Williams, had traded words with Brandon and the boy who was always at his house, Jamal. The latter, with a blunt cigar in his mouth, was blocking the street with his BMX bike. Williams asked him to move, but Jamal responded with an obscenity and added, "You get your ass out of the street." Brandon said nothing.

Around the same time, the owner of 7917 Jeffries — where the last pizza delivery robbery took place — learned that a group of teenagers had been gathering in his backyard at night, while he worked. The youths were moving his lawn furniture to the back of his house for their meetings.

When Brandon had been new to the neighborhood, he often sat on the porch and watched kids playing basketball on the low-traffic, dead-end street. Almost a year after he'd moved to Jeffries Avenue, Brandon assured Dorothy that he was staying out of trouble, and she took him at his word.

At five-feet-seven inches and 165 pounds, Brandon was a stocky, squat young man. A faint moustache outlined his upper lip. He didn't talk much, but made her laugh when he mimicked her. He was helpful at home and enjoyed cooking for his family. But hints of darker influences could be seen in the rap songs he wrote and taped to his bedroom wall:

One day ya here then you gone

IM going E.C. threw the struggle

Hayden Strip

Hood life

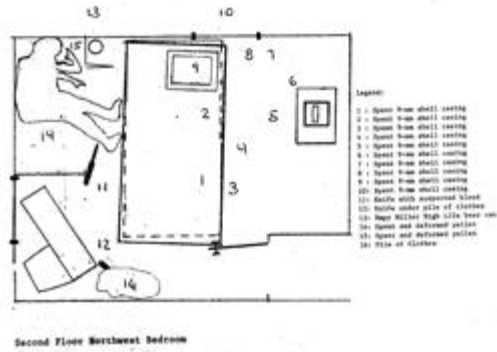
Fuck you

three of My niggas died from gun shots

thug life

Miss yall

the Hood Miss yall for ever



Brandon's Bedroom - Habeeb was in front of a television; Kraynik at the foot of the bed.

lil Bee 4 5 4 going to hold it down for yall for ever

gang aphileated

My lil cousin t-man love

never stops

im going to miss you for ever

ill see you one day

"Lil cousin t-man" referred to Brandon's 6-year-old nephew, Terran, who died in the 2004 house fire. Dorothy and Melvin didn't recognize the other names. On January 14, 2004 (two weeks before the East Cleveland house caught fire), a 14-year-old Brandon was found hiding in a house known for drug dealing and gang problems. It was close to 3 a.m., and police said Brandon had three rocks of crack cocaine in his pocket. Later, in the Jeffries Avenue home, Cleveland authorities discovered a knife under a pile of clothes near Brandon's bed and traces of marijuana in his urine.

Also taped to the wall were three jail letters, one dated January 2005, from half-brother Braynell, who was in juvenile prison. In part they read:

"I just been on lock down every dayŠ

And I'm trying to get out this Jump suitŠ

Man I forgot how it feel to be freeŠ

It been a long time coming and I know change go comeŠ

I'm working so hard so I can come home but the people it this place keep trying me. So I just flip every trip But I know I have to stop so I can come homeŠ

try to stay out the way and go to school and do not fall in my feet step okayŠ"

8:51 p.m.

Detectives Habeeb and Kraynik talked with the pizza delivery guy, who'd suffered a broken arm falling off the porch. Before the detectives got the call-back number for the pizza order, they searched the neighborhood. Among the bushes behind the house they found a long-sleeve black shirt and a gray wig.⁴

They thought of Brandon.

Habeeb and Kraynik's immediate supervisor, in charge of the Fourth District detective bureau, worked days and wasn't available. Lt. Michael Connelly was, and he knew both detectives well. He'd been Habeeb's field training officer in the Fourth District, and had also met Kraynik during that time. When Connelly was later promoted to lieutenant, he oversaw both Habeeb and Kraynik for two years on the district's Strike Force, a unit that handled priority assignments. (This special unit was eliminated in 2004, and its members reassigned to general detective bureaus, but detectives continue to refer to each other as "Strike Force.")

Connelly had moved to the narcotics division a few months earlier, and that's where Habeeb reached him by phone. Habeeb briefed Connelly on the latest robbery. Connelly told the detectives to begin gathering evidence for a search warrant.

Habeeb, 33 at the time and single, had joined the Cleveland force in 1997. In three years he worked his way into the Fourth District Strike Force. John Kraynik, 40 and also a bachelor, was working the Fourth District too. He'd been a cop since '96, and had joined the Strike Force in 2002.⁵

Now detectives, Habeeb and Kraynik were responsible for looking into violent and pattern crimes, like the pizza delivery robberies of 2005.

Their first encounter with Brandon had come on May 13, after a deliveryman reported that two men had held him up at knifepoint at 7712 Jeffries Ave. There had been a rash of similar crimes in the area. A neighbor told police that one man who had been robbed earlier was now carrying a crowbar to deliveries near Jeffries Avenue.

After the May 13 incident, responding officers checked out the phone number that had been given with the pizza order. It had been used before, and was listed in the restaurant's computer under "Brandon," at 7712 Jeffries Ave. Police made their way over.

A 14-year-old boy opened the door, and the officers heard someone running into the basement. The boy told detectives they could search the house, and told them that his cousin Brandon was hiding downstairs. Police found Brandon there, shirtless. In his room they saw a Marco's Pizza delivery bag. More pizza warmers were found in the backyard and behind the garage. An order receipt for that same day was on the kitchen table.

Brandon was arrested and taken to Fourth District, where detectives Habeeb and Kraynik interrogated him for hours. Brandon confessed to almost 12 robberies. He told the detectives that he would have young girls call for food deliveries, then rob the drivers, escape through backyards as he discarded his disguise, and come out on the next street.

"We cautioned him about his actions and tried to tell him it was a dead end," Habeeb told investigators later. Kraynik asked Brandon if he was going to keep it up. "McCloud just stared at me, put his head down and shrugged his shoulders."

Brandon spent two days in juvenile detention, but didn't plead guilty to anything. Dorothy was asked to pick him up.

"I was totally surprised that this had taken place," she told the Free Times. It was his first time in juvenile court, and his first documented offense, so the judge released Brandon on house arrest, and ordered him to wear an electronic ankle bracelet. He had to complete daily school sign-in sheets, perform 50 hours of community service, and give random urine screens. A juvenile jail sentence was suspended.

As Dorothy drove Brandon home, she asked him: "Brandon, did you really do this?"

"Yes."

"Why did you do this?"

"I dunno, grandma."

"Do you know you did something terrible? Why you do this? I mean, we don't have all the money in the world. And I'm working, and your uncle, we're doing the best we can. Why would you do this? Now I have to take off work, and I won't be making as much money now just because of something stupid. You didn't have to do this."

"This is the first time I ever tried doing anything like this," Brandon told her. Dorothy believed him, and still does. Referring to the complaint alleging eight or so robberies, she said, "I know that was a lie." And she remembers scolding Brandon, "You shouldn't ever, ever, confess to something you didn't do." She didn't really know who Brandon's friends were, and chalked the whole incident up to bad company.

Brandon carried around school sign-in sheets for the next three weeks. If he didn't fill out his own name or date, teachers signing off didn't bother to either. Several sheets end after the first period. Only Brandon's ninth-period English teacher seems to have put much effort into filling out the progress reports. In one dated May 18, she wrote, "Brandon has anger management problems. Brandon is angry with me for wanting him to stay in class. He wanted to go look for a hairbrush." May 24: "Completed all work today and continued to improve."

Brandon's probation officer sent positive feedback to the juvenile court judge. By June 16, the ankle bracelet was off, though Brandon remained on home detention. In mid-July, he pleaded guilty to one robbery count.

Dorothy agreed to buy Brandon new school clothes (he was about to start at South High), on one condition: No more messing around.

On August 11, a pizza deliveryman was robbed at 7716 Jeffries Ave., the house next to Brandon's.

11 p.m. to midnight

The phone number for the August 31 pizza order was for a house on East 86th Street. Detectives Habeeb and Kraynik drove there and spoke with Sharlita, who told them about the calls from a boy she thought was Jamal. The detectives also pulled more phone numbers from Sharlita's caller ID.

From there the detectives made their way back to Fourth District headquarters. Habeeb contacted police radio, and a dispatcher helped them trace the phone numbers. One was for Dorothy Chappell at 7712 Jeffries Ave. That wouldn't be enough to make an arrest — the victim had said he couldn't identify his assailant. This left Habeeb and Kraynik with two options: ask for consent to search and see if Brandon's guardian would let them question him, or get a search warrant.

Around midnight, Habeeb and Kraynik were back on Jeffries Avenue. They knocked several times at Brandon's door, but no one answered. So they watched the house for a bit, then circled the neighborhood to see if Brandon was walking the streets. Finally they decided to return to their desks and type up a search warrant.

2:55 a.m.

Their paperwork completed, the detectives called Judge Timothy McGinty. One of few Cuyahoga County Common Pleas judges residing in Cleveland, McGinty gets calls from police officers and detectives at odd hours almost daily.



Brandon McCloud - Waiting for another family member's court appearance at age 14.

McGinty was fast asleep when the phone rang. He knew Habeeb and Kraynik and thought highly of them, so he told them to come over. McGinty then went to wait on the couch, and nodded off until the doorbell woke him up. The three men walked into McGinty's dining room and discussed Brandon. McGinty signed the warrant.⁶

At about the same time, Dorothy McCloud got up to get ready for work. She left her street-facing room, across the hall from Brandon's, and went downstairs to take her diabetes medication. On the counter was a note Brandon had left for her, written in block letters on an index card:

grandma could I have 3 dollars for after school tommorow

it's ok if you don't have it grandma

Love

Grandma⁷

an grandma could you cook me some bacon an eggs thank you

Dorothy went outside to get the newspaper, then headed back upstairs to dress for work. She would make Brandon's breakfast before leaving.

3:30 to 4:11 a.m.

Habeeb and Kraynik returned to Jeffries Avenue. From the front porch of an abandoned house across the street from Brandon's, they looked for signs of waking inside the house, or for Brandon returning home.

At 4:07 Habib and Kraynik informed a patrol supervisor by cell phone that they were on a stakeout and planned to serve a search warrant. The supervisor said to call back when they were ready to go, and he'd send backup.

Minutes later the female police dispatcher who'd helped run phone numbers just before midnight called Habib on his cell phone.⁸

"What you doin' up there? Slowin down a bit?" Habib asked the woman. She had started her shift at 10:30 p.m., and would be on until 6:30 a.m.

"A little bit," she replied. "I was sitting here, nothing to do. And then I remembered you gave your number so Š so thought I'd call and harass you. I was gonna call and say, "Why aren't you home and in bed,' butŠ"

Habib laughed. "Yeah, there's a lot of people who'd like to know that answer."

The dispatcher wanted to know what had happened at the address she had pulled earlier, 7712 Jeffries. "We're down here," Habib told her. "We've got a search warrant on the house. We think the kid's in there, so we're just sittin' on it.⁹ He plead guilty to the last group, and he was nice enough to get fucking probation from the juvenile court, so Š"

"So are you waiting for movement from the house?" she asked.

"He's got a light on," Habib said. "We were here earlier, and no one was home. And now the lights are different. It looks like there's a light on in his bedroom. So we're just gonna sit on it for a while, and then hit it probably like in an hour or so." ¹⁰

"So if I hear you screaming like a girl, then I'll know that the kid's running," she joked.

"Yes. No, if you hear me out of breath, and barely audible, then you know he's running."

She laughed out loud. "Yeah, yeah, exactly. Then I'll know who it is too."

"Absolutely."

"Just Š shoot to kill," she said.

Both laughed again. "Absolutely," Habib said.

"All right, watch your house. Have fun," she said, then signed off.

4:45 a.m.

Brandon's uncle, Melvin, took the garbage out on the curb. Habib and Kraynik sat up. It was time to move.¹¹

At 4:54 the detectives called the patrol supervisor again. But there was a problem: Dispatch had just received word of a double homicide on East 113th Street. No zone cars were available to provide backup.

The detectives didn't want to wait. They didn't know how long any awake adults would remain in the house. The same dispatcher was still working police channel four, so they tried her again. The woman then called Fourth District patrol officers Shawn Smith and Marcus Jones, who had just gotten to their desks to file a report. Would they break from writing reports to assist two Strike Force detectives? Smith agreed and radioed over to Habeeb. Meet them on Jeffries Avenue, Habeeb told Smith, and come down the street with the car lights off.

4:59 a.m.

Dressed for work and back in the kitchen, Dorothy took three dollar bills from her purse and left them on top of Brandon's note, along with a red apple.

The eggs and bacon were already cooked, and she planned to leave the plate in the microwave so Brandon could heat it up when he came down. But Melvin said that Brandon might not look in there, so Dorothy covered the plate with tinfoil and left it on the stove.

Then she walked out the back door.

5:10 a.m.

When Officers Jones and Smith rode up Jeffries, Habeeb walked over to meet them. Someone was definitely home, Habeeb informed his backup. Habeeb showed them Brandon's picture, and said he probably wasn't home.¹² If he was, the plan was to detain and question him. After the detectives cleared the house, the two officers would chaperone anyone found inside while Habeeb and Kraynik executed the search.

All four officers approached 7712 Jeffries. Smith took a position in the backyard, while Jones stood at the bottom of the front porch. Habeeb propped open the screen. There was no bell, so Kraynik rapped on the door.

Melvin had just flushed the toilet upstairs when he heard a knock. He thought Dorothy had forgotten something. Assuming Brandon was asleep, Melvin walked downstairs and opened the door in a t-shirt and shorts. He was shocked to find two officers with guns drawn.

Both detectives were in gray-colored short-sleeve shirts, jeans and casual shoes. They were wearing black bulletproof vests over their shirts that had "Police" stamped across the front in large block letters.

Cleveland Police, Melvin was informed, with a search warrant for the premises.

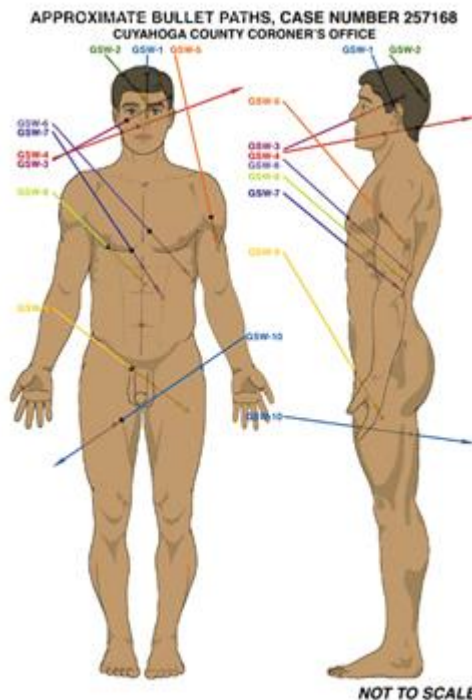
Melvin asked to see the warrant first. He was told that as soon as the house was cleared, they'd show it to him and explain everything.

"Is anybody else in the home?" Kraynik asked.13

"Just my mom, she's getting ready for work," Melvin said.

"Are you sure?" Kraynik asked again.

"Yeah."



10 Bullets - Six bullets came out of Habeeb's gun; four came from Kraynik's weapon.

The detectives called Jones to the front porch, and told him to wait with Melvin. Then they entered the living room with flashlights and guns drawn.

5:12 a.m.

In the garage, Dorothy switched off the car alarm, started the engine and turned the headlights on. As she opened the manual garage door, she was startled by the sight of a figure approaching with a flashlight. As the person drew closer, Dorothy saw a gun to his side.

"Hey, ma'am?"

"Yes?"

"Do you live here?"

"Yes, I do."

5:13 a.m.

Habeeb walked straight into the living room, and Kraynik shifted right, into the dining room. Habeeb covered the stairwell while Kraynik checked the living room. Then they headed upstairs.

Smith's voice came over Habeeb's radio: "Let 'em know I got the grandmother out here in the back, in the garage, getting ready to go to work."

Kraynik lined up behind Habeeb in the dark, narrow stairwell. "Cleveland Police," they announced.¹⁴ Habeeb proceeded up the stairs, and Kraynik placed his left hand on Habeeb's back to guide him. Both detectives kept their Glock 9mm's drawn in their right hands.

At the top of the stairs was a bedroom. Kraynik covered the hallway.

"Cleveland Police," Habeeb yelled before he entered and made a quick scan. Clear.

Back in the hallway, they quickly moved a few feet forward. Kraynik shined his flashlight into the bathroom. Empty. Several more steps down the hallway, there were two more bedrooms, one with its door closed. Habeeb covered the closed door while Kraynik cleared the second bedroom. As he came out, he closed the door behind him and lined up again behind Habeeb.

They approached the last door.

"Cleveland Police," Habeeb shouted, then turned the knob and pushed the door open.

5:14

Outside, by the garage, patrol officer Smith asked Dorothy more questions.

"Does anyone else live here besides you?"

"Yes, my son and my grandson."

"How old is your son?"

"He's 37. My grandson is 15."

Smith told her about the detectives' search warrant.

On the porch, Melvin asked Jones, "What's going on?"

The officer explained the situation¹⁵, but Melvin was confused. Brandon was already on home detention for the robbery back in May 2005. It was all over and done with.

This was for another robbery the day before, Jones said. Was Melvin sure his nephew was inside the house?

Positive, Melvin said.

Jones asked again.

Melvin explained again that Brandon had been in the house when Melvin went to sleep. But Officer Jones never got a chance to relay this information to the detectives upstairs.

5:15

Habeeb's flashlight lit the room as he entered. Something was keeping the door from opening completely. It was the mattress on the floor, Habeeb realized. He quickly stepped onto and over the mattress, and swept his flashlight behind the door. Clear. He was now behind the door, his feet back on the floor. He scanned the room with his flashlight, and spotted Brandon in the closet, back against the wall, face turned away, hands by his waist.

Kraynik didn't know what was stopping the door but entered the room anyway. Habeeb had gone right, so Kraynik went left. His body was perpendicular to the door, and facing the closet. His left shoulder was against a wall; his right foot braced against the mattress. He could see Brandon's right shoulder, but nothing else.

"Come out of the closet and put your hands up," Habeeb ordered.

Brandon turned to face Habeeb. In the flashlight's glow, Habeeb recognized Brandon, who was only wearing a pair of blue plaid boxer shorts, and kept his gun trained on him. Kraynik too had his gun raised, and his flashlight aimed at the closet. He repeated Habeeb's commands

"Come out of the closet. Show us your hands."

Brandon seemed to keep turning, but did nothing else. Habeeb saw a knife in Brandon's right hand, the 5-inch blade pointed at the ceiling. "Drop the knife!" the detective ordered. "Drop the knife!"

Brandon leapt out of the closet. That's when Kraynik saw the blade too. "Knife!" he yelled.

Brandon raised his right hand and lunged, as if to step on the mattress. He was about seven feet away from Habib, and five and a half feet from Kraynik.¹⁶

Both officers opened fire.

Hearing shots, Melvin and Officer Jones crouched down on the front porch. Melvin tried to get into the house, but Jones pulled him out of the doorway.

"Get out of the house," he yelled. "Do you hear me? Do you hear me?"

Smith, in the back with Dorothy, told her to take cover behind her car.

"Tell them don't shoot back here," Dorothy told him. She thought the gunfire was up front, outside her house.

"I got you covered," Smith said, then ran up.



Inside the closet - Brandon's blood spilled on to several pairs of shoes and the carpet underneath.

Dorothy sat inside her car because "I didn't know if I should duck or what."

5:15:35

Kraynik didn't stop shooting until Brandon's body had been pushed back a few feet by the force of the bullets. Finally he crumpled to the floor and into the closet.

Smith's voice came over the radio: "Shots fired! Radio! Shots fired!"

"Are you in pursuit?" the dispatcher asked.

Another voice added, "Male down. Multiple gunshot wounds. EMS."

Habib stepped back onto the bed as blood poured out of Brandon's chest. Habib called out to police radio, his voice frantic: "Shots fired. 7-7-1-2 Jeffries. Suspect down. Officers involved. EMS and a supervisor ASAP. Step 'em up."

There were 10 shots in Brandon: four from Kraynik's gun, six from Habeeb's.

Kraynik's right ear was ringing, his hearing muffled. He moved toward Brandon's body to determine if he was still a threat. Satisfied that he wasn't, Kraynik returned to the hallway, thinking about the rest of the house. On their way in, they'd only checked the rooms in their path to the second floor. In May 2005, Brandon had been found hiding in the basement. What if another accomplice was there now?

Kraynik yelled to the other officers, informing them that the detectives were okay and that they were now going to secure the kitchen and basement.

Habeeb turned on lights in Brandon's room and the hallway, then went to join Kraynik.

"We haven't gone further than the second floor," Habeeb radioed. "I don't know if we can get upstairs." He also noted that the basement hadn't been checked.

The detectives were panting.

5:19

Kraynik and Habeeb exited through the front door.

"We need to separate," Kraynik told Habeeb, and walked down the street. Habeeb stayed on the porch. Standing there, he made one last radio broadcast: "House is secured. Suspect ain't goin' nowhere. No vitals. We're checkin' him, he's got nothin'. Step up EMS, please."

Officer Smith went back for Dorothy. "Ma'am, shut your car off and come with me," he said, then walked ahead of her to the front.

Melvin was standing there, crying. Dorothy went to him.

"Mom," he said, "they killed Brandon."

5:25

After leaving the front porch, Kraynik walked about 150 feet east on Jeffries Avenue.

Mark Williams was outside, having heard the gunshots while getting ready for work. On the other side of some bushes, Williams heard a male voice.

"It's a fatality." The voice was frustrated and emotional. "I fucked up. I fucked up."

[Part 2: The investigation of the shooting.](#)

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Footnotes

1. The two boys had made it over to Brandon's house shortly after school, around 2:30 p.m. They talked a little, according to Jamal, but mostly wrote raps. They'd drink alcohol together. Once, Jamal said, Brandon had been bold enough to sneak into his uncle's room, and take a new bottle of Three Olives vodka. After a few swigs each, Brandon put the bottle back.

At one point that August 31 afternoon, Brandon and Jamal walked to a rap booth, inside a house two doors away, to record some of their lyrics. But eventually, they returned to Brandon's house.

2. Jamal denied to police that he'd called anyone but his mother from Brandon's house that day. Phone records show that the call to Sharlita's house was made within minutes of Jamal calling home.
3. Around Aug. 24, 2005, another police detective had conducted a consent search of Brandon's home, and was in the process of getting phone records.
4. The next day, the owner of 7917 Jeffries Ave. found a steak knife in his backyard.
5. As a former prison guard, Philip Habeeb had been stabbed before. "I know what it feels like to be cut," he would tell investigators.

Personnel files don't reveal anything out of the ordinary for either officer. At one point, Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Judge Timothy McGinty commended Habeeb for interviewing skills that helped convict a man. Only a Plain Dealer story indicates that Habeeb was involved in a prior use-of-deadly-force incident. In 2000, Habeeb shot and injured a man who struck him with a car, then attempted to flee.

6. Habeeb later summed up the need for urgency: "I knew enough about Brandon McCloud and his propensity to commit violent robberies. It would be unreasonable to put off the possible collection of evidence and/or an arrest. It would be improper to come back another day when that day he could have robbed or possibly hurt another person."
7. Dorothy explained that Brandon must have meant to sign his own name, but mistakenly wrote grandma again.
8. These are excerpts from a conversation that lasted four minutes.
9. But in his later statement, Habeeb indicated that neither he nor Kraynik believed Brandon was in the house.
10. It's unclear why the two detectives didn't move at this time, when they observed lights in the house.

11. "If we knew they were up, it would be easier to execute the search warrant," Habeeb told investigators. "We wanted to look for the evidence; that was our main purpose for being there. If Brandon was in the home, then that would be all the better because we could question him in front of his guardians.

... We saw no need to forcibly enter the home and do damage after the owner had left for work."

12. This contradicted what the detectives had told the female dispatcher about 30 minutes earlier.
13. Melvin, however, doesn't remember the detectives asking who was inside. If they did, he didn't have time to respond "because they were rummaging through the house before I could say anything."
14. Melvin and Officer Jones, who were about three feet from the front door, told investigators they didn't know if the detectives said anything while inside the house.
15. Melvin doesn't remember getting an answer.
16. Each officer said later that he thought Brandon was coming at him. "He was almost already on top of me," Kraynik told investigators. "I thought he was coming at me. I looked and saw that knife right there, I thought he was coming at me." Habeeb said: "I feared he was going to kill me. And I knew I had to stop him."

Brandon's family, however, continues to wonder, if he was upright when all the shots went off, then how did one bullet enter the bottom of his groin?

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