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CALL FOR THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF KATOINE RICHARDSON

On Sunday Oct. 10th, 19-year old Katoine Richardson was heading home from work when Madison police officers chased him down and wrestled him to the pavement for breaking curfew. In the struggle, one of the police officers is believed to have shot the other officer with their service weapon, but in a pathetic attempt to avoid showing the community how incompetent they are, the police subsequently released a statement that heavily criminalized Katoine and implied he was the one who shot the officer. The statement described him as a “wanted subject” and completely failed to mention that he was just attempting to walk home after work when police began harassing him, chasing him, and brutalizing him.

This police statement led to multiple news outlets framing this youth as an attempted cop killer, many of which have still not corrected this false narrative despite court documents being released saying that Katoine never even so much as fired a gun, let alone shot someone. There is also ambiguity around if an officer was actually shot at all. In actuality, the police chased Katoine down, brutalized him, and kidnapped him for walking--an experience that is all too common for Black youth. This is also not the first time Katoine has been criminalized by police for simply existing--he's been targeted for not being able to pay bond, being outside at night, and attempting to escape police violence. When the stories and statements came out implying that Katoine shot the officer his bail was set at a staggering \$50,000--later reduced to \$16,000. Katoine is currently still incarcerated, but the cops and news reporters whose lies further criminalized him are not currently facing any charges.

This traumatic experience has forced Katoine back into a cycle of criminalization that is made intentionally impossible for Black youth to escape. The police repeatedly emphasized that Katoine was holding a firearm as a means for justifying his violent arrest, but Katoine said he kept a gun on him because he did not feel safe in Madison. His public defender Stan Woodard shared that Katoine has experienced so much trauma at the hands of the police and the court systems that he was contemplating suicide when he ran from the police:

“Quite frankly he wanted to die. He just felt like things are just going so bad for him, he's got these cases and he feels that some of them are not merit-worthy and as a result of that he wanted to give up.”

The police stopping, brutalizing, and kidnapping Katoine in no way served public safety. Their incompetence endangered the life of someone they were supposedly sworn to protect, as well

as the lives of those on State Street, one of the busiest areas in Madison. This reckless, racist behavior again demonstrates why we do not need police in our communities when all they do is criminalize young Black youth, especially those who are low-to-no income, femme, trans, and queer. Many youth in a similar position to Katoine would have similarly chosen to risk their lives running from the police instead of turning themselves in and trusting the police with their lives.

Katoine's bail must be immediately dropped. There is no reason why he is being held on bail when the fault of the accident is entirely on the officers involved. All other Black people must be released from systems of policing, including that of detention centers and cash bail. We must immediately defund MPD and abolish policing, close all prisons and jails, and instead invest resources into our own communities for community control and infrastructure that would keep us safe and our needs met.

If you are able, please donate to Free the 350 bail fund, so that we may continue our mission to #FREETHEMALL:

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