

Episode 1

- Courtney got a BMW convertible when he was 21, and adored it
- Courtney died at 22 from a bullet in his back, not even a year after he got the BMW
- Parent and friend testimony paint Courtney as a guy who loved life and was willing to work hard to achieve his goals
- News reports say he was travelling to a friend's house before he died
- "Chicago police have one of the lowest murder solved rates in the country (US) (47% when victim is white), and it's even lower if you're black (22%)
 - This compels Shapearl Wells to figure out the true story behind who killed her son because the police can't be trusted/won't do it

Courtney Copeland in life:

- Born a day after Wells' 21st birthday
- Would spend all his money on: food, clothes, haircuts, shoes
- Called "Gucci" in high school
 - Further speaks to how much he spent on clothes
- Loyal to his friends
 - Loyal specifically to Chancellor Bennet (Chance the Rapper) as he would pass CDs of Chance's music to others, knowing that "this guy was gonna be big"
- Attended Jones College Preparatory School, one of the top schools in Chicago
 - Was on the basketball team, helped them win city championship
- Got a tattoo of a basketball across his chest that read: "Ball till I fall"
 - Wells is a religious person and believes that tattoos are a "desecration of the body"
 - Courtney clearly wasn't afraid to refuse this aspect of his religion, and even gloated with to his mom with another tattoo that read: "mama's boy"
- Courtney got a partial scholarship to play basketball in Indiana, but family couldn't afford the tuition, which meant that he could only play for a semester
 - Black generations struggle to get out of poverty as a consequence of historical oppression and an inability to acquire education past high school. They are left forced to work jobs on some of the lowest tiers of society. These are required but don't pay well
- Became a janitor at Dunkin' Donuts after coming back home, and then friend got him to work for World Ventures where he signed member for discount vacations
- Courtney's attitude shifted with his drive to make it to the top of the business
- He signed so many people in his first year that World Ventures leased his BMW
- Courtney first asked his mom but then asked his friend Christian Hernandez to cosign for the car
 - Hernandez's name ends up on the registration, but not Courtney's name. This becomes a problem if Courtney drives in the car, which he did all the time. As a black man, he's at added risk during police stops. ← This shouldn't be true, but it is
- Went on a trip to Cancun a few months before he died
 - He clearly felt like he earned the vacation

Last day of Courtney's life

- Helped a friend move a sofa
- Was thinking of applying to be an at-home caregiver for his grandmother
- Gave a presentation for World Ventures

- Was going to go on a road trip for the weekend the next day with his friend Chris (meets him ~ midnight)
- Had a book called “Think and grow rich”, was on chapter 3, that left a strong impression with Chris
 - Chris thought that Courtney was clearly very well off
- Courtney has a coworker girlfriend he’s dating he went to see her
 - News reports say that his family claimed he was heading to a friend’s place
 - Did they just say friend to minimize risk to the girlfriend?
- Makes a post about how hopeful he is for his future and how much he believes in himself before making the post
- A hospital transfers him to a hospital in Cicero, they say:
 - Courtney’s full name: Courtney Copeland
 - Where he was going: Police station close to where he had been shot
 - Whether or not to tell the family what the injury is: Other hospital says no
- Cicero police came to the family house at 2 am to get the family to go to the hospital
- Courtney was known for texting and driving, and Wells thought that he had been involved in an auto accident
- Family is asked to go to the family room, but they know exactly what the family room means
 - They dread going in. Dread, not fear.
- Their grief turns into confusion when they’re told that Courtney died from a gunshot wound
- Police tell family what they know:
 - Courtney was shot in the car
 - Drove himself to the police station, jumped out to tell a police officer, car was still moving
 - The police officer told Courtney to put the car in park, he does so
 - Courtney runs back and says “I’ve been shot”, before collapsing
- Wells feels suspicious when the detective wanted to ask her some questions
 - Asked her if Courtney was the owner of the BMW
 - Courtney’s name wasn’t on the registration for the car, Wells thinks that maybe her son’s death started as a police stop gone wrong
 - Is there a factor of a stage of grief here? She may have experienced the stages of grief very quickly, which is possible
 - References Philando Castile, a 32-year-old black man who was shot and killed in a traffic stop by a 29-year-old Latino police officer
 - The mistrust black people have for the police is present for black people across America. It doesn’t matter which state you live in because the prejudice against black people can be found everywhere. This leaves black communities further isolated as they can’t trust their local law enforcement because of stories from other states
 - Wells thinks that Courtney’s name didn’t show up when the police officer ran his plates, leading to confrontation
- Courtney Copeland’s family put up a reward for increasing amounts to \$10,000 for answers but no replies
- Wells tried to keep Courtney’s story alive by going on news shows
 - Wells goes on “Jamaica Funk” to try and get answers

- This is weird. From other true crime podcasts, when people want to get on the news, they go onto major networks that almost everyone watches in the area, sometimes even national news. Is this so common that Wells is turned away from major networks or is there an element of racism here?
- (FROM RTD) Perhaps Jamaica Funk could reach people more similar to herself, they'd be able to relate to her story and connect with her more
 - She could have also reached out to Jamaica Funk for support, and reaching out to a white-dominant station would make her feel further isolated
 - Other notable news sources may have treated her in a very accusatory way, and wanted more support for her own perspective
 - She may have feared that the news
- Wells also had to defend his name as police suspected Courtney Copeland of various things
 - News: "Police say Copeland was *not* a gang member"
 - Wells: Why was he even suspected of being a gang member
- Wells: "How many children have to die, How many black children have to die in Chicago"
 - Black people are very aware of the prejudice and brutality they and other members of the community face
- Someone tells Wells that Courtney was on the ground with cops standing around him, bystander feels like police did something to him
 - Bystander doesn't offer more information because of fear that the police will come after him
 - Further public mistrust in the police - In their eyes, the police are no better than the mafia
- Tow truck driver
 - Has a video of Courtney laying on the ground, lights flashing, nothing happening
 - "The police did it"
- Courtney has his mom listed as "Uh oh !!!" ← Ngl this is pretty funny

Episode 2

- "I am somebody"
 - The people "in charge" keep trying to devalue black people, but black people have fought tooth and nail for their rights
- Keep hope alive, a show hosted by Rev. Jesse Jackson and his daughter Santita Jackson
 - Airs on WVON: "The voice of the nation", used to be called: "The voice of the negro"
- Wells seeks counsel or recourse not from the police in the moments after she learns of her son's death but Santita Jackson because Santita Jackson has connections that can help her out
- Santita tells her to write and record everything that she's experiencing
 - "Coverup happens a day or so after, but in the beginning, you get the truth"
 - Doesn't seem like her first rodeo
- Wells records her experiences at the hospital, and she is already questioning the officers while grieving, and she tells her own version of the story
 - Her story is: Courtney was a black man driving a car in a Hispanic area that was registered to a non-black sounding name
- Police called Christian Hernandez (cosigner of BMW, his name is on the car's registration and not Courtney's) right after Courtney died to learn who the real owner of the car was

- So you're telling me that the police didn't know who the real owner of the car was until Courtney had died?
- Police know that Courtney has a criminal record because Courtney and his friends had used a debit card they found to buy chicken when they were 17
 - They were arrested, and Courtney was given an IR number
- Wells, Renee (Wells' mother), Brent (Courtney's father) met with three police officers (one of them is a Sergeant Mitchell)
- Police officers cannot give out names of the officers but say that they comforted Courtney and tried to get help right away
- The police officers that met with them hadn't spoken to the police officers that were first on the scene and only knew cursory details
- Cameras around the police station don't work, lack of funding that police officers themselves complain about
 - When Wells had talked to one of the detectives about the meeting, the detective claimed to have seen a video from the cameras
- Information about Courtney's death came from the grapevine rather than an official police information outlet
 - Started at the hospital. Someone told a friend, who told Wells' uncle Marvin on the West end, who told Wells' mom in the North.
 - The rumour was that Courtney was combative
- Police told Wells that Courtney had collapsed at the station, so how did he become combative and he was already in cardiac arrest when he had gotten to the hospital
- Wells finds the EMT report on Courtney which says:
 - Courtney was combative, violent, a danger to others
 - Handcuffed to the trauma bed
- Wells: Why would the police handcuff Courtney if he's dying unless they think he's a suspect of some kind
- Wells has a serendipitous run-in with Clarissa Hawkins, the ER nurse that comforted Wells when she learned of her son's death. She cut Courtney's clothes to perform medical procedure
- Hawkins says that Courtney's right hand was initially handcuffed to the stretcher, which became a problem since they needed to transfer him to a hospital bed
- Hawkins says that she never got a report about Courtney being combative
 - There are a lot of protocols that hospitals follow for a combative patient, so either this was a grand oversight on the hospital's behalf or Courtney wasn't combative
- There was no blood in the car, which is odd considering that police claimed that Courtney had been shot in the car
- The police still had Courtney's iPhone for evidence and Wells got it back a few weeks later, with a cracked screen and unlocked phone

Episode 3

- There's a recorded call moments after Courtney's been shot, can barely hear him saying "I've been shot! I've been shot!"
- Courtney's most recent call on his phone was to 911, which never surfaced to Wells for the police investigation
 - Wells: "Did my son call 911?"
 - Police: "You tell me!"

- This is perhaps the worst response you can give a mother grieving over the death of her son. Not knowing whether Courtney dialed 9-1-1 speaks to the police's either incompetence or wilful ignorance of the value of Courtney's life
- Turns out police did know that Courtney had dialed 9-1-1, but didn't tell Wells
 - I say doubt
- Wells felt like "We are the average black family trying to fight against the city in every way we can, we hear the doors being slammed in our face"
 - This connects back to why Wells went to Santita Jackson for help - the trust between black communities and America is only further degraded when the American systems that are meant to protect them instead kill and murder them and their children
 - More commentary about this us vs. them mentality...
- References Laquan McDonald and the following scandal for the Chicago Police
 - Laquan was shot 16 times in the front and the back as he ran from police
 - He was 17 years old
 - CPD and the city tried to coverup the case and videos until a judge forced them to release case information
 - The video shows officer Van Dyke shooting and killing Laquan McDonald
 - Few in the black community were surprised to hear this, but America was very surprised - this sparked a national debate about race and police brutality
 - The initial explanation was "self-defence"
 - Aggressive journalism, specifically by Jamie Cowell, revealed the truth about the case
 - Jamie's team, named the "Invisible Institute", agreed to take the case, Wells was referred to his partner Allison Flowers
- Together with Allison Flowers, Wells pulled police records from the day and found two major players: Officers Andrew Block, and Sergeant Sean Ronan
- Courtney rushed to Block, said "I've been shot", and then collapsed
- Block immediately called an ambulance, as per protocol
- Block is now a lieutenant
- Sergeant Sean Ronan had 30 complaints against him, more than 80% of complaints against other police officers
 - Checkered history since most complaints against police officers in Chicago are dismissed in favour of police officers → His offences had to be so drastic that they couldn't be ignored
 - He was disciplined twice
 - He was on record, calling black people: "nigga", "motherfucker", "stupid ass gangbanger"
 - Accused of false arrest, planting evidence, slamming a man's face into the concrete
 - He and some other officers were accused of throwing a man out of a window, tazing and beating him, and then refusing him medical care
 - This case was settled, and Ronan stayed on the force
 - There's a video of Ronan shooting at a man during a traffic stop
 - Police reports say that the man pointed a gun at the officers, but the man survived
 - Ronan was involved in another shooting, but he was given one of Chicago's top awards: The superintendent's medal of valour

- Not only is there little to no opposition to anti-black racism in the police department, but it is blatantly carried out and perpetrators awarded for their actions
- “Some officers never fire their firearms over their entire career, but the fact that Ronan’s done this is a big deal”
- The invisible institute sent many record requests to the department for records of the officers on the scene, police videos, and recordings from the scanner
- *Shapearl’s Second Meeting with the Chicago Police*
 - Biggest question: Why was Courtney handcuffed and did the police know about it?
 - Police justify their actions as necessary to put restraints on Courtney
 - Basically unproductive
- Shapearl has video evidence that Courtney is on the ground surrounded by police, trying to reach for help.
 - This is where they believe that Courtney is being combative, so they handcuff him and throw him into the ambulance
- Upon analyzing the video evidence, they had more evidence to show that the police may not have shot Courtney
 - Shapearl feels like Courtney’s death may have served a greater purpose if there was foul play, like Laquan McDonald or Philando Castile
- Clear difference between how white kids are taught to rely on the police and how black children are taught to fear the police
 - Due to long, intergenerational trauma
- When Shapearl and co. return to the crime scene, a police officer shows up later to ask them to move over to not block traffic

Analysis from RTD:

- Legislation as a way to genuinely combat racism
- Implicit bias from the police officers
- Why are police officers bystanders when the police officers themselves are bystanders
- Check out harper high school and racism here as part of This American Life

Episode 4

- Shapearl desperately wants to believe that Courtney could have been saved
- Courtney had a lot of female friends at World Ventures
- Courtney had a secret girlfriend named Alma, and was heading to her house the day that he was killed
 - Alma was in a rough neighbourhood
- After a year since Shapearl’s last meeting with the police (two years after Courtney’s death), the only update in his file was that “there are no updates”
- Gave Courtney’s phone to a digital forensics expert
 - Difficult to give Courtney’s phone away temporarily because the phone was all Shapearl had of Courtney
- Courtney visited Alma a lot, with a clear routine of parking the car at the church and then going to Alma’s home
- Courtney’s cousin punched Alma in the face shortly after meeting her because they were confused why Courtney would be in her neighbourhood (a hispanic neighbourhood) at all
- Alma wasn’t completely forthcoming with information

- Does this point to a larger issue of black people not sharing information *within* their own communities?

Episode 5

- Police didn't follow up on Edgar, who saw three potential suspects driving in a Grand Marquis shortly after Courtney was shot

Episode 6

- Had the police followed up on Edgar, they would have learned about a possible connection between Randall's 9-1-1 call placed about three people in a Grand Marquis tossing a pistol and Courtney's murder
- All three have done time and have a long history with law enforcement
- Police initially dismissed Randall's call about the three people in the Grand Marquis
- Shapearl learned that all three of the men in the Grand Marquis are part of the Stylers gang through her own investigation
- Invisible Institute did a double-blind mugshot room with Edgar to see if he saw the same people in the car that Shapearl suspected were in the car
- Even after handing over their investigation to the police and the police recognizing that they needed to follow up on Edgar, the police did nothing, as of a year after that meeting

Episode 7

- City lawyers dismiss what Shapearl believes to be facts of the case, i.e. Courtney was handcuffed
- Eventually, Shapearl's lawyers suggest that the best choice is to dismiss the case - it was too hard to try and win this case
- In Philadelphia, police do "scoop and runs" where they drive people who are hurt directly to the hospital
 - For a specific person [], he believes that if he were shot in any other major city, he may not have survived

RTD:

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