JOY REID: This is Ma’Khia Bryant, just 16 years old looking, very much like 16-year-olds do, doing her hair in the tutorials she once posted on TikTok, like this one, that is set to Bryson Tiller’s *Just Another Interlude*, looking adorable, exhibiting youth and joy and we wish her TikToks were a reason why Ma’Khia has risen to prominence, but, instead, it’s the other video that we’re about to show you, the body camera video showing her shot and killed by a police officer in Columbus, Ohio, minutes before a guilty verdict was announced in the murder trial of Derek Chauvin. Now, a warning: It is disturbing. We’re going to freeze the video before the shots are fired. Here it is.

[BODY CAMERA FOOTAGE OF BRYANT SHOOTING]

REID: The Columbus police held a news conference today, where they played two 911 calls. They do not share who made those calls. Police say Bryant threatened two girls with a knife. The police chief was then asked about one of the underlying issues of police reform, the use of deadly force.

DAVID BEGNAUD: To what degree should an officer opt to use a Taser, rather than his service weapon?

MICHAEL WOODS, INTERIM COLUMBUS, OHIO, POLICE CHIEF: I cannot respond specifically to this specific incident. But what I can say is, when officers are faced with someone employing deadly force, deadly force can be the response the officer gives. [SCREEN WIPE] If there’s not deadly force being perpetrated on someone else at that time, an officer may have the opportunity to have cover, distance, and time to use a taser. But if those things aren’t present, and there is an active assault going on, in which someone could lose their life, the officer can use their firearm to protect that third person.

REID: I’m joined now by San Francisco District Attorney Chesa Boudin and Lieutenant Cheryl Orange of the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department and a member of the Ethical Society of Police. Thank you both for being here and I want to start with you, Lieutenant Orange, because, you know, my assumption is that this officer is going to be cleared, right? I mean, this is the way — this is going to go down the way most of these shooting cases go down, because police have tremendous latitude to use deadly force. Fine. But the problem is, at this point, everything police say to me is just a claim that needs to be proven, even if there’s a — I mean, unless they’re full accounting. They won’t tell us who made the 911 call. Neighbors say that the little girl, that Ma’Khia made the 911 call. They aren’t telling us that. They aren’t being fully transparent here. That’s why it’s very difficult to trust what they’re saying. So, as you look at the circumstances of this, can you just walk us through how police should act in a case like this? Because, you know, I was saying on my Instagram earlier, I remember fights in even high school or even younger than that where a kid brought a pen knife or something to school, and teachers were able to defuse that
and they didn’t have guns. So what do you make of the, what, 10, 20 seconds this officer took before he opened fire on this little girl?

ST. LOUIS METRO PD LT. CHERYL ORANGE: Yes, Joy. Well, first of all, the most important thing that we got to recognize is that a 15-year-old girl lost her life and that is very tragic. One of the things that, as police officers, that we must have is — number one, is empathy and compassion and to do that, you have to understand, first of all, what you’re dealing with and hearing — I guess that was the police chief, who said that, in many cases, when you have deadly force, that, as law enforcement officers, we can legally use deadly force. But we’re talking about a child here that was involved in the altercation with someone else and, yes, I believe there was a weapon. Now, I could not see how the young lady was using the weapon. You know, I can’t really speak to that. But the main thing is, is that, as law enforcement officers, it’s our job to make an assessment and then make a decision. But, at the end of the day, we are talking about a 15-year-old girl that has lost her life tragically. Now, could something else be done? It’s a possibility. But it’s — that death speaks to each individual officer and how they assess that situation.

REID: And, very quickly, before I bring into the DA — and this is going to flip — I’m sorry — this is one I want to use, for my team. Somebody — one of the officers who responded to the scene had on a Blue Lives Matter face mask. Social media has shown videos of people yelling at somebody who yells, Blue Lives Matter. We don’t know whether it was one of the police. But if people — if cops are showing up to the scene of a shooting of somebody, and there’s people in pink jump suits running around and girls — teenage girls running around, and your response to that, given the sensitivities we’re in right now, on the day of the George Floyd verdict, is to self in a Blue Lives Matter mask, what message do you think that is sending to the community and to black people in general about your value for human life?

ORANGE: Well, yes, ma’am. I think that is — me personally — is very disrespectful and unprofessional, because you need to be — again, like I said earlier, you need to show some kind of empathy and to actually use empathy, you got to have understanding. You have to have some knowledge base and, to me, that would be just really insensitive, because it’s like right out in your face: Yes, you talk about Black Lives Matter, but Blue Lives Matter also. But what about people like myself, who both black and blue?

REID: Right, right and that’s a very good point. Okay, so I want to bring you in. Thank you for being here, Mr. Boudin, because you are doing some things that are a bit different in the way that you’re trying to sort of — sort of operate the sort of police/justice that does work in tandem. First thing I want to talk about is the fact that, when police shootings happen, journalists generally tend to rely on the statements that come out of police departments. But we have seen in multiple cases that that is not a good idea, because we’re not necessarily getting the truth. In the Walter Scott case — this was in South Carolina — police alleged that there was a struggle, that the man — you know, that the man gained control of the Taser, tried to use it against the officer, the officer then resorted use his service weapon. That was a lie. It turns out that, because there was person that had a camera that showed on video, that, actually, that was not true. We saw the same thing happened with George Floyd. Police put out an official statement: The suspect needed to
get in handcuffs and he had a medical distress situation. Lie. We’ve now seen that happen multiple times, that we cannot necessarily trust the statements that come out of law enforcement when we see these incidents happen. There’s that and then when people like yourself try to sort of change the way we’re doing it and say, okay, we’re going to take police out of these situations, we won’t have them arrest people for having weed, we won’t have people arrest — you know, arrest people for, you know, prostitution and other crimes, let me show you a couple of headlines about you. A thing called Law Enforcement Today called you the son of cop killers, and went after you in really nasty terms, simply because you had eased a policy on police stops. So, they’re mad at you and put out this to law enforcement that they’re reading about it. So, like, there’s a hostile — there’s a not being honest with the public piece, and then there’s a being hostile to people like you who try to change things piece. So, what do we do about that?

CHESA BOUDIN: Well, Joy, thanks for having me on and thanks for covering such critical issues to public safety and public trust in law enforcement. In San Francisco, we’re working every day to restore the trust that communities, especially communities of color, have in law enforcement. We know we can’t build public safety if we continue to have unnecessary loss of life at the hands of police and so I’m really proud of the work we’re doing in San Francisco. I have a dedicated unit that shows up to the scene of any officer-involved shooting and we take the lead on investigating what happened and whether or not we should file criminal charges. Last year, I implemented a policy treating victims of police violence like victims of any other violent crime. We provide them with the same services and the same benefits and I’m proud that we also sponsored a state law that would make my local policy effective all across the state of California. We have a long way to go and the verdict yesterday in the George Floyd trial, that was one case. That was an aberration. That was an anomaly. We have these kinds of cases happening all day, every day and it is really rare that there is the political courage or the evidence or the expertise or a police chief willing to get on the stand and testify against one of his own. We need to remember that, since George Floyd’s trial started, since the evidence was first presented to that jury, we have had more than 60 people across the country killed at the hands of law enforcement. Most of those —

REID: Yeah.

BOUDIN: — cases will never result in a criminal charge or a trial. And we have got to do a lot of work to change the culture.

REID: Very quickly, before I let you go, Mr. Boudin, my last question to you. Do you think part of the issue is that police are essentially gaining revenue for cities by pulling people over, and so they’re targeting communities that basically can’t fight back, poorer communities, communities of color, and that police maybe shouldn’t be doing that kind of policing that generates money for the city? Is that part of the issue, do you think?

BOUDIN: There’s definitely a financial interest. You know, you look at the role police unions play in a lot of these policies and protecting a lot of bad actors. This is an issue that I know, you know, the Ethical Society of Policing is really proactive on, right? We need to speak out and denounce misconduct and criminal activity, even if it’s amongst our own colleagues or within
our ranks.

REID: Yeah.

BOUDIN: It is essential to the well-being and safety of all the officers doing a good job that we hold those accountable who violate our trust.

REID: Indeed. We’ll have you guys back. We want to have more of a discussion on this. Chesa Boudin, as well as Lieutenant Cheryl Orange, thank you both very much.