



## What I Learned at the Police Academy

**Samantha Simon**, University of Arizona

Sonya Massey was just holding a pot of water in her own kitchen when an Illinois sheriff's deputy, Sean Grayson, threatened to "fucking shoot" her in the "fucking face." The body-camera footage from that night shows how quickly an interaction with a police officer can become deadly: In a matter of minutes, Massey's call for service turned into a murder scene. Throughout the interaction, Massey followed Grayson's commands. Despite her compliance, Grayson drew his pistol, aimed it at her, and shot her three times. At 36 years old, Sonya Massey became another Black American needlessly killed by the police. (Grayson has pleaded not guilty to charges of first-degree murder.)

Each time the name of a new victim of police violence enters the public lexicon—Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Eric Garner, Philando Castile, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and now Sonya Massey—there are questions about the officer's response. How could that officer have mistaken a cellphone for a weapon? Why did that officer shoot someone who was running away? Did that officer really have to shoot so many times? One answer to all these questions is that officers are trained to see the world as threatening and to respond accordingly.