

**STOP KILLER COPS—**

# Reopen the Clarence Morgan Case

Clarence Morgan, Jr., was a Black longshoreman and prominent community leader in the Burton Station section of Virginia Beach. He was the husband of Mrs. Naomi Morgan and the father of three children. On March 1, 1975, at about 7:45 p.m., Clarence Morgan, 32, was shot to death in his own back yard by D. W. Nicholson, a white Virginia Beach policeman who was dressed in plain clothes and never identified himself.

On the day of the killing, Clarence Morgan was suffering from a reaction to medication that had been given him at a hospital earlier in the day. Unable to reach the rescue squad by telephone, the Morgan family called the police for assistance.

Although their unmarked car was not dispatched to the Morgan home, Nicholson and another officer were the first police to arrive.



*The late Clarence Morgan, Jr., and his family*



Leaving his partner in the car, Nicholson talked briefly with Morgan's friends and relatives in the front yard. The policeman was told that Morgan's erratic behavior had ended, that he was calm and peaceful, and that Nicholson should stay away until medial help arrived.

### **Clarence Morgan killed in his own back yard**

Ignoring the people in the front yard and pulling himself away from one relative who held his arm, Nicholson approached the fenced-in back yard of the home, where Clarence Morgan was alone with his dog. Nicholson made no effort to locate Mrs. Morgan or to go to the front door of the home.

Instead, he jumped over the chain link fence into the back yard and pulled his gun. He pointed the gun at Morgan and told him to stand up. Morgan, not knowing who this white man pointing a gun at him was, stood as instructed and moved toward Nicholson. Nicholson backed up and fired three times, hitting Morgan once in the shoulder and twice in the chest. Shot through the heart, Morgan spun around and fell dead.

The killing so enraged the residents of Burton Station that they drove the police from the area that night and set fire to a police car.

### **Evans issues cover-up report**

Virginia Beach Commonwealth Attorney, Andre Evans, at first refused to do anything about the murder. Then, as Black citizens of Virginia Beach demanded Nicholson's arrest and prosecution, Evans tried to bring an end to the issue by writing a report to City Council.

From beginning to end the report is an obvious cover-up and an attempt to whitewash the facts of the shooting in order to clear Nicholson. There are vast differences between the "facts" in Evans' report and the stories that the witnesses to the killing have told. It is clear that Evans accepted everything Nicholson said as the truth while ignoring everything the Black witnesses saw.

Nicholson claims that he entered the back yard because Morgan was cutting the dog's throat. The eye-witnesses say that Morgan was only playing with the dog, and that he had no weapon. The dog is alive today and shows no scratches or signs of having been cut.

Nicholson claims that Morgan lunged at him with a knife, but every eyewitness has sworn that Morgan had no knife. Mrs. Naomi Morgan says that a knife that the Commonwealth Attorney's investigators showed her several days after the shooting belonged neither to her nor her husband. She says that she never saw the knife before they showed it to her and she believes that Evans invented the knife story to help cover up the cold blooded murder.

Evans' report concludes with a slanderous attack on Clarence Morgan, Jr., branding him a madman who attacked an innocent policeman. Everyone who knew Brother Morgan and his family knows that this is a lie. Clarence Morgan was a hardworking





*July 26, 1975: Clarence Morgan's relatives at a rally in Burton Station. Mrs. Isabelle Zabriskie, Mrs. Naomi Morgan, Clarence Morgan, Sr.*

longshoreman and a leading citizen in Burton Station, a man with a widespread reputation for taking pleasure in helping his neighbors, friends and fellow workers at every opportunity.

Instead of attacking the trigger-happy cop who shot Clarence Morgan, Evans attacks the Black people of Burton because of their anger over the murder of their neighbor. The murder and Evans' cover-up are reminders of how the white Virginia Beach power structure views the Black Community.

### **Virginia Beach: stronghold of racism**

The "modern" city of Virginia Beach can claim perhaps the most oppressive conditions Black people face in Tidewater. The Black communities are the oldest, most run-down sections of the city, yet the city spends next to nothing on their upkeep and renewal. Black families are still without running water or adequate sewage systems, and many roads in the Black communities are unpaved, while Black people's taxes are used for the upkeep of the wealthy white neighborhoods and the resort areas.

There has never been a Black person on the City Council, and there are only two or three Blacks on the police force.

As far as the wealthy white businessmen, landlords and gangsters who control Virginia Beach are concerned, they would just as soon eliminate the Black population of the city. They would rather have Black people's communities and land to use for tourist



attractions, motels, shopping areas and upper income homes to absorb the white migration from Norfolk. It is to service their own interests that they carry out the economic oppression, inferior education, lack of services and naked terror against the Black communities.

## **Police policy: harass Black community**

One of the main weapons they use to carry out this warfare against Black people is the police department, with racist trigger-happy cops like D. W. Nicholson, who are only too happy to do the dirty work for the men at the top. Whether it's harassing Black youth, filling the jails and prisons with Black people, pushing drugs in the community, or shooting an innocent man three times in his own back yard, the cops know their job and do it well. They occupy the Black community the same way an invading army occupies a foreign country.

This police terror is a fact of life in Black communities throughout Tidewater and the country.

This police terror is a fact of life throughout Tidewater and the country. We have only to look at the long list of Blacks murdered by the cops in this area in recent years—John Bellamy in Portsmouth, Sylvester Lee Royal and Donald Oliver in Newport News, Lymas Fauntleroy in Norfolk, and now Clarence Morgan in Virginia Beach, to name only a few. In Chesapeake, there was an attempt to burn Edd Johnson to death after he was jailed on frame-up charges, and the wounding of Black basketball star David Vaughan. The Norfolk police recently wounded a bystander and brutalized and arrested several other innocent people during an incident on Church Street.

## **Racist officials side with police**

The police are aided in their racist attacks by every level of state, city and federal government. Andre Evans' report, with its lies and overt racism, is really no surprise when we look at Evans' record as a prosecutor. Black youth always receive the harshest punishment prescribed by law in the Virginia Beach court system, while Evans deals leniently with their white counterparts—especially the sons and daughters of the wealthy.

The Virginia Beach City Council declares that it has already received an "objective report" from the Commonwealth Attorney. The all-white Council isn't interested in comparing Evans' report with the real eye-witness testimony (none of which is quoted by Evans). It doesn't matter to them that Evans' investigators didn't even ask Mrs. Morgan about what happened!

## **Only the people can win justice**

Some people say that Clarence Morgan is dead and that there is nothing we can do to bring him back. Yes, Clarence is dead—





August 9, 1975: Seventy people, Black and white, demonstrate at the Virginia Beach Civic Center and the police station to demand, "Reopen the Clarence Morgan Case."

viciously murdered by the police, like so many other Black men, women and children.

This time, however, there are people who are determined that Nicholson be punished and that the police terror be stopped so that Black parents will no longer have to wonder whether their child will be the next to be gunned down.

Spearheaded by Mrs. Morgan and other friends and relatives of Clarence Morgan, the Clarence Morgan Committee was established in order to carry on the struggle to reopen the case and to indict D. W. Nicholson for murder. With the support of the Prisoners Solidarity Committee of Youth Against War and Fascism, the committee has held rallies, demonstrations and meetings, is circulating petitions, and has confronted the Virginia Beach City Council to demand justice. On July 26, there was a rally of 75 people in Burton Station. On August 9, over seventy people demonstrated at the Virginia Beach Civic Center. On August 25, fifty people filled the City Council chamber.

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## How you can help "stop killer cops"

- Circulate petitions in your neighborhood, workplace, church or school, so that people will become aware of the struggle and so that we can show the mass sentiment in favor of reopening the case.
- Help distribute leaflets to inform people of upcoming events in the effort to reopen the case.
- Send financial contributions to the Clarence Morgan Committee to help us reach more people.
- Come to City Council on Monday, November 24, 8:00 p.m. in the Municipal Building at Princess Anne. Join us in demanding that City Council act on the Morgan case now!

We are calling for your help in pressuring the city to reopen the Morgan case, in exposing Nicholson as a murderer, in defending Clarence Morgan's name and honor, and in striking a blow against police brutality and racist killings everywhere.

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*"We have to stop sitting back and just letting another Black man die. The police think they can just go out there and kill Black people and they always get by. So they just keep doing it. But we are fighting back! Stop the war against Black America!"*

**Mrs. Naomi Morgan  
Widow of Clarence Morgan**

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This leaflet issued by:

The Clarence Morgan Committee  
Prisoners Solidarity Committee  
Youth Against War & Fascism  
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