

Time for another paradigm shift in policing

By [Tobias Winright](#)

August 15, 2014

Another incident of police use of deadly force has grabbed national (and international) attention. It happened just outside Saint Louis, the city where my family and I live. To say it's been a bad week for Ferguson, Missouri, residents is an understatement. Michael Brown is dead, a young man gone before he could start college and begin life as an adult. The life of Darren Wilson, identified this morning as the officer who shot Brown, has been forever changed, too. This happened within several seconds' time and a span that began at point blank and grew to 30-some feet.

Usually the Saint Louis area's air is saturated with heat and humidity. This week it's tension, fear, indignation, and a host of other intense emotions—as well as prayerful concern and [some graceful acts of kindness](#). Trust among fellow citizens and in our police has been incinerated like that convenience store on the first night of civil unrest—although hope began to get a firmer footing yesterday when Missouri highway patrol Captain Ronald S. Johnson, appointed by Governor Jay Nixon to take charge of policing in Ferguson, signaled a change in approach.

I'm a former corrections and reserve police officer and now a theological ethicist. I have written about policing and the use of force; I have even taught an ethics course for the Saint Louis County and Municipal Police Academy. I cannot *not* write about what has happened here... [Read the rest of the Century's online feature](#)