

Seattle University

ScholarWorks @ SeattleU

The Spectator Online

Newspapers

4-5-2023

2023-04-05 Seattle Mourns the Loss of Elijah Lewis

Andru Zodrow
Seattle University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.seattleu.edu/spectator-online>

Recommended Citation

Zodrow, Andru, "2023-04-05 Seattle Mourns the Loss of Elijah Lewis" (2023). *The Spectator Online*. 942.
<https://scholarworks.seattleu.edu/spectator-online/942>

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Newspapers at ScholarWorks @ SeattleU. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Spectator Online by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ SeattleU.



The Spectator • April 5, 2023 • <https://seattlespectator.com/2023/04/05/seattle-mourns-the-loss-of-elijah-lewis/>

Seattle Mourns the Loss of Elijah Lewis

Andru Zodrow, Editor-in-Chief

Elijah Lewis was driving his nephew to a monster truck rally on Saturday, April 1 when a man on a scooter engaged in a verbal altercation with him and fired several rounds into his vehicle. Lewis' nephew was struck in the leg, and Lewis himself was killed, according to KUOW. Lewis' family stated that his final act was shielding his nephew, who survived. A suspect arrested at the scene is currently being held for \$2 million bail, according to King5.

Lewis' death was a tragic loss for Seattle. At just 23 years old, he was a major presence in the city's civic life, as a co-founding member of King County Equity Now and an organizer with the Africatown Community Land Trust (ACLT). The ACLT shared their grief in a statement on Instagram.


"In addition to his work as a Community Builder with ACLT, Elijah led the charge in Black Seattle as a visionary supporting and pioneering various projects to advance the youth in our community and build strong, impactful and legacy-driven futures," the statement read in part.

The ACLT also highlighted the work Lewis undertook in providing economic opportunities for the Othello Marketplace through Southend Connections, a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering small-businesses at the market.

"[Lewis] helped pioneer community development by providing opportunities for small businesses to sell their goods and services, creating job opportunities and providing a space in our neighborhood where we can gather and connect with one another to build positive relationships and community connections," the ACLT wrote.

In Memory of Elijah Lewis



 Sheri Bebbington is organizing this fundraiser.

Created 3 days ago •  Funerals & Memorials

Screen capture of Lewis' memorial Gofundme page.

Lewis himself worked to reduce gun violence in Central and South Seattle. In a 2022 interview with Converge Media, a Seattle outlet that offers news coverage specifically for the Black community, he shared how gun violence had affected him. The Capitol Hill Seattle blog collected some of his statements on gun violence following his death.

“I’ve lost over 40 people, and a lot of them due to gun violence in general, to the point where it’s crazy, and you know that is really why...People ask me why I’m in this work, and for me, it’s not work, you know what I mean? It’s community. It’s life. It’s the life that I live because I don’t have a choice,” Lewis said.

Mayor Bruce Harrell offered his condolences in a statement released to the public Sunday, April 2.

“Elijah’s death is tragic and heartbreaking. Elijah was a young, effective, and authentic advocate—part of a new generation of community leaders committed to the Central District and South Seattle. He knew the power of mentorship—dedicating his time and energy to empowering youth and helping guide them toward a better future,” Harrell remarked.

Harrell condemned the heightened rate of gun violence in Black communities and called for stricter legislation limiting the use of firearms. The city saw a 23% increase in shooting deaths in 2022, according to the Seattle Police Department (SPD). The mayor was the keynote speaker at the Alliance for Gun Responsibility’s annual luncheon last year. However, he has been criticized by Councilmember Lisa Herbold for failing to create a citizen-led community safety department to accompany traditional policing, which he promised during his campaign. His ability to legislate guns themselves is limited, as all policies related to firearms are under the control of the state legislature rather than municipal bodies. The mayor addressed this issue in his statement regarding Lewis’ death.

“I will continue to ask the state to give cities the flexibility to set their own gun laws. We know our communities, we know gun violence is preventable, and we know action is needed to keep people safe. I implore the Legislature to advance the commonsense gun law proposals that are still on the table this session,” Harrell said.

Converge Media announced Lewis’ death with a reflection on his legacy.

“Elijah was a long time friend and collaborator of Converge Media making numerous appearances on air and in film over the last 4 years but even more than that he was a committed community builder, tireless advocate for the youth of our city and our brother,” the statement read in part.

Converge also created a webpage featuring interviews and news coverage about Lewis’ advocacy.

A Gofundme memorial fund has been created to support Lewis’ mother. The page, created by Sheri Bebbington, states that the funds will be used to cover funeral expenses as well as continuing the young advocate’s work in Seattle. Bebbington extolled Lewis’ advocacy, and argued that his final moments were a testament to his selflessness.

“Elijah was a vibrant young man of 23, a business owner, community organizer and advocate who worked tirelessly to create a better and safer Seattle. He was also a loving and loyal friend, son, brother and uncle. His last incredible act was using his body to shield his 9 yr old nephew from a barrage of bullets,” the page reads.

Lewis’ fearless advocacy and sacrifice for his community will continue to reverberate across the Central District for years to come. Whether gun violence in the city decreases will be determined by federal and state legislators, as well as municipal leaders. For the time being, fixtures of the community like Lewis will continue to exist in a status quo in which firearm deaths are a regular threat.

