



John Johnson

Birmingham, Alabama, 1948

Background

On Monday, March 29, 1948, Birmingham police officers J.A. Hale and C.A. Vildibill shot and killed John Johnson. Johnson was forty-two years old and a father of nine children.

Johnson was stopped by Hale and Vildibill in an alley behind a drygoods store on 22nd Street North. The officers reported that Johnson resisted arrest by pulling out a “fountain pen” .38 pistol. In response, the officers opened fire and shot Johnson in the chest and head. No explanation was ever provided as to why Johnson was stopped in the first place, and there were no witness accounts. He died at 10:45 PM at Hillman Hospital.

According to the *Birmingham World*, John Johnson was one of four victims of police homicide in Birmingham in a 30-day span.

Legal Status

Jefferson County Coroner Joe Hilderbrand deemed John Johnson’s death a “justifiable homicide.” Officers R.A. MacMurdo and W.J. Haley investigated the incident.