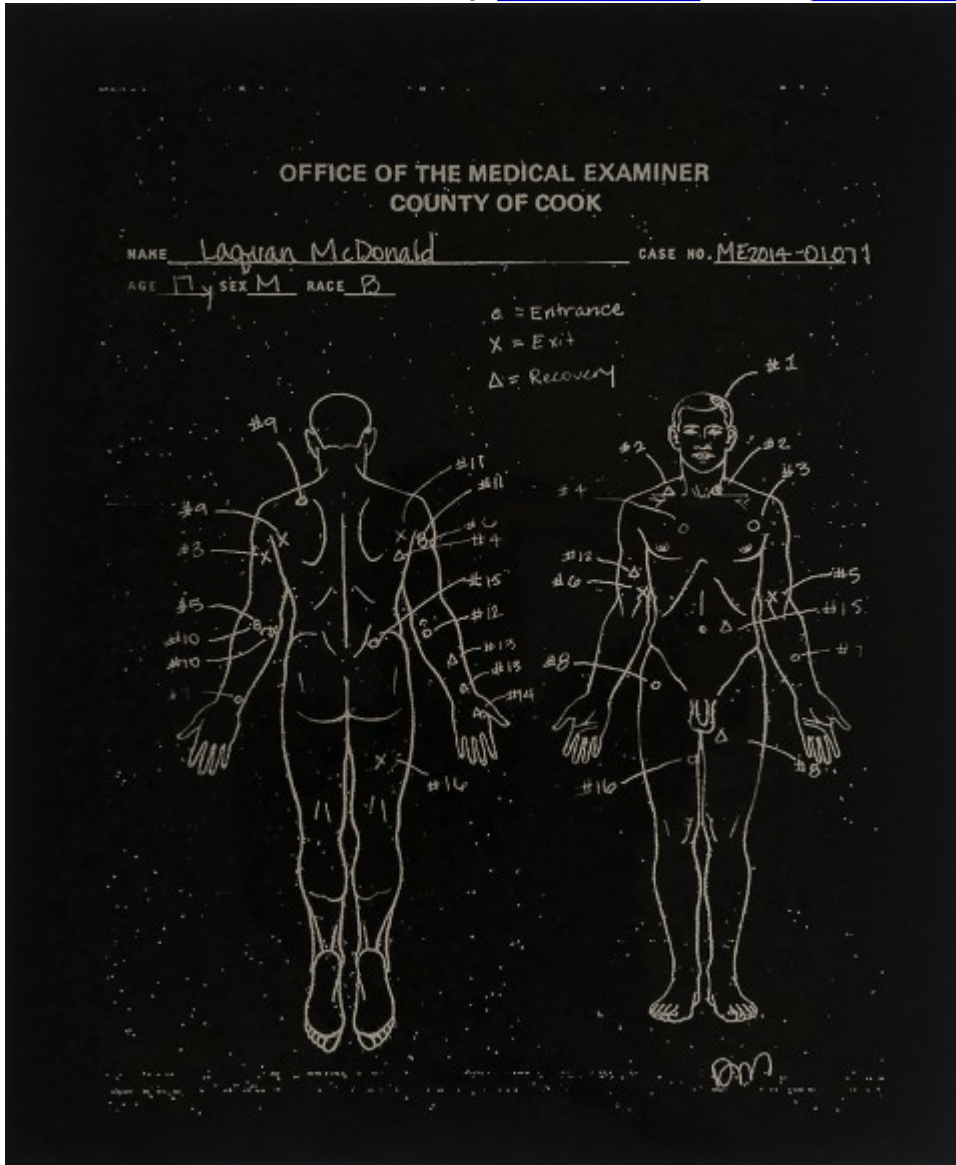


*Laquan McDonald* (from the series *In the Wake*), by Jared Thorne

art selection and comment by [Aaron Rosen](#) in the [June 16, 2021](#) issue



(Used by permission of the artist)

Laquan McDonald, a Black teenager, was walking away from Chicago police in 2014 when he was shot 16 times by an officer, who was later convicted of murder on the basis of video footage suppressed by authorities. Jared Thorne's photogram, produced from the autopsy report released by McDonald's family, demands that we confront the palpable brutality of the young man's execution. By shining a light on this diagram—and that of others like it, from the autopsy reports of other victims he

includes in this series—Thorne illuminates the stark reality of being Black in America. The original white document appears black in the photogram, further underscoring the minority bodies targeted by discrimination.

Seen through a religious lens, we are invited to attend to each bullet hole like the stigmata of the crucified Christ. Displayed in a simple row of light boxes, these autopsy reports recall the austere paintings by Fra Angelico for the monk's cells in San Marco, Florence, which focused on specific moments in the torture, death, and burial of Jesus. The emblematic bodies of these autopsy reports—represented by a White face, in a final act of erasure—are sketched as they would be examined, splayed upon a table. We might imagine ourselves in the position of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who tenderly prepare Jesus' body for entombment (John 19:38–42). Thorne's images demand that we care for the individuals before us, not as detached schematics but as real individuals. As James Cone writes in *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, the future of American Christianity depends on the ability to embrace “the crucified bodies in our midst.”