

Law enforcement corruption

Business



Law enforcement in the United States sole purpose is to ensure the safety and abiding of laws by all citizens. Though law enforcement tries to act as if they conform to such things, has the police system gone corrupt? As far back as one can remember there have been numerous attacks of Caucasian police officers brutally mistreating and killing African Americans, most of which are unarmed. Is there a deeper meaning as to why law enforcement are acting so unethical, and how will it be resolved? Police corruption has escalated to horrifying measures and African Americans have just begun in the movement to step forward for change in our country. First and foremost, law enforcements first order of business is to serve and protect, which is common in their credo, to all no matter what background they come from. Along with that, they are also put in place to investigate crimes, call response and emergencies, and being active members in the community by educating students on safety. Police officers play a crucial role in the law enforcement system.

Usually you only need a high school diploma to qualify for police academy training, but many officers have two to four year degrees in criminal justice. The median annual pay for this field is usually \$55, 010, which was according to the 2010 Bureau of Labor Statistics. Hundreds of cases have been brought forth of police brutality against African Americans. Though it may seem as if this is a new arising issue in our country, due to the many recent headline stories, it has been a major problem as far back as the 1850s. One story that dates back to the 1960s during the civil rights movement is of a young black man by the name of Fred Hampton (1948- 1969) who was a victim of police brutality.

In 1968, after the death of Martin Luther King Jr., Hampton became a leader of the Black Panthers in Chicago, Illinois. He did many great things in his community such as providing lunches for poor children, helping with a health clinic, make peace between the main Chicago gangs, and he was also able to bring people together of different backgrounds. Though the Black Panthers never gave reasons to provoke fear into citizens, many white people and Chicago police saw the group as a threat because they had guns in case of self-defense (which is a right for citizens). Hampton lived with his girlfriend (at the time was eight months pregnant) and seven other Panther friends.

On December 4, 1969, at 4: 45 a. m. police came to his door with a search warrant. The state's attorney general, Edward Hanrahan stated the police came to Hampton's apartment with a search warrant. When the Panthers answered they opened fire.

In the shootout Hampton and Panther Mark Clark were killed, and the others were arrested for attempted murder. Hanrahan added: " We wholeheartedly commend the police officers' bravery, their remarkable restraint and discipline in the face of this vicious Black Panther attack, and we expect every decent citizen of our community to do likewise." A couple weeks later it was discovered that police had come to gun down Hampton. The wall in his bedroom was full of bullet holes, the mattress was soaked in blood, and later proved that over one hundred shots were fired at the Panthers and only one by a Panther at the police. The families of Hampton and Clark, and several other Panthers took police and Hanrahan to court which went on for 14 years.

When the judge forced the FBI to give up the cases papers, it was found Hampton's bodyguard, William O'Neal, who was a FBI agent-provocateur was paid \$300 to have a floor plan drawn of Hampton's apartment with an " X" marking Hampton's bedroom. A current story of yet another unarmed African American man killed by a white police officer was 18 year old Michael Brown (1996-2014). It was a Saturday afternoon of August 9, 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri. According to eyewitnesses, Michael and his friend were walking down the street when a cop drove by and yelled, " Get the f**k on the sidewalk!" When they did not listen, the officer drove back, but had trouble getting out of his car so he grabbed Brown by his neck, began to choke him and reached for his gun. The gun went off and the officer began to bleed, and that is when Brown and his friend began to run away. The officer finally got out of the car and shot Brown, and then Brown immediately fell to his knees and raised his hands.

The officer then shot Brown in the face and chest and Brown fell dead. According to the police, Brown attacked the officer in the car, the gun went off, and Brown ran away. The officer got out of the car and shot Brown from 35 feet away. The police left Brown's body lying in the middle of the street for hours. There were no charges or arrests made, and the officer that shot Brown was put on paid leave. Sunday night, August 10 a candlelight vigil was held near the site of where Brown died.

Many people in the crowd showed up shouting " No justice, no peace!" " Hands up! Don't shoot!" " We are Michael Brown!" This is also how the slogan #HandsUpDontShoot began. The anger of the people in Ferguson sparked protests and riots on the streets. What began as peaceful protests

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turned into riots, looting, and vandalism. Many officers and public citizens were injured and many of the participants were arrested. The shootings continued to go on without any consequences, as of this month on April 19 Freddie Gray died under custody of police for unknown causes. Due to this event it struck protests in the city of Baltimore, Maryland.

Police were aware of the protests and had hunches that there would be a possible riot. On April 27 citizens of Baltimore aging from 13+ years of age began looting and vandalizing their city. Many local stores including an new CVS and senior center were lit on fire and also nearby police vehicles, due to the growing rage of violence. Several police officers were injured by the rioters. It was claimed that many of the so called “ thugs” were not even from Baltimore.

Many of the older citizens tried to stop the violence because they thought change would not happen by violence, and also to get everyone to go home in fear of someone else getting shot. Due to the riots, school was closed the next day and a set curfew was implemented until further notice. As shown on only three of the hundreds of cases where police officers abused their power in how they handle many situations, especially that of people are who are unarmed. Recent studies have shown why law enforcement officers may be acting in such ways. Constant factors that may lead to corruption is the fact that much of the job performed by law enforcement are not done with supervision or seen by the police unless caught on tape, which many of the recent stories have been. There is also confidentiality within law enforcement, in which officers have strong ties with each other (large part of police culture).

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Many managers who have had to work up to from the lower positions have the same common values which brings them closer together. Variable factors could consist of their community structure. For example, if police live in a city where crime activity is high, they might be more inclined to be harsher in the field. Police, as many others, are influenced by politics, culture, and standards of their surroundings. This could include officers believing in racial stereotypes, such as African Americans as “ thugs”, which many newscasts seem to refer to African Americans as.

Due to police officers generalizing many African Americans as the same, it has instilled fear into some while others stand firm for their rights. Usually an officer begins at an entry level position, and learns policies and department in which they work in. As the officer begins to become comfortable with the power that they and independence in the field, it usually leads to police abusing their power. As the factors are presented, there are many reasons that lead to such corrupt behavior. There are also psychological factors that could lead to police corruption. What may lead to the corruption is certain aspects of the theory of role-playing (Myers 647).

Philip Zimbardo of Stanford University conducted the Stanford Prison Experiment in the universities basement where it was made into a mock prison. Zimbardo’s main interest in this experiment was finding whether brutality reported within American prisons were due to personalities of the guards or the prison environment. The group of participants were split into two and paid to be either a prisoner or a guard. Findings showed that within a short period of time the prisoners and guards settling into their roles. The guards began to act more strict toward the prisoners by treating them in a

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brutal manner and seemed to enjoy it. Zimbardo concluded that people will promptly conform to social roles.

Most participants said they were felt inclined to get involved and feel committed. This could be related to law enforcement officers. As police become more conformed to the field, they begin to feel powerful and committed to doing the “ best” that they can. To begin to solve the problem of police brutality, there is a need to have better qualifications to get into police academy besides a simple high school diploma. Many leaders have thought and began to implement body cameras onto police officers while reminding law enforcement that they should be committed to restoring the public’s trust. A new program is being discussed about a police-cadet program that provides a combination of education, training and service in the police department as well as a probation period that will be monitored carefully.

Even though this is not going to change anything in a matter of days, it is the beginning to lessening police brutality in our country. Law enforcement seems to have a gap in their system which needs to be seriously taken into consideration. Many people of all different races and backgrounds are coming together help in the effort to change the system. Many African Americans believe that the government has turned against them and will not go down without fighting for their freedom. To properly have the message heard, we have to learn to protest peacefully, which is what Martin Luther King Jr. would have wanted.

As Martin Luther King Jr. quoted: “ I never intended to adjust myself to economic conditions that will take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few.”