
Police Brutality: Violence Against Racial Minorities

"I can't bring myself to watch yet another video, not because I don't care, but because we're all just a few videos away from becoming completely desensitized. The public execution of Black folks will never be normal.(Andrena Sawyer). Police officers were once known as peacekeepers, but not unfortunately are just known as not more than law enforcement. Police brutality can be back tracked to the 1800's where race minorities have had to deal with police violently abusing them and discriminating against them. Isn't the police force suppose to protect us from all the bad people in society that try to do bad things to us, these officers take advantage of their power and abuse it to make other people suffer. They should be monitored and given consequences for what they do to these people because they leave them scared and traumatized for the events they have to experience. But to be clear many still do their job, not all of them are bad. This violence against racial minorities is a serious problem that affects many states in the United States. This issue has sparked up more because we now have social media that brings more awareness and gets noticed more by others. Because of these events there has been movements made to help protect people. Racial minorities have had conflict with police brutality and discrimination in the streets , and it has caused these civilians trauma and makes them question if they can be safe in the hands of these officials.

Police brutality is the use of excessive and/ or unnecessary force by police when dealing with civilians, and it violates the law. A police officer using excessive force is when they violate your own constitutional rights. Social media and technology have allowed people to share events where people become more aware that police brutality still exists. They record and live stream these officers in action. With demographics changing, people trying to change the police laws are trying to develop better representation for Latinos when it comes to police. They hope that it will minimize bias and abuse (Urbina and Espinoza Alvarez, 117). Thanks to various protection by the state, individuals have amendments, like the fourteenth amendment that provides additional safety for individuals, stopping the state from taking away "any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." The second law that the United States has against police brutality is Title eight- teen of the United States code where it makes it against the law for police officers to purposely keep people from expressing their rights that are shielded by the United States constitution. ("Lee and Park , par .6") Title six of the Civil Rights Act is also another law that helps people who have had problems with police brutality. It states that it is against the law for authority of the law to discriminate people because of their nationality, ethnicity, gender, and/ or their religion. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is also another law that guarantees protection to those individuals who have disabilities. The act can be effective when racial insults, detainment with no reason, excessive force applied, and/ or racial profiling have taken place to those individuals with disabilities. These individuals who in any way experience police brutality and/ or discrimination are entitled to file a civil lawsuit against the police officer.

These officers think it is okay to do this because they have no consequences for their actions. Law enforcement does nothing but give these officers just a slap on the wrist, which causes them to act out again and do the same thing over and over again. Malcolm Holmes and Brad Smith in their book, *Race and Police Brutality: Roots of an Urban Dilemma*, indicated a situation involving a Hispanic man and his arrest for disorderly conduct. Joe Campos Torres was

arrested for maybe being drunk but besides that he did not look like a threat when they took him from the club he was at. A few hours after Joe was arrested he was left at the jail brutally beaten that they did not want to process him and rather they told the officers that arrested him to take him to the hospital. Six officers took him to the hospital where they took a detour that ended the life of Torres. During the trial two officers said they saw Torres pushed off a dock by an officer. He stated that the officer told Torres, "Let's see if the wetback can swim." His body was then recovered days later and during trial two officers were guilty and charged for negligent homicide. They were given suspended sentences (Homes and Smith, 3). The police officers being charged does not always mean they will get convicted them for their crime. Instead of imprisoning all six officers' that were apart and present during the situation, they just gave two officers to deal with the consequences. So that the other four are left to do the same things again to another victim. Police officers are rarely prosecuted because of the lack of investigating that is done. The investigators that are suppose to go into depth to see what happen are sometimes from the same police department as the officer and creates conflict. Also most of the evidence that can be given is from speculators who witnessed the incident, and sometimes their testimony is not trustworthy for them to use. They rather believe a peace officer rather than a civilian for credibility. Two other altercations that ended in no consequence for the police officer was Akai Gurley and Botham Shem Jean. Lee and Park explained in their article that, "Peter Liang was convicted of manslaughter after Akai Gurley was killed by a ricocheting bullet in a dark stairwell of a Brooklyn housing project. The judge later reduced the conviction to criminally negligent homicide. Mr. Liang was sentenced to five years of probation" (Lee and Park para.6) . Lee and Park authors of "15 Black Lives Ended in Confrontations with Police. 3 Officers Convicted," assert that cases, where African American's have died because of police officers, has increased nationwide lately throughout the years, and is continuously advertising protests all over the world. This year alone, an officer on her own time from Dallas shot and killed Botham Shem Jean because she thought he was in her apartment (Lee and Park para 1). In many cases, no law enforcement officers may never be charged for the unjustified crime they did. The investigator who is supposed to check thoroughly if the crime can be charged or not, determined that they should not be charged because the application lethal violence was proved to be justified (Lee and Park para.9).

Now a day it is safer to be a cop then it was years ago. Police are the ones that pose more threat to the community than civilians in the street. The deaths of police officers have actually decreased as years go on. Deadly shootings involving police officers from 2014 went down, where forty- nine cops died in the gun fire. Also the rate of police deaths corresponded to a big decrease in crime rate as well in recent years. These officers have a huge impact on the way they approach civilians and what they do to them while in their custody. Professional's can say that providence police involved in immigration enforcement leads to the police discriminating Hispanics and caused difficulty in Hispanic families and communities. Surveys show that uprising of crimmigration each year is about five to nine percent of Hispanics in the US are halted and asked to provide answers for the questions they ask about their immigration status. Also, about one third of Hispanics know about someone who has been arrested or deported because of enforcing immigration. (Pickett ,108) These officers lead to traumatizing families and most importantly the victims involved. Toyin Owoseje author of "Pennsylvania Police Officer Who Tasered an Unarmed Black Man Not Suspended" writes that, "Mr. Bernot was filmed as he repeatedly told Sean Williams to straighten his legs. As the 27-year-old starts to do so, he fires his taser at him and Mr. Williams collapses...Mr. Sorace acknowledged that members of the community would find the decision "extremely upsetting", but he insisted Mr. Bernot was not to blame for adhering to policies that needed to be updated." (Owoseje, para. 3 & 5) The victim in

the incident Sean Williams spoke to Good morning America about how he feels after the incident and how he thinks he was racially profiled and was left frightened by the incident. He states that by no means necessary someone should go through what he did and that it is wrong, especially because the person is being cooperative to the orders being given. People should not be traumatized for the rest of their lives for a situation that could have been avoided. (Owoseje para. 11 & 12) Many people the following day of the incident took into their own hands in protesting the streets wanting justice for what had happened. Also for the officer to be accounted for, for what he did, and to have justice in changing police brutality after the disturbing video going viral. (Owoseje para. 7) It is said that African Americans are the top ethnic groups with high rate of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Even if an individual is not present during the situation and sees a video of a police officer shooting a civilian they will also develop the disorder by just viewing it, and shows that it is very common and has a connection with young adults. It happens to be those who spend a great amount online. These officer are suppose to keep us safe and we are suppose to confide in them when we are in danger, but they are changing the way people think about them.

Racial minorities have conflict with law enforcement but all of the law authorities and attorney's end up being corrupt and discriminate these minorities for who they are and the victims do not get the fair trial they deserve. Van Cleve explains in her book that "Crook County" is a word that breaks up punishment within court and the jail. Newcomers may assume that "crook" is indicated to the culprits, but it actually refers to all the professionals who are made fun of and labeled as "public pretenders," who are con artist that messed with the system (Van Cleve , 20). Van Cleve explains, "Some private attorneys often acted as though they would rather be on the side of the prosecution...They sold out their clients with the same slurs and stereotypes that prosecutors used to denigrate mopes. Often they mocked their client's poverty and laughed at the racist jokes in the room" (Van Cleve ,93). At the ending of her book Van Cleve states that her study was focused on the professionals that run Cook County Courts. Her main point is that the defendants, victims, families, and racial minorities who are abused in court rooms are no way able to be ignored. But the professional's in the court often carried out the public, defendants, and victim's invisible (Van Cleve,181). These officials give no hope for the victims because they discriminate as much as the police officers.

Police officers not only physically harm racial minorities, but they also harass them with irrational comments and discriminatory "jokes." Michael Gold, gives the exact words of what the police officer said to the men being that, "'If anybody wants to fight or run, I'm a little trigger - happy, guys,' he told the men in August. 'I'm not gonna lie.' 'You know, I get paid a ton of money in overtime if I have to shoot somebody,'" he added, "so don't do anything s*****" (Gold , para. 2-3). Gold, a journalist for the New York Times and author of "White Police Officer Fired After Telling a Group of Mostly Black and Hispanic Men He was 'Trigger-Happy'" explains that the men involved in the encounter of the police officer recorded everything the officer said in a video and then posted it to social media where it circulated quickly. Then two months after the altercation, Stephen Barone, the officer involved was fired. After a thorough investigation another similar altercation came up involving the same officer in July (Gold para. 4-5). The New York Times article states all the conversation as to how the officer tried to say that he was "joking" with the men throughout the whole time of the altercation. Despite the viral video that was published the officer was downgraded, where he was on administrated leave the next day after the altercation and then in September was just forced a salary cut and put on desk duty (Gold para 16-17) . Police brutality has always been a problem and it has not changed yet.

A lot of times where these harsh incidents happen seem to be in rural locations. Sirry Alang, author of "The More Things Change, The More Things Stay the Same: Race, Ethnicity, and Police Brutality," indicates that Edwards et al. found that the assassination of black men involving police officers has to do with place. The murder risk increased in metropolitan areas and also in rural areas (Alang ,1128) .Being Hispanic or African American in the eyes of a police officer always means danger to them. Just by walking down the street with a hooded sweater makes them suspicious. In Alang's article she explains that we are no longer doubted of being escaped slaves, but we are now questioned for being "suspected." Whether it be driving, utilizing a washroom at a tea shop, wearing a thread on your head while roaming home, having a cookout, etc. In general, not being white makes you a suspect. This creates a culture that discards our possibility suffering from police assassination, making it a greater chance if the person is Black or Latino (Alang ,1128). There have not been any cases, where people see a brutal beating by a police officer in a location where white people live. Most of these altercations happen when the majority of the population is Hispanic or African American. And most of these people who participate in trying to make a change are Hispanics and African Americans.

Even if personally you have not been involved in these types of situations it still impacts the way you perceive police officers because they can take away your image of them being the ones that are suppose to keep you safe. Police brutality is an issue that can change the lives of harmless people who are taken advantage of. Police brutality makes racial minorities and other groups question if they are really safe and question whether or not the police officer they encounter with means good or bad. And for those with bad experiences it leaves them traumatized for what they experienced.