
Police Officers vs. African Americans

Is it “ To Serve & To Protect” or “To Serve & To Disrespect” ? Police brutality has existed for decades undetected but got worldwide exposure from the “ leaked footage” of the 1991 police incident in Los Angeles displaying the harsh beating of Rodney King by law enforcers. This event , in addition to all of the officers that were shown on tape got acquitted of all charges, led to riots happening all over Los angeles for 6 whole days. What led us as a people to commit such barbaric acts ? Was it frustration of inequality ? Was it us finally taking a stand against “The White Man”? African Americans have a long , dark , and very twisted history with this country and its “Law Enforcers” , but yet we still pray for the day that equal justice will be served in the court of law if an unarmed African American youth is gunned down by a police officer.

Police brutality has been forced upon the African American community for over 50 years . Dating back to the late 1920's , African Americans always had a higher percentage of being killed by police officers than any other race in the U.S. During this time , studies were being conducted and analyzed with many of these confrontations being initiated by police officers(Survey conducted in Chicago & Cook County between 1927-1928). Between 1931-1932 , over 14 volumes of published findings of crime related and police tactics was shown to the public , one entry being titled “ Report on Lawlessness in Law Enforcement”, in response to President Hoover forming the National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement. Fast forward 30 years later to the Civil Rights Movement era and you see police attacking peaceful African American protestors with fire hoses and police dogs. For example : Southern states started openly accepting the abuse of African Americans and allowing Klu Klux members to terrorize the families of said minorities as a fear tactic. As a result , African Americans (beginning in the 70's) who started joining local police forces went through horrendous recruitment training and would turn against their own people/community in order to receive praise/acceptance from the white police officers and to be viewed as a “Good officer of the law”.

In recent years police brutality has been on an uprise with many African Americans , youth or adult, being gunned down by “Officers of the Law” or severely beaten and verbal abused as a form of submission . September 15th of last year (2018) , a 19 year old named Anton Black was killed by 5 police officers while they were trying to restrain him in order to get cuffs on his wrists, with one of the officers saying how Black had “superhuman strength” and that it ‘scared’ him. Anton had went into cardiac arrest after being restrained by the team of officers after 2 minutes and was pronounced dead after being taken to the hospital shortly. 4 years prior , a man named Eric Garner was another victim/example of police brutality. Witnesses reported that Garner had just broken up a fight which is why Law enforcers were called on the scene that day, but seemed to know the officers and told them he had done nothing and to leave him alone as they had prior history harassing him.At that point garner was surrounded by 5 police officers and they all started tackling him down to the ground with each of them holding down apart of his body while one officer still had Eric in a chokehold as his fell on his knees and onto the floor while shouting out 11 times “ I can't breathe” before the team eased up their stronghold on the man and tried to check for a pulse. When EMTs arrived , Garner had already lost consciousness and had a heart attack while being transported to the hospital where he was pronounced dead an

hour later. These two deaths , in addition to countless others deaths/mistreatment of African Americans, stirred up more hatred and resentment towards Police Officers and the Justice System as a whole.

While there is a high level of resentment towards Law Enforcement Officers , many seem to not know what it actually feels like to be in the line of danger every single day with the possibility of not coming home later that day or ending up gravely injured. All officers of the law are not bad as how they are perceived by the media even if the bad may outweigh the good, but there are those who grew up as minorities and never experienced police brutality personally so they're perspective on Law Enforcement Officers may differ than a majority of said race. For example : Officer Jesse Hartnett is a good example of what some might call a “good cop” , while being injured in the line of duty(3 bullets shattering his arm and damaging the nerves along with it), Harnett has been praised by the community for his courage and his generous nature towards those who lived on the streets , often buying them food or beverages while stopping to make small talk to those who passed while on his patrol, being called a “compassionate officer”by Commissioner Richard Ross.

Another example of a “good cop” is the story of about James Roberts and how a police officer helped him make it in time for his job interview. Roberts was lost while on his way to secure a job interview after struggling to get one for years and asked an unnamed officer for directions , knowing that he would not make it in time , the officer offered the late businessman a ride to his interview and wished him luck & god bless after dropping Roberts off in front of the building where his interview was scheduled. These are prime example of Police Officers committing acts of generosity but they often go underappreciated and overlooked by the public due to how their image is portrayed in the media or rather how certain officers take the law into their own hands.