

Black Lives And Police Tactics Matter

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Race, Police Violence, and the Question of Structural Bias

The question that usually pops up whenever a black person is killed by police is whether the killing is instigated by racism or not. Many studies on how black people are mostly targeted by the police reveal that racism plays a big part in instigating such killings. Police officers seem to be racially biased when it comes to the matter of maintaining law and order. However, one will be appalled to hear the law enforcement officers ruling out the idea that police killing of black people is racially instigated and arguing that one cannot accurately tell what transpired before the killing. This paper will seek to answer the question of whether racism, which has permeated the law enforcement system, also plays a role in informing racial disparities in violence meted out by the police against people of color.

Evidence from research and news indicate that black people are much more likely to be killed by the police compared to their white fellows. The killing of black people is at a disproportionate rate despite the black people forming a smaller percentage of the United States population. This disparity in the rate of killings reveals the underbelly of the widespread racial inequality, which is deeply rooted in the American justice system. Some research has it that this disparity is due to socioeconomic factors in the black community, such as high rates of poverty, unemployment, and negligence by the police, which leads to more crime and violence in the black communities. This racial bias has fueled criticisms of law enforcement and has led to movements such as black lives Matter to demonstrate against racially instigated police killings.

Empirical Evidence on Racism in Police Shootings

A study by Michael Siegel reveals that police shootings are instigated by structural racism. Siegel conducted a study on serious police shootings using the data from the Mapping Police Violence database between the period 2013 and 2017. Siegel ran the data using the following key indicators of racism: racial segregation, rate of incarceration, level of education achievement, level of economic disparity, and unemployment gaps for several states in the US. The study revealed that black people are a target of police violence, and they score a higher index of state racism, which explains the violence meted out by the police on them. Siegel's study revealed that the high rate of police killings of African Americans correlates with structural racism in the American justice system. Racial segregation explained well the unarmed killing of black people across many states in the US.

Siegel's study on the high rate of police shootings of black people debunked the hypothesis that the high rate of crime and violence in black communities explained the higher rate of police shootings of African Americans. The study revealed that both are contributors but does not fully explain the disproportionate rate of police shootings. According to the study, structural racism is the major predictor of police shootings of unarmed black suspects. From the study, the following states registered the highest index of state racism and shootings of unarmed black people by the police: Wisconsin, Minnesota and Illinois. Evidence of police shootings on Facebook and in the street reveals structural racism and empirical data has shown that many racial policies are perpetuating these killings of blacks. Arrest by the police is racialized in the sense that police tend to perceive black people as aggressive and noncompliant with the law. Any attempt of resistance by a black person upon arrest by the police will most likely culminate in a deadly shooting.

There is widespread inequality in the way police handle black people as compared with other races. People of color are more likely to be victims of police brutality, whether they are doing anything illegal or legal. Black people are more likely to be stopped by the police, which usually extends to police violence. Any black person stopped by the police is likely to experience police violence, such as an officer pointing a gun at him or forcefully pinning him or her to the ground. These encounters sometimes lead to violent brawling, ending in shootings by the police (stone, p.37).

Competing Interpretations of Racial Disparities in the Use of Force

Some studies are dispelling the myth that police lethal use of force against certain races or ethnic groups is not instigated by racial biases as espoused by the media or political leaders. The high number of deaths of African Americans due to police shootings is due to the high crime rate committed by black people. The majority of the black people living in the inner cities are suffering in abject poverty as a result of the high unemployment rate and negligence of the government. This predicament prompts them to involve themselves in crimes such as mugging and drug trafficking, which leads them to deadly encounters with the police. Black neighborhoods are characterized by high crimes and are very dangerous for the police. Police are likely to draw their guns in any encounter within such areas, which explains why most deadly shootings by the police involve black people (Johnson, p.10).

In addition to structural racism among the police, black people are less represented in the police force, and this explains why so much violence is meted out to them. The unequal number of black police officers in the police task force leads to more black shootings in the sense that there is a lack of belonging among the police when they are carrying out their brutality. I bet a black police officer will act with more restraint when handling a black suspect, unlike a white police officer. This misrepresentation of black people in the police force explains why most black people are racially biased and not treated fairly within the precincts of the law.

The widespread killing of blacks has led to movements such as black lives matter, and there is an immediate need for the justice system to look into this matter. Police training and other policy reforms need to be done to abate this predicament. Police training on how to use firearms should now be about when to shoot and not all about how to shoot. Police should be trained using interactive videos to test their decision-making skills in situations where they are under pressure and are likely to shoot a suspect. They are supposed to be trained to act with restraint, and undergoing a policy academy is one way of achieving this goal. There should be workshops for the police officers to undergo training on firearm training and review their tactics.

Training, Accountability, and Reform of Police Tactics

Body such as the Municipal Police Training Council ensures the regulation of law enforcement agencies and the training of their police officers. This body helps the government to make recommendations regarding police training schools, the qualifications of the instructors, and the category of in-service training. Municipal Police Training Council has two courses for police training, which include the basic course for police officers and the course on police supervision. They are designed for new recruits and are taken only once. The course for police officers entails classroom work and field training, while the course in police supervision entails supervisory roles, handling of legal issues, management of incidents, and community relations, among other duties (Johnson, p.44).

The purpose of police training is to ensure that they operate with high professionalism and within the law. Training equips them with problem-solving skills that inculcate politeness and professionalism in them. Better training of the police officers helps mitigate the liability of risks such as criminal liability or for killing civilians indiscriminately and bringing the reputation of the policy justice system into jeopardy (Glenn, p.125).

Training the police on the use of force can greatly help with reducing murder rates. It is the duty of the law enforcement officers to protect themselves and the civilians and sometimes this might need the use of force. Training is meant to enlighten the police officer on the degree or amount of force necessary to stop an offender's action and to avoid excessive use of force, which might be construed as police brutality (Glenn, p.229). Police officers have a variety of weapons at their disposal to subvert any danger. Some of these weapons include hand-to-hand combat, tasers, and handcuffs. Proper training on these weapons will help the police to protect themselves, the civilians, and their reputation as well.

Works Cited

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