
Black Lives Matter - A Movement to Put an End on Police Brutality

Putting an End to Police Brutality with BlackLivesMatter

Racial discrimination has long been one of America's greatest misfortunes. From slavery dating back to the 18th century to police brutality in the 21st century, race-related prejudice has remained constant, always being the nuisance that prevents the nation from truly being the "land of the free". America as a whole has made great improvements throughout the years, pushing its way to the top and earning its title as a world power; behind the scenes though, the nation's innerworkings are teeming with systematic racism. The inequality African American's must endure in America can be traced back to the fact that they have always been running, fleeing, trying to escape from danger. Years ago, the need to flee came in the form of trying to escape their slave masters or plantation owners.

Nowadays, their reason to escape and lash back is due to increasing systematic racism and police brutality. The riots that occurred over unjust police actions in Ferguson, Missouri, did not stem simply from anger and resentment, but rather a need for retaliation and to express the emotions pent up after centuries of discrimination. Injustice and racial discrimination of African Americans by police departments, such as Ferguson PD, have led to the #blacklivesmatter movement, which allows African Americans and their supporters to finally have a voice in the issues affecting them. Before an explanation for police brutality on blacks can be given, one must first understand the way in which police departments function. Police departments throughout the nation earn revenue through ticketing and arrests; the common victims of many police stops are minorities. In this case, they are impoverished African Americans living in Ferguson. When revenue is needed, police officers seem to target minorities (Coates).

The tension between Ferguson's police force and African Americans is the result of a relationship built on suspicion rather than trust and acceptance. Ta-Nehisi Coates, a national correspondent for The Atlantic, wrote an article in which the police officers of Ferguson are compared to gangsters. Their 'gang', in search for revenue, targets African Americans, and Coates states: The "focus on revenue" was almost wholly a focus on black people as revenue. Black people in Ferguson were almost twice as likely to be searched during a stop, twice as likely to receive a citation when stopped, and twice as likely to be arrested. If for-profit policing is terminated, racial discrimination in police departments will follow suit. Campaign Zero, a website focused solely on the idea that police brutality can be put to a stop, explains Coates' argument in further detail, while also providing suggestions both sides can do to put a halt to police

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violence. For example, Campaign Zero's website states that, "Police should be working to keep people safe, not contributing to a system that profits from stopping, searching, ticketing, arresting and incarcerating people". Before change can be made, the corrupt system in which police departments obtain revenue must be revised because, as of now, the current arrangement further distances officers from African American citizens; this gap leads to dehumanization and the misconception that targeting blacks is okay—they are simply a means of revenue.

Not only are African Americans being targeted as a way to increase profit, but excessive and unnecessary force is being used against them due to blatant racism. An investigation of the Ferguson Police Department, conducted by the United States Department of Justice, found that police officers use unneeded force, which violates the Fourth Amendment; what is even more shocking is that the "overwhelming majority of force—almost 90%—is used against African Americans". Cops also use electronic control weapons when they are not needed (United States. Dept. of Justice). They employ ECWs as if they are harmless tools, when in reality they are dangerous weapons capable of great physical damage. Police officers' readiness to use force and cause physical pain to their suspects spreads fear throughout the community and cultivates distrust and resentment. The systematic racism occurring in Ferguson is not contained to just one city; throughout the nation, riots have erupted, and the saying 'black lives matter' has come about, causing both awareness and misunderstanding.

BlackLivesMatter is described as "not a moment, but a movement" (Black Lives Matter). It was founded in 2012 following Ferguson police officer George Zimmerman's murder of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, who was, after his death, placed on trial. The movement makes efforts to widen the conversation around state violence and take all of the prejudices made against African Americans into consideration (Petersen-Smith). In the 21st century, racism and stereotyping against certain groups of people should not be a problem, yet it still occurs in America each and every day. BlackLivesMatter combats discrimination and fights for equality, which the nation, especially an area as tumultuous as Ferguson, needs. Even though the BlackLivesMatter movement is in full swing, protestors argue against it, claiming that it is exclusive and promotes racial divides instead of equality.

Several Republicans, such as Ben Carson and Rand Paul claim that saying "all lives matter" is more inclusive, and some go so far as to call BlackLivesMatter a hate group (Marino). Even though their arguments are understandable, for BlackLivesMatter does focus solely on the hardships that African Americans face, saying "all lives matter" takes away the effects of the real problem at hand. Black Lives Matter does not mean that other lives do not matter, it is simply stating that black lives matter too (GeekAesthete). Imagine being at a fundraiser for cancer, which emotionally impacts millions of patients and family members each day, and having a group of people in the audience stand up to exclaim that, no, it is not just cancer that

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matters, but all diseases that matter. The protesting group's point would completely deviate away from the mission the fundraiser is trying to focus around; proclaiming that 'all lives matter' takes away from the problem of discrimination and racism that blacks face.

White people, since the beginning of time, have always been the subject of glory; now, it is time for African Americans to get a say and have their voices heard, and the BlackLivesMatter movement is one of the many ways in which their grievances can be addressed and recognized. Police brutality against African Americans, especially those in corrupt areas such as Ferguson, must be terminated. In order for America to move past its horrible past of systematic racism, which continues to this day, police departments must reevaluate their their process of arrests and put a stop to for-profit policing. African Americans have been discriminated against for too long, and the #BlackLivesMatter movement is finally helping countless people all across the nation have their voices heard. Empathy is needed to combat police brutality and racism, for when people put themselves in the shoes of others and open their eyes to the injustices being committed all around them, areas such as Ferguson will be able to show the promise of equality for all races.

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