

## The Police War on Black People Continues—Here's Why

by Arlene Eisen

*“Once the classic method of lynching was the rope. Now it is the policeman’s bullet.... We submit that the evidence suggests that the killing of Negroes has become police policy in the United States and that police policy is the most practical expression of government policy.... Force and violence systematically and consistently employed to quell the righteous anger of Blacks is justified by calling murder an exercise ‘law and order’”*

—from *We Charge Genocide*, 1951 Petition to the United Nations edited by William Patterson, endorsed by W.E.B. DuBois, Paul Robeson, Harry Haywood and others.

What makes this modern day lynching a seemingly inoperable tumor woven into the arteries and sinew of the U.S. body politic?

More than six decades have passed since Patterson’s authoritative study of police killings of Black people. Within that span, the Deacons for Self Defense and others used arms to protect the Black Freedom Movement against vigilantes in the South; the Black Panther Party for Self Defense organized thousands of people based on the demand to end police brutality and murder of Black people; and insurrections sparked by police atrocities rocked every major city in the country. Then in February 2012, a vigilante, George Zimmerman, killed Trayvon Martin. Two years ago today the acquittal of George Zimmerman re-kindled a movement against impunity for police and vigilante killers. Yet, despite the outrage over the state’s protection of Zimmerman, and the spotlight on impunity of police who summarily execute Black people on camera, the killing continues with shocking regularity. And the impunity of police, and even vigilantes, proceeds apace.

What makes this modern day lynching a seemingly inoperable tumor woven into the arteries and sinew of the U.S. body politic? This is the first in a three-part series that offers a diagnosis of sorts of our national disease.

A cornerstone of police impunity is the failure of the federal government to require reliable and accurate reporting. Even organizations that have the resources to amass and disseminate the data, still must rely on police accounts of the killings that invariably justify their mayhem. Impunity breathes life into chronic assaults by cops and the state’s privatized killers. In May and June 2012, *Operation Ghetto Storm* (OGS) documented 30 Black people killed per month by police, security guards and vigilantes. In May 2015, The Guardian’s website counted 26 killed by police alone. Their count for June 2015 is 19. If they followed OGS methodology to include vigilantes and security guards, the total for

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Online at TeleSur English:

<http://www.telesurtv.net/english/opinion/Update-on-Operation-Ghetto-Storm-Part-1-20150713-0007.html>

<http://www.telesurtv.net/english/opinion/Update-on-Operation-Ghetto-Storm-Part-2--20150715-0033.html>

<http://www.telesurtv.net/english/opinion/Update-on-Operation-Ghetto-Storm-Part-3-20150721-0013.html>

We called the Report Operation Ghetto Storm (OGS) because the name encapsulates our conclusion that the mission, white supremacist state policies and institutions, high tech military hardware, and military mind-set that characterized the invasion of Iraq also sustain the occupation and war on Black and Brown communities inside the U.S.

June 2015 would be at least 28 or one every 25.7 hours for the month.

Initially enraged by the Florida police's refusal to arrest Zimmerman for the murder of Trayvon Martin, we began to collect names of murdered Black people to demonstrate that Trayvon's killing was systemic. We found that in 2012, police, security guards and vigilantes killed a total of 313 Black people. Divide the number of hours in a year by 313 and you get one every 28 hours. We called the Report *Operation Ghetto Storm* (OGS) because the name encapsulates our conclusion that the mission, white supremacist state policies and institutions, high tech military hardware, and military mind-set that characterized the invasion of Iraq also sustain the occupation and war on Black and Brown communities inside the U.S. Security guards and vigilantes, protected by "stand- you-ground", "self-defense", the "home as castle doctrine" and other laws, join the 18,000 law enforcement agencies employing approximately 250,000 police and sheriffs in the occupation and containment of Black communities.

### ***The Mission of Police in Black Communities in Historic Context***

White supremacy is much more than the ideology or ranting of a right-wing extremist, admirer or member of organizations like the Ku Klux Klan. White supremacy has flowed in the mainstream since the beginning of U.S. history.

*"White Supremacy is a web of interlocking, mutually-reinforcing institutions —economic, military, legal, educational, religious and cultural—that propel a system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations, and peoples of color by white peoples and*

*nations for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power, and privilege."*<sup>1</sup>

The groundbreaking historian, Gerald Horne, has demonstrated how the United States—a settler colony based on stolen land and built with stolen labor-- was the world's first nation founded on white supremacy. Its founding heroic democratic myths are lies. The so-called "American Revolution" was, in fact, a counter-revolution by slave owners and land pirates who feared that the British Crown would not allow their profitable white supremacist enterprise to continue.<sup>2</sup> Slavery and slave trade made the development and economy of the United States possible.

The system of slavery enlisted white settlers—including those who owned no land—to control the lives of enslaved Africans. The earliest "law enforcement institutions" or police forces grew from networks of white people whose task it was to contain and control enslaved Black people, especially those who attempted escape. After the Civil War and end of Reconstruction, between 1877 and 1950, white supremacist organizations like the Ku Klux Klan, civilian mobs, local sheriffs and police colluded to enforce sharecropping—different from slavery in name only—and to maintain Jim Crow—de jure apartheid and denial

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Martinez—early member of the Black Southern Freedom Movement organization, SNCC and Latina activist—formulated this definition. [http://soaw.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=482](http://soaw.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=482)

<sup>2</sup> Gerald Horne. *The Counter-Revolution of 1776: Slave Resistance and the Origins of the United States of America*. NYU Press 2014. Glen Ford offers a summary of Horne's argument at [http://blackagendareport.com/white\\_supremacy\\_protects\\_imperialism](http://blackagendareport.com/white_supremacy_protects_imperialism)

of citizenship. They institutionalized a system of omnipresent surveillance, prison plantations and more than 4000 lynchings to terrorize Black people into submission and to re-entrench white supremacist power.

While this state-sanctioned terror was centered in the South, many Northern and Western states were sites of lynching and all practiced some form of slavery and then Jim Crow. White riots or pogroms against Black people mobilized white mobs in many northern cities to contain the Black people who had migrated North during and after World War I. Local police throughout the country enforced ordinances that barred Black people from living in the “Sundown towns” where they worked. Despite numerous proposals, the federal government never passed an anti-lynching law or any other legislation to protect Black people against the excesses of police and white citizen attacks. Rather, when Black people’s tradition of resistance to white supremacy gained strength in the 1960’s, the federal government launched COINTELPRO. Under that program, dissent was criminalized, leaders and militants were assassinated or incarcerated and their activities were disrupted.

This failure to protect Black people’s human rights persists in the toothless pretenses of the federal government to hold police accountable. *Operation Ghetto Storm* documented how only 12 percent of the extrajudicial killings of Black people might be justified by international human rights standards. That leaves 275 killings that were tantamount to lynching— an astronomical number compared to the heyday of lynching.

As early as 1960, in an essay published by *Esquire*, James Baldwin explained the

mission of the “modern” police in Harlem, New York: ... the only way to police a ghetto is to be oppressive..... Their very presence is an insult, and it would be, even if they spent their entire day feeding gumdrops to children. They represent the force of the white world, and that world’s real intentions are, simply, for that world’s criminal profit and ease, to keep the black man corralled up here, in his place. The badge, the gun in the holster, and the swinging club make vivid what will happen should his rebellion become overt.”

In 2013, the New York State Senate heard testimony that the former NYPD Commissioner Kelly told the NY State governor that his aim was to instill fear in young Black and Latino men every time they left home. A recording made at a Brooklyn Police Station showed that Kelly’s views permeate the NYPD: “If you get too big of a crowd there, you know, they’re going to get out of control, and they’re going to think that they own the block. They don’t own the block, alright? They might live there, but we own the block, alright? We own the streets here.”<sup>3</sup>

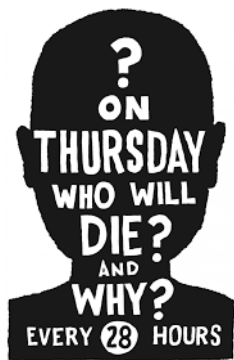
Within the last year the uprisings and police response in Ferguson and Baltimore have illuminated how consistent the police’s mission has been over the decades. Whether they are equipped with candy, traditional billy clubs and sidearms or tanks and high tech military equipment; whether their chiefs give them arrest quotas that require petty harassment or follow the principles of “community policing”, their mission remains the same: to contain, control and force submission of Black people.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.operationghettostorm.org/uploads/1/9/1/1/19110795/operation\\_ghetto\\_storm.pdf](http://www.operationghettostorm.org/uploads/1/9/1/1/19110795/operation_ghetto_storm.pdf) (page 11)

## Part 2: The Turning Wheels of State-Sanctioned Killing



In Part 2 of this series we'll investigate the enduring ideological and structural underpinnings of police state occupation and control of Black communities.

*"Plaintiffs' decedent's injuries, losses, and damages complained of, were directly and proximately caused by the acts of Plaintiffs' decedent, not this Defendant."*

—from initial court filing by the Cleveland City Attorney rejecting responsibility for the fatal shooting by police officer Timothy Loehmann who shot Tamir Rice, a 12-year-old child as he sat on a playground swing with a toy gun.

This pattern (of killings) is by design. It is the product of a web of support for police and vigilante killing under the auspices of legislative, executive and judicial branches of the state from local to federal levels and reinforced by a hegemonic white supremacist narrative.

Since George Zimmerman was acquitted of murdering Trayvon Martin two years ago, at least 600 Black people have been killed by police, security guards and vigilantes. An unknown number of the parents and other loved ones of those who died have had to endure legalistic contortions and media campaigns that blame the deceased for their own deaths

The sickening pattern of vicious violence and humiliation by police that is now on full display in social media leaves no doubt. Police personnel departments throughout the country attract, recruit and maintain men and women who hold Black people in utter contempt. Yet their white supremacist convictions are not the primary cause of the chronic epidemic of police killings. A panel of expert psychologists could screen out all police recruits who display white supremacist leanings and it would hardly improve the rates of police killing of Black people. The acquittal of Zimmerman and failure to charge all but 10 of the officers who killed hundreds of Black people in 2012<sup>4</sup> is a pattern that persists today with the exoneration of Darren Wilson and other high-profile killers. This pattern is by design. It is the product of a web of support for police and vigilante killing under the auspices of legislative, executive and judicial branches of the state from

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.operationghettostorm.org/news/police-impunity-update>

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### **The Narrative on the Political Stage**

Politicians from right to left pander to white supremacist ideology that assumes whiteness as the universal standard for all that's good and blames Black peoples' pathology, criminality and other personal failings for their own oppression. While right-wing extremist organizations and Republicans' policies are overtly racist, Democrats are often not much different. President Bill Clinton campaigned on a platform of "ending welfare as we know it". That platform openly pandered to those who agreed with far-right ideologues like Rick Santorum who, years later declared, "I don't want to make Black people's lives better by giving them somebody else's money." Clinton also sponsored various get-tough-on-crime policies that exploded the prison population. He deregulated the financial system and launched NAFTA and other globalization measures that resulted in financial ruin that disproportionately affected Black people. More recently major Democratic Party leaders, Harry Reid and Joe Biden, praised Obama's electability on the grounds that he "had no Negro dialect" and was a "bright and clean and nice-looking guy".

However, many have argued that as the first African American President, Barack Obama has been the most disappointing

politician to pander to white supremacy. He shrewdly strikes a “balanced” pose, in his speeches, and actions, like his 2013 address at Morehouse. Yet he invariably emphasizes a conservative, neo-liberal privatized approach that holds Black people responsible for overcoming centuries of entrenched white supremacy. In a press conference after the people of Baltimore took to the streets to express their outrage at the police breaking Freddie Gray’s spine, Obama joined the chorus of right-wing pundits and “objective” media who labeled the “rioters as criminals and thugs.”

Look at Dylann Roof’s rationalization for Charleston massacre that obsesses on “black- on white crime” and on the righteousness of Zimmerman’s vigilantism. Then consider how Dylann’s thinking overlaps with the hegemonic narrative— even propagated by the first Black president-- that demonizes, criminalizes and fears Black people. This narrative is manifest in the “justifications”<sup>5</sup> police use for killing Black people, who are all labeled “suspects”. Some 47 percent of police report they shot a Black suspect because they (the police) “felt threatened”. No corroborating evidence was ever given or requested. Fourteen percent of suspects “gave the officer no choice but to fire” because they fled. Only 13 percent of suspects were actually killed in the course of firing a weapon.

Unfortunately, some in the movements against police impunity implicitly accept part of a white supremacist narrative. They dedicate their protests to those “innocent/ unarmed” victims of police killings. It is tempting, even natural, that community outrage builds on the grounds that the victim was a child, heading to college, or only carrying skittles. But, the focus on unarmed victims implies that it might be

acceptable for the police to kill an armed Black person. It undermines movements for justice and human rights by accepting the myth that cops are heroes who protect the community against criminals.

*Operation Ghetto Storm*<sup>6</sup> found that 44 percent of Black people had no weapon at all at the time they were executed. Given the many cases where the public learned that the police misrepresented wallets, lighters, cell phones or pointed fingers as guns, OGS recommended caution in accepting police reports without corroboration. Nevertheless, gun possession is legal in 41 states and even where it is not legal, possession alone is not a capital offense.

### ***Policies that Institutionalize the Black “Criminal” Narrative***

The Great Migration away from Southern sharecropping and terror formed the Black communities that the police now occupy. Legislation and regulations from federal to local levels, between 1934 and 1962, denied Black people home loans or even the right to settle anywhere outside ghettos. In the 1960’s, police departments first created paramilitary units to repress Black rebellions that swept all major cities in the US. In 1971, President Nixon declared the “War on Drugs”, which gave moralistic cover to a raft of laws that criminalized Black life and led to omnipresent policing, surveillance and mass incarceration. In the 1986, President Ronald Reagan issued a national directive that declared “illicit drugs a threat to national security.” And so began a domestic arms race among police departments and indoctrination of police in the win-at-all-costs mentality of soldier. Since 9/11, the Patriot Act and its various incarnations strip citizens of our basic rights that protect against all forms of police tyranny, give various agencies carte blanche to monitor citizens’ every move and utterance, justify racist profiling and

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5 [http://www.operationghettostorm.org/uploads/1/9/1/1/19110795/operation\\_ghettostorm.pdf](http://www.operationghettostorm.org/uploads/1/9/1/1/19110795/operation_ghettostorm.pdf) (page 25)

6 <http://www.operationghettostorm.org/> (page 24)

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provided infinite funds to maintain a system of mass incarceration. Edward Snowden's revelations showed how the behemoth of mass surveillance has taken on a life of its own, multiplying without enabling legislation. Yet it is clear from the record, the main target of all this surveillance is black and brown. Somehow, all the cameras, phone data collection, drones, Fusion Centers and spy networks haven't been able to detect white faces or prevent amateur attacks, like the one Dylann Roof, announced six months in advance.

### **Funding Militarization and Political Clout of the Police**

The National Rifle Association, Monsanto and organizations controlled by the Koch brothers effectively pressure state and federal legislatures for law-and-order legislation and funding. The same defense contractors whose lobbyists have successfully gorged the military industrial complex and promoted war abroad have expanded their realm to feed the militarization of domestic police.

Lobbyists representing police officers keep a relatively lower profile, but they come out in force to expand their budgets, various "Bills of Police Officers' Rights", warrantless wiretaps, use of drones and to oppose drug reform and any encroachment on their authority or impunity. In addition to the millions they may spend, the combination of the white public respect, even reverence, that they command in the media and their "expertise" that lawmakers depend upon, give police outsized influence.

The National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO) lists 126 member organizations. The powerful New York City Police Benevolent Association and a number of others do not appear on the list. The International Union of Police Associations (which is a member of the AFL-CIO)(AFL-CIO), the National

Fraternal Order of Police, the National Police Benevolent Association—each with their own local and state affiliates—also join the lobby. Their websites feature several themes that are echoed in corporate media: (1) Police are heroic public servants who never stray from their duty to protect citizens from criminals and terrorists and uphold law and order; and (2) Police work is extremely dangerous and requires unconditional public, political and financial support.

Generally their message has prevailed. After a barrage of negative publicity in the progressive press exposing the police use of lethal excessive force in scores of cities, a national Gallup Poll released June 19 found that only 18 percent of people in the U.S. expressed "little or no confidence" in the police.<sup>7</sup> Even the 34,500 member New York City Police Department — which former Mayor Bloomberg bragged was the 7<sup>th</sup> largest army in the world — maintained public support after they staged a coup-like work refusal and openly expressed contempt for the people of New York and their Mayor. A June 25 editorial in the *New York Times* praised Mayor DeBlasio after he caved into the demands of the Police Benevolent Association by hiring 1300 more officers for "community policing and to fight terrorism."

Their budgets both reflect and reinforce the political power of police. Law enforcement budgets receive money from a multiplicity of sources which hides the magnitude of their resources. A former Congressional aid estimated that when federal agencies are combined with state and local agencies, the annual total comes to \$266.8 billion or \$850 per person per year in the United States.<sup>8</sup> This excludes billions more for

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.gallup.com/poll/183704/confidence-police-lowest-years.aspx?utm\\_source=Politics&utm\\_medium=newsfeed&utm\\_campaign=tiles](http://www.gallup.com/poll/183704/confidence-police-lowest-years.aspx?utm_source=Politics&utm_medium=newsfeed&utm_campaign=tiles)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.quora.com/How-much-does-the-U-S-government-spend-annually-on-roads-and-police>

Homeland Security, and an additional \$72.2 billion a year for national and military intelligence. Then there's the unaccounted billions more that the Department of Defense, Justice Department, and others distribute to law enforcement agencies in the name of homeland security. In 2012 Stephan Salisbury<sup>9</sup> wrote that the money spent on armoring and arming local law-enforcement since 9/11 could have rebuilt<sup>10</sup> post-Katrina New Orleans five times over with more than enough money left to provide job training and housing for every one of the 41,000-plus homeless people in New York City, 15,000 homeless in Philadelphia and additional tens of thousands of homeless in Detroit, Newark, and Camden. "Throw in some crumbling bridges and roads, too," he suggested.

In May, with typical fanfare, President Obama announced an executive order which, he claimed, would improve public safety and restore trust in police in places like Ferguson. Executive Order 13688 would, he promised, restrict police departments' use of tank-like armored vehicles that move on tracks and other military-style gear that "can sometimes give people a feeling like there's an occupying force as opposed to a force that's part of the community that's protecting them and serving them." As if it were the gear, and not the police mission that, for decades, have occupied Black communities and killed Black citizens. However, even given Obama's logic, the details of his Order reveal that it leaves the billions of dollars worth of military hardware that have already been distributed in place and that future "restrictions" are full of loopholes. Moreover, there is no serious provision for funding, monitoring or enforcing the program.

Meanwhile, military contractors continue to invent and peddle high tech equipment

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.salon.com/2012/03/05/the\\_cost\\_of\\_americas\\_police\\_state/](http://www.salon.com/2012/03/05/the_cost_of_americas_police_state/)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.sfgate.com/business/network/article/The-true-cost-of-Katrina-2567118.php>

to police departments to more efficiently terrorize those who police are charged with containing. For example, a popular item advertised in *Police One* magazine, along with arms and other military accoutrements, are handcuffs that enable police to deliver an 80,000-volt shock to a detainee.<sup>11</sup> Each set of cuffs cost \$1500, plus an additional \$400 for each transmitter.

The mythology of police heroism in the face of Black criminality immunizes the police from scandal when their own white supremacist rants are exposed. For example, in "liberal" San Francisco, investigators discovered repeated exchanges of racist and homophobic text messages among 14 cops. They included salutes to "white power", and declared, "All n- must f-hang." Yet thanks to a gentrified public indifference, vigorous defense by the Police Officers' Association, bungling and bureaucratic complacency that apparently didn't see the urgency in holding such white supremacist behavior accountable, the offending cops are likely to retain their jobs.<sup>12</sup> Similar exposures of white supremacist rants by cops in New York, Illinois, St Louis, Cleveland, Ferguson, Fort Lauderdale suggest that the culture is endemic in most departments. Police unions' protection also extends to the officers after they've been fired for "unjustified" extrajudicial killings and physical abuse. A recent exposé in *The Atlantic*, detailed how around the country, 70 percent of officers' terminations and suspensions are overturned.<sup>13</sup>

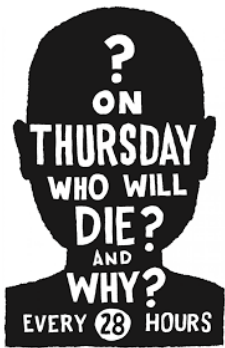
<sup>11</sup> <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/-handcuffs-shock-prisoners/396674/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/S-F-Police-Chief-Suhr-is-hit-by-scandal-but-6339807.php>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/12/how-police-unions-keep-abusive-cops-on-the-street/383258/> <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/12/how-police-unions-keep-abusive-cops-on-the-street/383258/>

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## Part 3: What Can Stop Police from Killing a Black Person #every28hours?



This is the third of a three-part series that investigates how the extrajudicial killing of Black people is tightly woven into the history, hegemonic ideology and institutions that constitute the U.S.A. Our aim is to contribute to an urgent effort to move the conversation on police “reform” to a strategy for ending the systemic war on Black people (aka “Operation Ghetto Storm”).

*Iraq war veteran Dan Grabow applied for a spot in the Michigan State Police Academy. The top brass are recruiting 400 new troopers and they believe military vets have the right stuff. “I think they’re right,” Grabow said. “We have the training.... We know how to dress. We know how to do things in stressful situations. A lot of us combat vets have been there and done that,”* Fox News, March 19, 2012

Grabow is one of thousands of U.S. veterans who have traded their army dog tags for police badges.<sup>14</sup>

They are joined by an uncountable number of recruits from white supremacist organizations and individuals who believe in the crusading white supremacist mission of the armies of U.S. Empire.

### **Do They Fight under the Confederate Flag or under the American Flag?**

The answer is both.

Ajamu Baraka pointed out in his June 22 blog that Dylann Roof’s objective to take over HIS country from Black rapists and criminals was ideologically consistent with the ideology of U.S. military propagandists. *“The irrational, violence-prone racialized “other” occupies a permanent space in the consciousness of so many in the U.S., which is why it has been so easy to mobilize public support for U.S. military interventions and campaigns of political subversion, from Iraq to Venezuela.”*<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.foxcarolina.com/story/16976568/michigan-state-police-looking-to-recruit-military-vets>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.ajamubaraka.com/closing-the-historical-circle-white-terrorism-at-the-emanuel-african-methodist-episcopal-church>

Too often, the affinity between followers of anti-Black groups, veterans of foreign wars and the police is more than ideological. Since the Charleston massacre last month the internet has reposted a flurry of exposés.<sup>16</sup> They feature websites like “Stormfront” with 300,000 registered subscribers and hundreds of white fascist organizations that encourage their members to enlist in the U.S. Armed Forces and police departments. At the same time, “extremists” actively recruit from inside these military institutions.

White supremacy is chronic and deeply rooted in the Army and its mission. Even the Department of Homeland Security issued a short report<sup>17</sup> in 2009 that pointed out how the return of military veterans from combat correlates closely with the rise in Klan membership. They are only the tip of an iceberg. Nevertheless, Fox News and a horde of politicians denounced the Report. Homeland Security deleted it from its website and the unit investigating domestic terrorism was sharply reduced. Yet there are at least 2.4 million veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Even if

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.salon.com/2009/06/15/neo\\_nazis\\_army](http://www.salon.com/2009/06/15/neo_nazis_army)

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/16/opinion/veterans-and-white-supremacy.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/16/opinion/veterans-and-white-supremacy.html?_r=1)



only a small percentage of them continue to wage a conscious war against people of color at home, the “service and heroism” of soldiers returning from the battles for the US Empire permeate the Zeitgeist of U.S. society.

Federal and local governments give incentives to police departments who hire veterans. A website for the International Association of Chiefs of Police features resources, including guides on how to market and recruit veterans to police departments. The Office of Community Oriented Policing in the DOJ has also set up a program, “Vets to Cops”, to encourage law enforcement agencies to hire veterans. It features available grants, toolkits and other resources. Many local police departments actively recruit veterans, with or without grants from the federal government, and give veterans extra points in the hiring process.

### **Looking in Vain for Judicial Relief**

The growing list of refusals by local district attorneys to indict police is infamous.<sup>18</sup> Refusals by the Attorney General and Supreme Court are slower in coming to light. Yet, in April 2015, the *New York Times*<sup>19</sup> documented that “At the Supreme Court<sup>20</sup>, where the limits of police power are established, Mr. Holder’s Justice Department has supported police officers every time an excessive-force case has made its way to arguments.”

A consistent line of Supreme Court precedents set and reflect the prevailing political power as expressed by the U.S. Attorney General, the Department of Justice and their regional appointees. Since

18 <http://www.operationghettostorm.org/news/police-impunity-update>

19 [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/22/us/at-supreme-court-holders-justice-dept-routinely-backs-officers-use-of-force.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/22/us/at-supreme-court-holders-justice-dept-routinely-backs-officers-use-of-force.html?_r=0)

20 [http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/s/supreme\\_court/index.html?inline=nyt-org](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/s/supreme_court/index.html?inline=nyt-org)

1989, in *Graham v Connor*, the Supreme Court legalized police use of force whenever that use is judged “reasonable” from the point of view of the officer on the scene. In recent years, a raft of Supreme Court rulings have enhanced police discretion.<sup>21</sup> For example, in May 2014, *Plumhoff v. Rickford*, the Court ruled that police could more easily justify shooting-to-kill a “fleeing” driver.

Families and protesters seeking “justice” for Black people killed by the police, security guards and vigilantes often place their hope in the Department of Justice (DOJ). In early May 2015, some protesters of Freddie Gray’s killing celebrated when they heard that the Department of Justice had opened an investigation into the Baltimore Police Department. However, a review of the outcomes of DOJ investigations indicates that the DOJ is understaffed, often lacks subpoena power, has limited enforcement power, and most importantly, lacks the political will to challenge their own commitment to settler colonial tradition, the entrenched power of police unions, pro-police politicians and media.

Since the DOJ’s first investigation in 1997, it has reviewed 65 departments-- including Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, Metropolitan DC, Cincinnati, Detroit, Oakland, New Orleans (two times), Portland, Seattle, Las Vegas, Philadelphia, Miami (two times) and most recently Cleveland (two times), Ferguson and Baltimore. With some cities, like Los Angeles, Oakland, Detroit, DOJ investigations drag on for more than a decade. Finally a consent decree is negotiated, departments commit to cosmetic changes, and despite a flurry of media publicity and the threat of court enforcement, records show that police departments go back to business as usual.

21 [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/27/opinion/how-the-supreme-court-protects-bad-cops.html?smid=fb-share&\\_r=3](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/27/opinion/how-the-supreme-court-protects-bad-cops.html?smid=fb-share&_r=3)

White supremacy is chronic and deeply rooted in the Army and its mission..... there are at least 2.4 million veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Supreme Court legalized police use of force whenever that use is judged “reasonable” from the point of view of the officer on the scene.

The DOJ's failure to reform or protect the people of Cleveland from "systemic excessive and deadly force by police" is a significant case study.

No president or politician whose election depends on pleasing the captains of financial and military industry will seriously commit to ending Operation Ghetto Storm any more than she or he will end the U.S. Empire's military interventions around the world.

The DOJ's failure to reform or protect the people of Cleveland from "systemic excessive and deadly force by police" is a significant case study. In 2004, the DOJ completed a four-year investigation of the Cleveland Police Department's excessive and discriminatory use of force. The out-of-court settlement, included a prohibition against officers firing at fleeing vehicles unless someone's life was in danger. Yet in December 2012, some 62 of Cleveland's squad cars joined the chase of a Black couple whose only "crime" seemed to be that their car backfired. Community members likened the frenzied pursuit to a lynch mob. In the end, Timothy Russell and Melissa Williams died in a barrage of 137 bullets. Community outcry pressured the DOJ to open another investigation. It didn't take long for investigators to find systemic discriminatory problems in all aspects of the department's structure. Nevertheless, the City received a DOJ grant for \$1.25 million to hire 10 new officers and another million for "crime prevention". The following year, just before then Attorney General Holder formally released a scathing report<sup>22</sup> that exposed the Department's "systemic deficiencies", the DOJ granted them another \$1.9 million to hire 15 new officers. In November 2014, they summarily executed 12-year old Tamir Rice as he played on a swing with a toy gun.

Then, in May 2015, Officer Michael Brelo was acquitted of voluntary manslaughter. He was the cop who, in December 2012, had climbed on the hood of Timothy Russell's crashed car and fired 15 shots,

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2015/04/23/policing-the-police>

point blank into the motionless couple. These details lead to the inevitable conclusion that rather than enforce Black people's rights, DOJ investigations serve as pacification programs to placate besieged Black communities.

### **Building Resistance and Solidarity**

Galvanized Black communities in the streets of Ferguson and Baltimore, along with the slow boil of Black people in communities across the country, have finally broken through the "myth of a post-racial America." They are challenging complacency and denial by the majority of white people. They are forcing a national conversation about racism. Will that conversation lead to an end to the war on Black people? The answer depends on many complicated conditions that cannot be predicted apart from the vision gained from a protracted struggle led by Black people.

Yet, the implications of our study do suggest the need for certain strategic assumptions. First, body cameras, improved training, reduced military hardware and other "reforms" are cosmetic and cannot change the basic state-sponsored, violent mission of the police. Second, reliance on the Judicial System for substantive justice (or even revenge) will lead to community pacification and eventual frustration. Third, no president or politician whose election depends on pleasing the captains of financial and military industry will seriously commit to ending Operation Ghetto Storm any more than she or he will end the U.S. Empire's military interventions around the world. Fourth, given the deep roots and pervasive control of the white

supremacist hegemonic narrative, a housing, health, education and dignified priority is to educate and organize masses employment. Last, with the recognition of people, block-by-block. The movement that survival for most of the people of must be capable of sustaining a struggle for the world depends on defeating the white all oppressed communities to become self- supremacist imperial project, building determining with full human rights to life, international solidarity becomes essential.

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*Arlene Eisen is the author of the study called "Operation Ghetto Storm: 2012 Annual Report on the Extrajudicial Killings of 313 Black People by Police, Security Guards and Vigilantes" (Also known as the #every28hours Report) originally published by Malcolm X Grassroots Movement. The revised edition is available at [www.operationghettostorm.org](http://www.operationghettostorm.org)*

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