

Blacks Lives Matter and Police Brutality in the United States

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“Our police force was not created to serve black Americans; it was created to police black Americans and serve white Americans.” The quote by Ijeoma Oluo from the book, “So You Want to Talk About Race,” serve as a constant reminder of the prevalent nature of police brutality in the United States against the racial minorities. The Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments of the Constitution champions for equal protection under law. The two amendments (5th and 14th) require both federal and state governments to offer equal protection and follow due process as stated in the country’s constitution. Furthermore, police play a critical role in society by maintaining law and order, protecting property, and lives. In some circumstances, police are allowed to use reasonable force in the course of their duty. But what is reasonable force? Police brutality in the United States is caused by racial biasness against minority racial groups and overcoming such practice require members of the various police departments to be subjected to inclusivity training. Black Lives Matter protests are a clarion call to end police brutality, systematic racism, and promote racial equality in the United States.

Global protests are on the rise in various parts of the world because of increased cases of social evils, political, and economic challenges such as corruption, discrimination, and marginalization of the minority groups. Protests play a critical role in the development of a nation since they aim at informing, sensitizing, and demanding for change. The Black Lives Matter protests were meant to sensitize the world about police brutality against African-Americans, systematic racism and racial discrimination in the United States. Consequently, the protests were meant to put pressure on the government and various police departments to act and protect African-Americans from police brutality. Social media play a critical role in facilitating global protests as it connects people and provide an avenue for people to air their views leading

to a national and global discourse. Racial discrimination and inequality is common in the United States. Racial minorities and marginalized communities' rights are violated based on stereotypes. Black Lives Matter global protests is a call for equality and demand for the stop of police brutality against African-Americans.

Police departments in the United States have the “use of force” policy that dictates how and when authorities can apply force in the line of their duty. The force applied by police should be reasonable (Taylor, 2018). However, the word reasonable is relative and some officers apply excessive force in the course of their duty. Moreover, the definition of “reasonable force” differ from one state to the other. For example, George Floyd was killed by a police officer who used a chokehold (neck restraint) – some states believe that using a chokehold is reasonable while other states such as New York have banned the use of chokeholds since 1993 (Hawkins and Thomas, 2013). Police brutality against the racial minorities such as African-Americans in the United States dates back to the mid-20th century (Taylor, 2018). However, the inhumane treatment by the police against African-Americans was unknown to the Whites until mid-1960s since the media did not highlight the issue as it was considered news unworthy. Cases of police brutality against African-Americans were covered by African-American press and civil rights organizations that championed for equal treatment of all races (Hawkins and Thomas, 2013). African-Americans with the help of other like-minded citizens have fought for equal protection and treatment under law but they continue to face numerous challenges. From the 1960s, police brutality was one of the main catalyst for race riots that took place in urban America (Hawkins and Thomas, 2013). Watts Riots of 1965 and the Detroit Riot of 1967 were inspired by police brutality against minority race in the country. Additionally, in 1980 the Liberty City section of Miami erupted into riots after police killed an unarmed African-American (Taylor, 2018). In

2020, the United States faced countrywide riots by the Black Lives Matter after the killing of George Floyd. History illustrates that police brutality against racial minorities such as African-Americans continue to exist. What is the solution to police brutality against racial minorities in the country?

Police reforms without changing the mindset of the officers have proved to be worthless in the quest to end police brutality against African-Americans in the United States. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts that all humans are born free and equal in dignity and rights (Hawkins and Thomas, 2013). As a result, everybody deserves equal treatment and protection under the law. African-Americans make up 13% of the United States population but because of police biasness, the number of African-Americans incarcerated in state prisons across the United States are more than five times the rate of whites who contribute to 62% of the nation's total population (The Sentencing Project, 2020). Additionally, the Bureau of Justice Statistics asserts that 38% of state prisoners in the country are African-Americans, 21% Hispanics, and 35% are Whites (The Sentencing Project, 2020). The figures from the prisoners around the United States are disproportionate considering the overall population of the country. Consequently, police brutality and biasness against African-Americans can be a contributing factor to the nation's prison composition. The United States is a diverse country with people from different backgrounds. The solution to the historical inhumane treatment of African-Americans by the police require cultural diversity training. United States' criminal justice system is biased against African-Americans based on rate of incarceration, execution of death penalty, and wrongful convictions (Hawkins and Thomas, 2013). Consequently, cultural diversity awareness training for police officers can be a vital role in curbing police brutality in country. Inclusivity training is essential since it grants people the skills to better work with others of

divergent abilities, gender, race, training, nationalities, and sexual orientation. Furthermore, diversity training allow the trainees to learn and overcome myths and misconceptions about people from other cultural backgrounds. Inclusivity training will help the police view African-Americans as other United States citizens and treat them equally to other races (Déverge, 2016). Police officers depend on members of the community to provide them with information that help in the maintenance of peace and order. Consequently, diversity and inclusion training with better the cooperation between police officers and African-Americans and curb the rate of crimes in the country (Moon et al., 2018). Additionally, the government lose taxpayers money because of wrongful conviction and compensation to the victims of police brutality (Déverge, 2016). Inclusivity training and cultural difference awareness can help save the money as it will curb police brutality in the country. Curbing police brutality in the United States require a collective approach among all stakeholders (Moon et al., 2018). Reforms should be centered towards changing the mindset of police officers about African-Americans and it can be achieved by making it mandatory for all officers to go through inclusivity training.

Excessive use of power among police officers is among the reasons that adversely impact the relationship between the police and the public. Furthermore, the use of outdated policing techniques can lead to the deaths of citizens and negatively affect the relationship between the public and the police (Lum et al., 2016). For example, the chokehold technique led to the death of George Floyd and led to unrest in the country adversely impacting the relationship between African-Americans and the police as they felt they were discriminated against and brutalized by the authorities. Technology can help in curing such challenges because it can provide the police with less-lethal weapons such as the conducted energy devices (CEDs) and pepper sprays (Lum et al., 2016). The use of deadly force by the police is among the main reasons that contribute to

social unrest and conflict between the police and the public. As a result, the development of less-lethal weapons can assist in reducing the force used by the police when on duty.

Overall, historically African-Americans have been victims of police brutality and systematic racism because of the myths and misconceptions associated with the race. United States is a diverse nation with people from different backgrounds and cultures. Curbing police brutality in the United States require police officers to be subjected to inclusivity training. Diversity and inclusion training helps trainees understand people from diverse cultures and treat them as humans despite the differences in race. Police brutality has social, economic, and political ramifications and it should stop for the country to remain united. The Black Lives Matter protests were successful around the globe since it sensitized the world about police brutality against African-Americans and racial discrimination. The football world continues taking a knee as a sign of solidarity with the affected parties. Ending racial discrimination and police brutality require collaboration among all stakeholders. The Black Lives Matter demonstrations illustrated the importance of solidarity and unity of purpose in fighting social evils.

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