
Police Brutality in the United States of America: A Social Issue

Annotated Bibliography - Police Brutality in the United States

Police brutality is a pressing issue that has become more prevalent in the past year in the United States. Throughout the year 2015, there have been over 700 cases of police brutality. There have been numerous groups, organizations, and ideas that have been put forth in order to help put an end to police brutality. In order to put an end to this issue we need to understand the reasons behind why this issue has gotten out of hand, and the reasons to why we believe there are solutions to this problem. However, with two very strong opposing sides to this issue, it has become a rough and touchy subject to put an end to.

Michael Slager a white 33 year old police officer in North Charleston, South Carolina shot and killed Walter Scott, who was an unarmed 50-year old African American man. Slager initially pulled over Scott for having a broken taillight. "Slager claimed that he feared for his life when Scott stole his Taser. Scott had ran away and Slager shot him 8 times in the back." This incident made legislators in SC approve a law to require their State and local police officers to wear body cameras.

New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) has been accused of "brutality, racial profiling, corruption, and overall misconduct." However, the majority of the police at NOPD are working for public safety, multiple officers have "ignore[d] the boundaries of constitutional policing." The department has been put on blast for numerous cases at the station due to misconduct.

"Hate crime" is a popularized term that was primarily used in the 80's. This term is used to describe crimes that are motivated "by an offender's bias against the victim's race, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, or disability status." Numerous laws have been passed in the United States that aim to eliminate such 'bias-motivated crime, both federally and on the local level.'

Police brutality has been said to be an epidemic. With two opposing sides, supporters argue, "police brutality and abuse are exaggerated, and only rarely do officers use excessive force." However, the opponents argue, "police departments across the country too often use excessive force, injuring people suspected of crimes and occasionally killing them." The matter of police brutality has been an issue for multiple decades, however nowadays 60% of the cases are physical.

Chicago's police chief was 'ousted' after multiple days of protest about a white officer shooting a young black teenage 16 times. The department had refused to release footage of the killing for over a year. "Illinois attorney general called the DOJ's civil rights division to investigate Chicago police practices, including the use of deadly force and the adequacy of its investigation of misconduct allegations." This caused the Mayor (Rham Emanuel) to ask police superintendent to resign.

So far, in the year 2015, the police killed 776 people. Of those 776, 161 of them were unarmed,

and 745 were men. “No cases happened in the states of Rhode Island, South Dakota, and Vermont (3 of the countries least populated states).” However, in the city of LA 14 were killed, Houston at 11, Phoenix had 9, New York City had 7, and Oklahoma City also had 7. Shooting killed a total of 680 people, while Tasers lead to the death of 39.

In the month of October, 95 people were killed by police. This website features five stories from across the country. The first was Corey Jones from Palm Beach Gardens, FL. Jones was a well-known drummer shot dead after leaving a late night gig. His car broke down and the officer thought he was armed in an abandon vehicle. The second was a student in Columbia, SC that was “slammed backwards to the ground.” The third was an unidentified man in Los Angeles, CA. While the fourth was a student in Round Rock, Tx. The fifth was Gary Carmona Boitano, from Columbia, MD.

Issues about excessive force by U.S. police departments continue to be a topic of recent controversy. The two-sided debate suggests that one side of the argument (Latinos and African-Americans in general) agree, “confidence in law enforcement is relatively low.” However, the FBI can agree that there is really no “reliable grasp of the problem”

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Black Lives Matter is a movement that started taking off in 2014 to put a public awareness to all the “police encounters that resulted in the deaths of African- Americans.” The Black Lives Matter movement has gained tremendous support on social media outlets and through street demonstrations. This movement has numerous chapters across the country.

Justice Together was “an anti-police brutality group that claimed to have chapters in all 50 states and over 300 college campuses.” This group was started by Shaun King who was moved by the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter. However, after receiving multiple death threats and threats to his family Shaun King had to resign from his group ‘Justice Together’. Because of his resignation many people formed the hashtag #ShaunKingLetMeDown.