

A call for justice against police brutality

Relations between civilians and the police force shifted dramatically over the course of a few months last year. It took the tragic death of one young man in Ferguson, Missouri to ignite a fuse across the country of people crusading for justice. Justice for the lives taken at the hands of officers who face no penalty for the death of these young men. In order to prevent further injustice, police forces should train their officers to live by the law and not above it.

Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Tamir Rice are just a few names on the ever-growing list of black men and teens killed by police officers. On Aug. 9, 2014, Michael Brown was excessively shot and killed by Officer Darren Wilson. His death immediately led to protests across the nation. These protests intensified during the holidays after the grand jury failed to indict Wilson on the charges of first-degree murder, second-degree murder, or voluntary/involuntary manslaughter. This case, along with the case of Eric Garner, an unarmed black man killed by an NYPD officer using an illegal chokehold, resulted in a failure of indictment by the grand jury as well. Masses took to the streets across the country staging die-ins, storming public businesses and streets with signs brandishing phrases such as "I Can't Breathe" and "Black Lives Matter."

Last year, government officials and former presidents commemorated the 50th anniversary of the civil rights movement. This reminded Americans of the tumultuous Jim Crow era and the injustices that occurred. It reminded us all of the disregard for and mistreatment of black lives in America, mistreatment that lingers today. According to a 2014 ProPublica report, black men ages 15-19 are killed at a rate of 31.7 per million compared to white males killed at a measly 1.47 per million by police. This disparity is appalling, and confirms the thoughts flowing through the minds of those calling for justice. With the lack of convictions, it seems as though cops are protected by the law but those slain are not.

In May 2010, officer Joseph Weekley shot and killed 7-year-old Aiyana Stanley-Jones in her Detroit home during a night-time police raid. Weekley was originally charged with involuntary manslaughter and careless discharge of a firearm after he claimed to have accidentally fired at Jones when her grandmother allegedly grabbed for his handgun. After two failed mistrials, the judge decided not to take it to trial a third time, and officer Weekley will not be forced to retire.

It's time Americans take a stand against corrupt police departments across the country that allow for racial profiling rather than protecting and uplifting their communities. The youth need to learn their rights so that they know when police are abusing their power. Police officers need to focus more on protecting their citizens, rather than meeting quotas. To solve the issue of corruption within the police force, officers should be fully knowledgeable of the laws in America as well. Mandatory trainings regarding race relations should occur throughout the year at police departments to forge relationships between police and their communities.

One of the main reasons tragedies like these continue to occur is the lack of accountability from officers. Until cops engaging in police brutality face consequences for their actions, the wedge between civilians and officers will continue to deepen.



-Art by Angelynn Ragland

STAFF STANCE