

# No Justice in Ferguson, NO PEACE ANYWHERE

The arrival of winter did not cool off the anger of the black community of Ferguson, Missouri. After months of grand jury proceedings, County Prosecutor Robert McCulloch managed to engineer a sham decision, but he could not forestall the waves of protest. Ferguson took to the streets again, joined in solidarity by demonstrations in over one hundred cities across the nation—including militant actions in Los Angeles, Oakland, and Detroit. Even in Europe, protesters gathered in London and Berlin. All of this, an international phenomenon against racism and police brutality, grew out of the bold initiative of one small community which, before August, hardly anyone had ever heard of.

However, a considerable portion of the world was paying attention by the time that the grand jury decision failed to indict the killer cop, Darren Wilson, on any charges. The majority-white, prosecutor-led grand jury would not press a single charge against a white officer who killed an unarmed black man—no case, no trial, and not even a pretense of concern for justice. According to the grand jury decision, the racist murder of Michael Brown would not even be treated as a crime. This echoed the legal response to the old Jim Crow lynchings, in which a black man could be killed on the basis of any accusation, and the legal system would have nothing to say about it.

County Prosecutor McCulloch led a charade grand jury process, designed to get the result he wanted while placing the responsibility on twelve other people. He notably carried out the same routine in the summer of 2000, when he would not indict two white officers who had killed two unarmed black men. Missouri Governor Jay Nixon led a state-enforced cover-up throughout the events, and deployed the National Guard against the only people who were fighting for justice. There is no reason to accept this process as final or even as a legitimate execution of due process: McCulloch must be removed and his grand jury process must be declared a sham—the decision must not stand. Killer cops should go to jail, and if the criminal justice system cannot achieve this, then

## PUBLIC TRIBUNAL FOR TRUTH AND ACTION: JUSTICE FOR MICHAEL BROWN

Wednesday, December 10, 6:00pm at Greater Saint Mark Family Church  
9950 Glen Owen Dr., St. Louis, MO 63136

The struggle for justice in Ferguson has moved into a new phase. To sustain a renewed period of action both in Ferguson and across the nation, it is necessary to build the leadership of the movement and to expose the truth behind the racist murder and the fraudulent legal process. The world needs to know what really happened, how a young black man was killed for no reason, how his racist killer was protected by the criminal justice system, and how a small community confronted the systematic, New Jim Crow policies of repression and cover-up. It is necessary to demand that the killer cop, Darren Wilson, be placed behind bars; but it is also necessary for us to put on trial the entire sham political machine and America's new police state—the prosecutor, the governor, the police force, the Justice Department, the FBI, and the endless barrage of lies. The Public Tribunal will provide the opportunity for open testimony from the community, for critical analysis, and for building the organizing power to move forward and achieve victory.

the courts have no authority to pass sentences on anyone else.

“Let the justice system do its work,” this was the advice of the respected authorities and the civil rights celebrities who counseled for “peace” in Ferguson. The Ferguson resistance was very wise to ignore them, and now appears even wiser in the wake of the grand jury decision. For America's most segregated black and Latino communities, where police can murder people with impunity, peace has never been an option—there is only the choice of whether to fight back. The Ferguson resistance has been revelatory in this regard. If there will be justice for Michael Brown, and if his killer eventually sits behind bars, it will be thanks to the courageous efforts of those who did not “let the justice system do its work,” but instead started fighting for justice themselves.

The movement for justice for Michael Brown has therefore produced yet another cause that is worth fighting for: the movement itself. That movement has provided the only dynamic possibility of achieving anything other than the business-as-usual routine of police violence and cover-up. That movement has braced every police department and government official in the nation against the new reality that their everyday abuses could now backfire in spectacular fashion. That movement is immeasurably more valuable to the cause of justice than any number of grand juries, federal investigations, media exposés, and

political speeches. The “dialogues” for mediating racial tensions, and all other attempts to dissuade mass action and restore passivity, only seek to return the nation to conditions in which it will be easier to continue the police war against minority youth. For these reasons, every step in the direction of real struggle is its own victory, is important for its own sake, and is worth defending with as much devotion as the cause of justice for which the movement was built. Ferguson's very first achievement has also been its greatest: people are fighting back.

The movement has gained the power and the authority that it needs to achieve its demands—starting with the rejection of the sham legal routine and the jailing of the killer cop. Already, political authorities are scrambling to figure out what promises they need to make in order to placate the struggle. And it has been clear for some time that killer cop Darren Wilson can never return to the Ferguson police force—in fact, every police officer in the nation now knows that his conduct can be placed under the very large magnifying lens of a mass movement. In dozens of communities, black and Latino youth for the first time in their lives have been able to express their power in the streets. The movement is just scratching the surface of its potential, and has no reason to settle for token measures from the politicians. We can win, and Ferguson has shown the way.

2014.12.03

# STOP the Racist Attacks Against Minority Youth JAIL the Killer Cops: A Badge Is Not A License to Kill END the Policy of Cover-Up and Blaming the Victim

## THE LESSONS OF FERGUSON

First printed August 14, 2014

Updated on August 30, 2014

In Ferguson, Missouri, the racist murder of Michael Brown produced the only response that could ever hope to break the otherwise endless cycle of injustice: *mass resistance*.

With the exception of the outburst of impassioned struggle that followed, the police killing of Michael Brown would appear to have been copied from an overused script. A young black man, unarmed, was shot by police while his hands were in the air. The police defended the killing by making the absurd claim that Michael was reaching for the officer's gun, following the standard legal advice that has become an automatic reflex: "Just claim that he was attacking you, and then you'll get away with it." The media, politicians, and civil rights celebrities called for peace and mourning. All otherwise seemed to be going according to the business-as-usual routine—but the black community of Ferguson was not content to follow the routine.

The Ferguson upsurge took over the streets for ten days, culminating in the arrival of the National Guard. The rest of the nation watched in awe, either fearing or admiring the power that such a small population could exert. The entire national political structure was left to contemplate some burning questions: "What if this happened in Los Angeles? Or Chicago? Or Detroit?" And seemingly overnight, the myth of the "post-racial" America simply evaporated.

There can be no question of the wisdom of those who choose to take matters into their own hands: the criminal justice

system has stubbornly denied justice in virtually every instance in which black and Latino youth have been brutalized or murdered by the police. Regardless of the facts of the situation, regardless of whether the political leadership was Democratic or Republican, and regardless of the public magnitude of the scandal, all authorities have strictly applied a universal policy to all racist murders by police: the cop gets away with the murder, the civil rights celebrities keep the peace, perhaps a bit of money is tossed towards the family of the victim, *and the black and Latino youth remain in peril*. No, there can be no question of the wisdom of those who choose to take matters into their own hands.

Just days following the murder of Michael Brown, the LA police shot and killed another unarmed black man, Ezell Ford. LAPD officers had committed another murder only one week earlier, beating Omar Abrego to death in front of his house. The city of Oakland, California still remembers the police killing of Oscar Grant, whose murder was recorded on video as Officer Johannes Mehserle shot the unarmed Grant in the back while Grant was face-down on the ground and in handcuffs. The city of Santa Rosa, California still remembers the police killing of Andy Lopez, the 13-year old Latino youth who was shot seven times by Officer Erick Gelhaus; the District Attorney for the case, Jill Ravitch, did not even file charges against Gelhaus. And the nation watched as NYPD officers strangled the unarmed Eric Garner to death just one month ago.

But the events of Ferguson, Missouri, in which the black community created mass resistance to the national pattern of police tyranny, represent an important divergence from the standard refrain. The struggle introduced serious obstacles to those who wish to cover up the problem without offering any solution, and challenged the hypocrisy of those who call for

peace without insisting that justice be dealt to the police perpetrators of violence. Even more profoundly, the Ferguson resistance has done more to protect all black and Latino youth against police brutality than any other action in the last twenty years. Thanks to Ferguson, every police officer in the country must think twice before drawing his gun against an unarmed person, seriously considering the idea that a single act of abuse could precipitate a national emergency. No investigations, no internal reviews, no changes in police protocol have accomplished in twenty years what the black community of Ferguson achieved in just ten days.

However, ten days and one community are not enough. It would be dangerous for political authorities to assume that Ferguson was simply a freak accident, or that the deployment of the National Guard "solved the problem." Some political frauds even seek to minimize the conflict as being nothing more than a "communication problem" between police and the black and Latino population. The underlying reality is that racial inequality and segregation have grown to levels not seen since the old civil rights struggles, half a century ago. As long as black and Latino children attend separate and unequal schools and can have no expectations for a decent living afterwards, the norms of "order" will continue to be a hostile, militarized police force and a titanic prison industry. The real "communication problem" is that the political elite need to receive a bigger, stronger message.

To defend the lives and freedom of the black and Latino youth across the nation, it is necessary to build a new wave of mass struggle against police tyranny. It is necessary to demand real opportunities, integrated education, and decent jobs. For all those who wish to lead the way towards equality, join BAMN and take matters into *your own hands*.