

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

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*.

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Mobilize Detroit Against POLICE BRUTALITY

On Wednesday, August 13, just days after the police murder of Michael Brown, the Detroit police gave their own example of the same method: “shoot first, ask questions later.” The police opened fire without warning in an east side residential neighborhood, at Nottingham and Berkshire. It was daylight, and people were outside by the small store on the corner—children and other bystanders ran for cover from the sudden, reckless police gunfire. The police operation looked more like a mafia-style hit, as a drug enforcement vehicle sped to the intersection and then fired from the passenger window.

The targets of the shooting were two young men, Dennis Arnold and Darnell Martin, who were in a vehicle at the stop sign when the police attacked. Darnell Martin was shot in the shoulder, and the two terrified friends attempted to drive away. Other police vehicles quickly swarmed to cut off the desperate escape. After striking a tree, Dennis and Darnell then raced on foot from the police assailants. Although they were apprehended soon afterwards, they had managed to preserve their lives against a police attack which, by all clear evidence, was designed to result in their deaths.

As the police taped off the scene of their own shooting, witnesses and other residents gathered to confront the police and to criticize the negligent violence that the police had unleashed in their neighborhood. The confrontation evoked the rising anger and indignation connected to the events of Ferguson, Missouri. The Detroit police were not amused, and in yet another expression of their enmity and disregard towards the whole community, the police decided to “make an example” out of one of the people near the scene. The “example” was Damen Smith—a local father of three children—who was simply walking home from the corner store. Police grabbed Damen’s arms behind his back, and as the bewildered captive attempted to negotiate and argue for his release, one of the officers pepper-sprayed Damen in the

face. The police arrested Damen and put him in prison. The real message was clear: police are conducting a war, not just in Ferguson, but against every black and Latino community in the nation.

On August 14, BAMN led a march in downtown Detroit in solidarity with the Ferguson resistance, and news circulated about the east side police shooting. Young BAMN activists organized in that neighborhood the next day, and by the evening had assembled a group to march through the local streets to protest against police brutality. The east side neighborhood marches continued for eleven consecutive nights, growing in numbers as inspired onlookers became participants. The bravest and most determined leaders in the community—the neighborhood children—became the real heroes of the marches, taking over the streets.

Emboldened by the demonstrations, local witnesses came forward and talked with the activists about their recollections of the police shooting and aftermath, helping to build the legal defense for Dennis, Darnell, and Damen. BAMN’s legal team stepped up to represent all three men in court, free of charge. Using the model of mass resistance, both on the streets and inside the courtroom, the struggle against police brutality in Detroit now proceeds to defend the victims of the attacks.

On August 25, BAMN held a Public Tribunal on police brutality—a community hearing to manifest the truth of the police attacks. The lead attorney for the three defendants, Shanta Driver, presented the case against the police misconduct. Damen Smith, whose release from prison had been secured just days before, testified about the assault he endured, and displayed the cell phone videos that were recorded by onlookers at the scene. The witnesses and activist investigators of the police shooting gave their analyses of the incident. And the Tribunal created a public freedom of inquiry and expression that would never have been possible in any government courthouse in the nation.

Now is the time to take a stand. The Detroit police have long demonstrated a callous disrespect for the basic rights and wellbeing of the city’s population. Among their most notorious acts of reckless violence, the fatal police shooting of 7-year old Aiyana Jones in 2010 received national attention. But national attention alone is not sufficient to protect the lives of the people of Detroit against the ongoing regime of police warfare. As long as the police can carry on with impunity and face nothing more than the occasional exposé, they will continue their abuses.

Something more is needed, and the community of Ferguson has given some examples of what the “something more” could be. Detroit truly needs to embrace a renewal of energy and passion: so many years of poverty and racist inequality have stifled the hope, dignity and active spirit of the black and Latina/o population for too long. Let this moment be an opportunity to create a *real* Detroit revival, one that far transcends any of the corporate investments, but rather awakens the city to a new sense of ability, self-worth, and social power.

2014.08.15, 2014.09.07

JOIN THE MARCHES— BE AN ORGANIZER

Contact BAMN (see below) to stay updated on coming events and to help build the campaign against police brutality.

BRING THE MOVEMENT TO THE COURTROOM

Preliminary Hearings:

Dennis Arnold and Darnell Martin
Thursday, September 11, 11:00am

Preliminary Hearing: Damen Smith
Friday, September 19, 9:00am

Frank Murphy Hall of Justice
1441 Saint Antoine St., downtown Detroit
(Contact BAMN if transportation is needed)

JOIN THE DETROIT CONTINGENT TO MARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, ANN ARBOR

Friday, September 12, 12 noon on the Diag
(Contact BAMN for transportation info)

If you have witnessed or experienced police brutality and misconduct, contact BAMN immediately. Any information could be of use, and BAMN can provide legal counsel both for defense and to file suit against the police.

BAMN

COALITION TO DEFEND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, INTEGRATION AND IMMIGRANT RIGHTS AND FIGHT FOR EQUALITY BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY
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