

Criminal Justice

Police Brutality

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Abstract

This paper explores the reason behind police brutality and why there is so much of it. It also explores the criminal justice system and why it is so unfair. The importance of this research is to show how police officers think they have the power to use violence against people whom they think are criminals. Police brutality is important because the use of violence is harming people and this all adds up to the criminal justice system being unfair. This is also important because it is treating people from different races differently. According to 7 articles I found, the reason behind police brutality is due to racism and power. I agree with police brutality having to do with racism and power because what I have gathered so far shows that they use violence mostly against blacks, Hispanics and even kids rather than white people because they think they have the power to use it against anyone and because they are racist.

Keywords: Police brutality, violence, power, racism, criminal justice system, whites, blacks, Hispanics

Many people believe that the criminal justice system has been unfair, like having police brutality in most cases. Why is there so much police brutality in the world? Well, the reason is mostly because of racism and power. Many police officers tend to act tougher and powerful against black people and Hispanics because they feel that black people and Hispanics are seen as the “dangerous” people to the community and as “criminals” than white people are. This is important because they are targeting and discriminating more black and Hispanics and using violence against them (Polysyndeton) like brutally arresting them or even killing them when they ended up being innocent. This all circles around the criminal justice system being unfair.

Police brutality is the use of excessive or unnecessary violence by police officers against people. Police brutality has been active for many years now. It was seen during the “Industrial Revolution in the 1870s when law enforcement would physically harm workers that went on strike.” (What Is Police Brutality? 2019, February 19) Police would use violence against workers that just wanted to go on strike. Violence is not the answer to stop a strike that is going on because it can lead to more serious problems. “Black newspapers reported incidents of police brutality throughout the early and mid-20th century” (Nodjimbadem, K. 2017, July 27) Police brutality has not stopped since a long time ago. It has been seen throughout each year and it has happened mostly to black people that it has even shown up in the newspaper. This is something that should be stopped and not allowed by the police. “Aggressive dispersion tactics, such as police dogs and fire hoses, against individuals in peaceful protests and sit-ins were the most widely publicized examples of police brutality in that era.” (Nodjimbadem, K. 2017, July

27) The era they are talking about is the Civil Rights Era. During the Civil Rights Era, (which was in the 1960s) (Parenthesis) many people were protesting peacefully against segregation when they got attacked by police dogs, fire hoses and some people even got beaten up. They used violence to stop these protests and sit-ins when they were not harming anyone. Police officers used violence because they think they have the power to stop anything with it. They even used police dogs, something unnecessary knowing that the dogs could hurt them. There is police brutality because of how the criminal justice system is unfair.

The criminal justice system itself is unfair and mostly racist. Policing and profiling and the death penalty and judges and sentencing, (Polysyndeton), etc. tend to mostly look at black people as criminals and suspects, which ends up being a racist factor. Police officers tend to search and stop mostly blacks and Hispanics, they do search white people but not as much as black and Hispanics. “Black drivers were also searched at twice the rate of white drivers, though — as in other jurisdictions — searches of white drivers were more likely to turn up contraband.” (Balko, R. 2019, April 10) Police officers believe that black people are suspicious and related to crime which is why they search more blacks than white people. In the end, white people are the bad guys. The little times that police officers search white people, they end up having illegal stuff on them. This ends up showing that the criminal justice system is unfair because only black people are being searched while leaving the real criminals out in the world. They don’t get searched as much as black people and Hispanics. They think white people would be innocent while in reality, they turn up contraband. “A 2017 study of

interactions between officers and citizens taken from footage captured by police officer body cameras found that “officers speak with consistently less respect toward black versus white community members, even after controlling for the race of the officer, the severity of the infraction, the location of the stop, and the outcome of the stop.” (Balko, R. 2019, April 10) Not only do they search black people mostly, but they also have less respect for them because of how they appear. Every police officers have to turn on their body cameras to see everything that happens during the process of arresting and talking to someone. Due to the police body cameras, it shows that they speak with little respect against black people than white people even if they are black. This is unfair because everyone should be treated the same. Policing and profiling are unfair.

When people commit a crime, it leads to making time in prison regardless of your skin color, a crime is a crime, but it shows that black people spend more time in prison than a white person does even if the crimes are seen as similar. “A study published last May found that when a white person and a black person are convicted of similar crimes, Republican-appointed judges sentence the black person to three months longer in prison.” (Balko, R. 2019, April 10) Racism is even seen in the criminal justice system and with judges. People who commit similar crimes should be sentenced in similar ways and similar times in prison. It focuses on your skin color to be sentenced more or less and that's unfair. Just because they are black doesn't mean that they deserve to spend more time in prison than a white criminal. White or black, they should spend the same time in prison if they committed similar crimes.

When it comes to the death penalty, it also contributes to racism. Doing my research it showed how black people are being executed for killing white victims then for killing black victims. “A 2016 study found that in Louisiana, killers of white victims were *14 times* more likely to be executed than killers of black victims. Black men who killed white women were 30 times more likely to get the death penalty than black men who killed black men. Those convicted of killing white people were also less likely to have their sentences overturned on appeal, and Louisiana hasn’t executed a white person for killing a black person since 1752.” (Balko, R. 2019, April 10) According to the criminal justice system, white people are seen as more important than black people, and that if you kill one, they are automatically getting the death penalty. This is another reason that shows how the criminal justice system is unfair. Anybody that kills someone should get the death penalty regardless if it was a black or white victim. This also shows that black people who killed white women get the death penalty then a black person who killed a black man. Since 1752, no white person has been executed for killing a black person meaning that the criminal justice system is racist. If you are white, you don't get executed for killing someone (especially a black person), (Parenthesis) but if your black, you do. Black people's lives matter and should be treated the same way that white people get treated.

Not only are black people getting executed and stopped more than white people, but they are also getting killed by police officers each year. Killing is an act of police brutality. This shows how police think they have the power to shoot and kill anyone they see as “dangerous.” 66 black men and boys were killed by police according to

NEWS-ONE, written by NewsOne staff. 2019, November 16. Many black people killed by police were innocent showing how police officers believe they have the power to kill anybody that seems suspicious when they don't know yet. According to NewsOne, written by NewsOnes staff. 2019, November 16, here are some black people who were killed by police officers over the past years. The first black man killed was Emantic "EJ" Fitzgerald Bradford Jr at the age of 21 by a police officer. He was an active-duty officer for the army and was innocent during the time this happened. This happened during Thanksgiving night when there was a shooting at an Alabama mall. An act of kindness led him to his death. The police thought he was a shooter since they saw him with a gun when it reality he was just trying to save people from the shooter when he was the one who got shot and killed. He was seen as the 'good guy with a gun.' (NewsOne staff. 2019, November 16)

Botham Shem Jean, another black man, killed by a Dallas police officer at the age of 26. He was killed on September 6, 2018, by an off-duty police officer, Amber Guyger. He was an innocent guy who didn't do anything to get killed. She killed him because "she thought it was her apartment" (NewsOne staff. 2019, November 16) and thought he was robbing. He was killed in his apartment. This shows how police officers think they have the power to shoot anyone. She was sentenced to prison after all. Even though you might think someone is in your house, shooting and killing is not a solution. She mistaken her apartment and now she is paying the consequences.

Eric Garner, a father of 6, was killed at the age of 43. He was killed due to police brutality. He was killed when a NYC police officer, Daniel Pantaleo placed him on a

chokehold, something that is prohibited by the NYPD policy. He was saying “ I can’t breathe” and the police officer didn’t care. (NewsOne staff. 2019, November 16)

Arresting someone is not a reason to use violence especially if it’s going to lead to death. He was saying he couldn't breathe and they didn't care to stop. This shows how police brutality kills people.

All black people that were killed were innocent and there is still more. Gregory Gunn at the age of 58 was shot 5 times by a white Montgomery, Alabama police officer on February 5, 2016. The reason he was shot was that the police officer said “he looked suspicious” while walking home from a friend's house. (NewsOne staff. 2019, November 16) The police officer used violence to kill someone just because he looked suspicious. If it was a white person they wouldn’t have shot him. Maybe he was suspicious, but killing wasn’t the solution. They could have walked up to him and asked him questions. The world is so cold, just because a black man looks suspicious, they could get shot and it should not be like that. This makes colored people scared to even walk outside.

Stephon Clark at age 22 got shot 20 times on March 18, 2018. He got killed in his backyard because they thought “they saw a gun in his hand. It turned out he was only carrying a cellphone” (NewsOne staff. 2019, November 16) Policies feel powerful and shoot anyone they see as suspicious especially if they are black. He wasn’t carrying a gun, it was only a cell phone and without knowing, they shot him to his death. First, they should have investigated if it was a gun and even if it was, arrest him, not kill him. Another man, Julius Johnson who was 23 years old was shot by a police officer named

Charles Anderson because he said “he was attacked and feared for his life” (NewsOne staff. 2019, November 16) Being feared does not mean that killing is a solution. “Ten years later, a KKK application was found framed in Anderson’s home” (NewsOne staff. 2019, November 16) This all adds up that he didn’t like black people and that he was in the KKK. Innocent people getting killed by police officers is unfair. They don’t have the right to die in the hands of police officers.

Not only are police officers using violence against adults and killing them, but they are also using violence against children. An 11-year-old middle school girl from Farmington was treated very brutally by a Mexican police officer named Zachary Christensen. He pulled her and slammed her on the ground just because he heard that she “took more milk than she was supposed too and threw some on the ground according to KOB.” (Brown, L. 2019, October 23) She was getting hurt and the cop didn’t stop. He kept on trying to arrest an 11-year-old. “She cried and begged him to stop.” (Brown, L. 2019, October 23) Maybe she did do something bad but there was no reason why he had to use violence against her. Police brutality is everywhere. The criminal justice system is unfair. Police officers feel they have too much power to hurt anyone, even little kids. He did accept that he did wrong but that doesn’t stop him from hurting the little girl.

Police brutality is mainly because of racism and power. Everyone knows this is the reason even Bernie Sanders, an American political. He made a racist comment “I would respect what they are doing so that you don’t get shot in the back of the head” (Musumeci, N. 2019, October 28). This was asked by a black male student if he ever

gets stopped by a police officer. This is an example of how he could be racist and how he knows that police officers are racist as well. You don't just say a comment like that playing already. Another question by a black female student to former Vice President and current Democratic primary front-runner Joe Biden "If I were your daughter, what advice would you give me the next time I am stopped by the police," the student asked Biden, to which he responded to laughter, "If you were my daughter, you would be a Caucasian girl and you wouldn't be pulled over." (Musumeci, N. 2019, October 28). This is a racist comment because he is saying how black people are the one who gets pulled over by police officers rather than white people. This shows how even political people and the former President think that police officers are racist and unfair.

According to (Bronxdefenders, 2013, August 12) "While 88% of people stopped by the NYPD are never charged with any crime, some unconstitutional stops lead to unlawful arrests, triggering a domino effect for families and whole communities." A lot of people stopped by the NYPD are innocent but get treated with violence when getting arrested. This not only affects themselves but it also affects their family and community because there is too much police brutality and they are getting scared of them. "In landmark decisions in two class-action lawsuits, a federal judge ruled today that the New York City Police Department has violated the constitutional rights of tens of thousands of Black and Latino New Yorkers by subjecting them to unlawful stops without individualized suspicion."(Bronxdefenders, 2013, August 12) A judge is saying that the NYPD is very racist towards black and Latinos. This is a violation of

constitutional rights because the police officers are stopping them without a good reason or without being suspicious. They are stopping them without having a reason.

The criminal justice system is unfair, there is a lot of police brutality in the world and this is mostly due to racism and power. Police officers feel they have the power to attack anyone they want and they target more black and Hispanics than white people because they feel like they are the “criminals” when mostly half of them are not. This is unfair because everyone should be treated equally and police officers should not abuse the power they have in their hands. The criminal justice system should be fair and stop police brutality because a lot of innocent people are getting killed in the hands of police officers and getting treated badly with violence when violence should never be the answer. No one is safe with police brutality. This is important because the criminal justice system should be justice for all and fair. It should protect the innocent, not judge them unfairly just because of their skin color. If the criminal justice system was fair, police brutality would stop.

I am using Ethos everywhere I used quotes from the sources. I used pathos when I explained each quote because I used emotion to convince them that there is so much police brutality because of the racism and power of police officers. Logos is being used when I used the facts from the sources and for example in paragraph 3 and 4 when I said the rate of blacks being sent to the death penalty and being searched rather than white people.

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