

USA & “Black Lives Matter”: Feds Join Whitewash of Police Murders

Friday 10 June 2016, by [SHEPPARD Barry](#) (Date first published: 10 June 2016).

Three young African American women started a blog in 2013 entitled “Black Lives Matter” in the wake of the acquittal of George Zimmerman, a racist vigilante backed by the police, in the murder of Travon Martin. Martin, an unarmed Black youth, was walking home from a store when Zimmerman shot him for being in the “wrong” neighborhood.

The blog initiated a movement of the same name, as young Blacks through mass actions broke through the wall of silence concerning police murders of Black people. Since then the names of unarmed victims have become known nationally, including Sandra Bland, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice and many, many more.

Such murders didn’t just begin these past three years – the long-standing role of the police in keeping the Black communities in line and suppressed, through daily harassment, arbitrary arrests, beatings and even murder, has been brought to light.

There has been another pattern that has emerged since these killings have been exposed. In almost every case, the cops involved have gotten away with these murders, or received light punishment. This has been done by prosecutors refusing to bring charges, hung juries when charges are brought, and judges imposing ridiculously light sentences or acquitting the cops in cases where there is no jury trial but heard only before the judge.

But it is not only the local and state justice systems who are involved, but the federal system has recently been part of the pattern, emphasizing that this is one aspect of the institutional racism that permeates all of U.S. society.

One example relates to the murder by two white police officers of 25-year-old Jamar Clark, who was African American, last November. Multiple eyewitnesses testified that Clark was thrown to the ground and then handcuffed when he was executed. This occurred in Minneapolis.

A series of protests were organized in the next months, including a weeks-long occupation outside the Fourth Police Precinct where the killer cops were headquartered. At one of the protests white supremacists opened fire on a group of Black Lives Matter activists, but no one was hit.

The police went on the offensive to discredit the protesters. The head of the police mutual protection association called them terrorists. He also said in the media that the eyewitnesses could be prosecuted for perjury if they came forward, blatant intimidation. The cops who did the shooting denied Clark was handcuffed, of course.

Then in March, the local prosecutor, Mile Freeman, decided not to bring charges against the two officers, rejecting the testimony of the many eyewitnesses, accepting the police version that included the assertion that Clark had grabbed one of their guns.

Cameron Clark, Jamar’s cousin spoke out after that decision: “There’s blood on Mike Freeman’s hands. I can’t control what the city – we’ve been [protesting] for four months. We’re tired of this.

And y'all supposed to be protecting and serving. Y'all are not protecting. Y'all is the biggest gang. Y'all are killing us. And y'all get away with it."

Then the federal Department of Justice "investigated" the case to decide if Jamal Clark's civil rights had been violated. The FBI, as the investigating arm of the DOJ, concluded that there was no evidence that Clark's civil rights were violated, and no charges were brought. The head of the FBI, James Comey, has repeatedly asserted that the Black Lives Matter protests have crippled the police from doing their job.

Federal Prosecutor Andrew Lugar announced the decision in late May. He began with crocodile tears, saying "There are no winners here, and there is no victory for anyone. A young man has died, and it is a tragedy....my heart goes out to [Clark's] family." He then went on to disparage the eyewitnesses in defense of the DOJ's finding that Clark's civil rights were not violated.

In an interview on *Democracy Now!* Lena Gardner, a cofounder of Black Lives Matter in Minneapolis, responded. "The first thing I want to say is that I believe the people. I believe community. I believe when people tell me what they saw. I believe that over the accounts of police officers in any situation where they have killed a Black person. You can see how even in [Lugar's] language talking about the case, he says Jamar Clark died. Jamar Clark didn't die. He was murdered.... And we have countless witnesses say they saw Jamar Clark handcuffed, and they shot him while he was handcuffed."

The DOJ is also reviewing the case of Eric Garner, the man seen on video being strangled to death by cops in Staten Island, part of New York City, in 2014. The video was seen across the country and internationally. It shows how the confrontation began with a group of cops harassing Garner for selling individual cigarettes on the street to make a few dollars, supposedly evading pennies in taxes. Such harassment for petty "offenses" is just one example of daily, pervasive harassment by police in Black communities across the country.

After Garner says "why are you harassing me?" the video shows the police gang reacting to such impermissible "talking back to police," by attacking him in a choke hold as he wheezes "I can't breathe" and then throwing him to the ground and strangling him.

The DOJ reported a few days ago that it had an internal conflict about whether these actions amounted to denying Garner's civil rights. It seems the FBI asserts that Garner likely died from natural causes due to previous health problems. As of this writing, no charges have been brought.

Contrary to Comey's claim that the police have been intimidated, they have been emboldened by not being held accountable. A case in point is the trial and conviction of Jasmine Richards, Blacks Lives Matter organizer in the Los Angeles suburb of Pasadena.

In August of 2015, Richards was part of a protest of police violence when police arrested a Black woman nearby, who allegedly walked out of a restaurant without paying her bill. The protesters, who didn't know her or her alleged crime, saw the police roughing her up and began shouting. Three days later, Richards was arrested and charged under a law originally known as "felony lynching."

The grotesqueness of all this is that this law was originally passed in the era when there were many lynchings of Blacks, where white racist mobs would attack police stations where a Black was being held, capture him, torture and hang him. So a law originally intended to protect Black prisoners from murder by white racists is used to attack a Black activist protesting police violence - her real "crime" in the eyes of the police.

In the face of protests after Richard's arrest, Democratic California Governor Jerry Brown changed

the name of the law but not the law itself.

The local prosecutor then formally charged Richards under this law. She was subsequently convicted by a jury that contained no Blacks. On June 7, Richards was sentenced to 90 days in jail, and three years of probation, under which she will be under intense police scrutiny to find another excuse to re-arrest her.

Barry Sheppard
