



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on April 3, 2017

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Blacks and Cops

Cop Under Fire: Moving Beyond Hashtags of Race, Crime, & Politics for a Better America, by Sheriff David Clarke, Jr., Franklin, Tennessee: Worthy Books, 2017, 256 pages, hardcover.

Inspired by the clenched-fist salute at the 1968 Olympics by two medal-winning athletes, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, 13-year-old David Clarke decided to raise his own clenched fist on his front yard in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, as a police cruiser drove by. To his apparent surprise, the car stopped, and two officers got out. As they approached young Clarke, a black teenager, he thought perhaps he had not done something very smart.

Fortunately, his father, a Korean War veteran and an employee of the post office, bounded out of the house, wondering why a patrol car stopped in front of his home. The first officer said that his son had waved them down, and they thought he needed help, while the second one was more honest: "Actually, he raised his fist."

His dad calmly said, "I'll take care of it."

Inside, his dad bluntly told him, "You never screw with the police. Never."

Clarke never did anything like that again. In fact, he later joined the police force and rose steadily in the ranks, being promoted to detective, on to lieutenant of detectives, to police captain, and finally as commander of the first district — the business and entertainment center of Milwaukee.

In January 2002, the sheriff of Milwaukee County resigned, and Republican Governor Scott McCallum picked Clarke to replace him, and he has held the post ever since.

Clarke speculates in his book *Cop Under Fire: Moving Beyond Hashtags of Race, Crime, & Politics for a Better America* as to how his clenched-fist episode would have played out in today's world: "A black kid and his friends are hanging out on their front yard, when they see a patrol car coming slowly through their neighborhood. One kid curses at the police officers, picking up a rock and throwing it at their car. His friends laugh and extend their middle fingers to the cops. The car stops, and the officers get out."

After an exchange in which the boys call the officers pigs, the mother of one of the boys comes out of the house, asking the officers, "Why are you bothering these boys?"

One of the boys then hits a policeman "square in the face" with a rock, and the other officer handcuffs the boy. The mother whips out her cellphone to capture the event on film, screaming, "Quit brutalizing him."

Clarke predicts what would then happen: "The dramatic footage leads the six o'clock news. For the next few days, Black Lives Matter (BLM) protestors set up camp around the boys' house. The officer is accused of racism and put on leave."

A brief history of BLM is recited in *Cop Under Fire*. After George Zimmerman was acquitted of all charges in connection with the death of an unarmed (Clarke explains that "unarmed" does not necessarily mean a person is not dangerous) black teen, Trayvon Martin, Alicia Garza was sitting in a bar in California. She responded with a post, urging black people to act, to organize and to realize "that black lives matter." A friend, Patrisse Cullors, read Garza's post, commented, and created the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter.



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Of course, the BLM movement is based on the premise that white cops are driving around, looking for blacks to harass, and even shoot. It is an assertion that Clarke spends much of his book countering. In fact, he calls the group Black LIES Matter, and he was invited to appear on *Fox & Friends* to discuss the phenomenon. On the show, Clarke's position, "First of all, there is no police brutality in America," was taken out of context, as most of those who repeated this quotation did not add what he said next.

He did not mean that "specific incidents don't ever happen across the country." He meant that it is "no longer systematic, nor is it condoned within our ranks."

"Show me the data," Clarke added, "show me the research that demonstrates and supports the lie that law enforcement officers use an inordinate amount of force against black people."

The *Washington Post* recorded every fatal police shooting in 2015 in America and found that less than four percent of fatal police shootings were of unarmed black people. The *Post* discovered that in 75 percent of the fatal shootings "police were under attack or defending someone who was."

Clarke added: "The bottom line is this: If you stop when a cop tells you to stop, and you don't point a gun at a cop or try to fight them, you'll probably survive your encounter with the police. But that's not the message the black activists want to convey. No matter how wrong, misguided, reckless, and dangerous a black person might be acting, they'll side with them over the police every time."

He detailed one incident that happened with one of his own officers to demonstrate unfair coverage of local law enforcement. One of his officers was caught on television with his boot on the neck of Lamar Nash, a black man. "Within days, the complaint came. It was from an official from the city of Racine's local chapter of the NAACP saying the officer who placed his foot on the suspect's neck used — you guessed it — excessive force."

After Clarke conducted an internal investigation, he held a news conference in which he announced his conclusion that the officer's use of force was "reasonable under the circumstances."

One week later a community forum was held for a "discussion" of Clarke's decision. He played film footage, pausing it at the moment "when the deputy put his boot on the suspect's neck." Clarke told the audience that he had talked to the deputy who expressed fear that guy would fight for his weapon, to which Clarke said, "That was my thought as I watched it on television just like you did."

"Do you teach your officers to place their foot on people's necks even after they're on the ground?" asked one person.

"We don't teach it," Clarke responded, "But it seemed to work pretty well."

Clarke then asked for a show of hands, asking how many thought this case was about race. Every hand in the room went up.

"Then, I held up an 8 x 10 picture of the deputy ... the black deputy," Clarke recalled, writing that he then told the crowd, "This is the officer who used his boot."

The helicopter footage, shot in the dark, wasn't clear enough to show the race of the officer, Clarke explained. "Everyone assumed that this was yet another incident of a white cop using excessive force with a black kid," Clarke said.

In the book, Clarke discusses the cases of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Tamir Rice, and he tells the reader what the "lessons" of each are.



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He noted that Obama's attorney general, Eric Holder, met with the family of Michael Brown, but he did not meet with Officer Darren Wilson, the officer who shot him. "Brown was not shot in the back. Blood splatters show that Brown was coming at the officer, not running away from him. By the way, his hands weren't even raised when he was killed. Several black witnesses confirmed what the autopsy and forensic evidence proved, but they had to remain in hiding because of all the violence" in Ferguson, Clarke writes.

"Let that sink in. Almost everything you heard about that case was a lie."

While much of the book is written in defense of local law enforcement, Clarke also discusses several other issues. He is strongly for the Second Amendment: "If the federal government began a gun confiscation program, I'd simply refuse." He believes the "War on Poverty" actually increased poverty. He argues that the government has gone too far in ignoring civil liberties because of terrorism concerns: "We deserve both privacy and security. God forbid a terror suspect straps explosives to his or her body and detonates them in public space. The overreaction might be that the government makes every American citizen walk naked in public spaces to prevent the next attack."

Constitutional conservatives will find little with which to differ with Clarke in this book.

Perhaps the biggest problem constitutionalists would have with Sheriff Clarke is his endorsement of the Article V "Convention of the States," saying it is the "only way things will change." This call for a constitutional convention to add amendments to the Constitution is actually quite dangerous — once it is called, no one knows what might be passed at such a convention. The last constitutional convention scrapped the previous constitution (the Articles of Confederation). And even were this convention to pass a good amendment and go home, why does anyone truly believe government officials would obey it any more than they obey our present constitutional restrictions?

Clarke devotes little time to an Article V Convention, though, and the rest of the book is not only very informative, it is a clean, quick, entertaining read. He is a no-nonsense type of guy, a Christian, and a patriot.



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