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Police Brutality

By now, nearly every American knows the mantra about police brutality: Black Americans are disproportionately targeted by police who routinely abuse, beat, shoot, and kill them without consequence since police exist to enforce “systemic racism.” Because of unchecked police violence, police departments should be defunded and abolished — or *at the very least* be held accountable to “civilian review boards” or the federal government. That is the mantra, but is it true? While liberal politicians and the liberal media regurgitate that mantra after the death of every black American at the hands of police, the actual numbers tell a very different story.



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Though police brutality does occur, police brutality is relatively rare and is usually adequately dealt with by the mechanisms that are already in place. Police departments in the United States, like other government offices, are kept from widespread abuse by checks and balances that prevent their consolidation of power. Because of those checks and balances, the record shows that when bad cops abuse the power with which they have been entrusted, they are held accountable. The system generally works.

Take, for instance, the tragedy that was used as a pretext for this newest wave of anti-police activism: the May 25, 2020 death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin. After Chauvin held Floyd down for more than eight minutes by pressing his knee into Floyd’s neck, Floyd died. While the autopsy shows that Floyd was under the influence of both Fentanyl and methamphetamine (either of which, when taken alone could have contributed to his death by causing respiratory and cardiac distress), the chokehold applied by Chauvin was excessive and dangerous and therefore a case of police brutality, particularly during the period when Floyd was unconscious. Despite claims that the Minneapolis Police Department would make sure to protect its own, that hasn’t happened.

In the immediate aftermath of Floyd’s death, Chauvin and the other officers on the scene that day were dismissed and charged with a litany of crimes related to the death of Floyd. Chauvin himself was charged with murder and stripped of his police certification (meaning he cannot be employed as a police officer).

Chauvin’s punishment even hit him at the personal and societal levels. His wife filed for divorce, waiving her right to ask for alimony. She stated that all she wanted was to disconnect her life from his and leave his name behind, reclaiming her maiden name — so much for white privilege.

So the system *is* working. Chauvin and his fellow officers are being held accountable for their actions. This case is not an anomaly. Bad cops usually end up facing justice.



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The space of this article does not allow for a comprehensive list, but — besides the example listed above — the following should suffice to illustrate the point that the system does work to hold police accountable:

On October 20, 2014, police in Chicago responded to a call about a young black man trying to break in to cars in an industrial area. Seventeen-year-old Laquan McDonald was reportedly seen stabbing car tires with a small pocket knife. When police ordered him to drop the knife, he ignored them and jogged away, down the street. Several police followed him in multiple cruisers, and several more followed on foot. Officer Jason Van Dyke arrived on the scene, exited his vehicle, drew his weapon, and shot McDonald twice as McDonald jogged away from him and other officers. McDonald fell and never got up. Seconds later, Van Dyke fired at McDonald's prone body until his weapon was empty. Van Dyke had been on the scene for only 30 seconds by the time he had emptied his weapon into McDonald.

In all, Van Dyke shot McDonald 16 times — the last 14 shots as McDonald lay dead or dying in the middle of the road. And though the Chicago Police Department attempted to cover up the crime, the checks and balances worked. Private individuals used a lawsuit to pry free police video of the incident, and after an investigation by the district attorney's office revealed the truth, Van Dyke was charged with first-degree murder and 16 counts of aggravated battery, one for each shot fired. After his trial, he was convicted of second-degree murder and 16 counts of aggravated battery with a firearm.

In another instance, on the evening of September 6, 2018, off-duty Dallas Police Officer Amber Guyger entered the apartment of her upstairs neighbor, Botham Jean, whom she had filed several noise complaints against. In fact, she had filed a new complaint that morning. Guyger shot Jean, killing him, claiming she thought she was in her apartment and that Jean was an intruder. After an investigation by the Texas Rangers and a grand jury indictment, Guyger was charged with murder and fired from her department.

In her week-long trial, Guyger claimed that when she arrived at what she thought was her apartment, she found the door ajar. She added that when she entered and saw Jean, she drew her weapon and ordered him to "Show me your hands!" She also claimed that Jean ignored her orders and advanced toward her. Fearing for her life, she fired twice at Jean's center mass. One shot missed entirely. The other shot hit its mark, ending the life of a man who's only "crime" was eating ice cream while sitting on his own couch, watching television in his own apartment.

But both forensic evidence and witness testimony told a story that sharply contradicted Guyger's account. Jean's two roommates — who were in the apartment at the time — said they heard her banging on the door and demanding that Jean open it. And a forensic pathologist testified that the trajectory of the bullet showed a downward angle, indicating either that Jean was seated — or perhaps just rising from a seated position — or was crouching (possibly in fear) when he was shot. That trajectory would have been impossible if Jean was standing and walking toward Guyger when she shot him.

After hearing all of the evidence, a jury convicted Guyger of murder. She was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. Again, the system worked. Guyger — a police officer who shot and killed an unarmed black man — was treated the same as anyone else. She was investigated, indicted, and charged, received a fair trial, and was convicted.

These cases show what happens when a police officer commits murder. The space afforded to this article does not allow a list of officers disciplined, fired, or convicted of lesser abuses of their power, but



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an Internet search will return multiple such results.

Contrary to the anti-police sentiment of BLM, Antifa, liberal politicians, and the liberal media, the fact remains that police officers are usually held accountable and in check, even when the victim is a black man.

It's a myth that police officers are not held accountable, as is the idea that police officers are the enforcement arm of an evil, racist system that routinely oppresses black Americans. To answer that claim, a look at the numbers behind police brutality is needed. Fortunately, those numbers are readily available.

In an online article for Law Enforcement Today, dated February 18, 2019, Kyle S. Reyes took a deep dive into those numbers. Using data available from [statista.com](#) and the National Law Enforcement Memorial Fund, Reyes found that the number of complaints against police for abuse is statistically insignificant when compared to the numbers of times police come into contact with the public in an official capacity, meaning no abuse is commonplace.

In the population of the United States, numbering nearly 330,000,000 people, police officers account for a mere one-fifth of one percent of the population (about 670,000 officers), and in any given year, they come into contact with 17 percent of the population in their official capacity (55,000,000 civilians).

Of those 55 million contacts, only 26,000 resulted in excessive force complaints against officers. Doing the math, that means that a mere .047 percent of people — of all races — who have contact with police officers ever even *claim* that they are the victims of police brutality. And only eight percent of those complaints were sustained by the facts once investigated. That comes out to a minuscule .0038 percent. Let that sink in. That is less than four-one-thousandths of one percent.

Suffice it to say, police brutality (racist or otherwise) is rare. The odds of being the victim of a violent crime are exponentially higher than the odds of being the victim of police brutality — according to the statistics, a person is seven times more likely to be murdered and 42 times more likely to be the victim of rape.

Furthermore, in all of 2018 (the last year for which numbers are available as of this writing), the total number of police “deadly force” incidents in the United States was 998. In more than 95 percent of those cases, the suspect was armed. Given the number of both police and the general population, that number is low.

When broken down by race, the numbers do not support the idea of an evil racist system in which black people are oppressed and threatened by police. Of all uses of deadly force by police in 2018, more than 49 percent were against whites, while only about 23 percent were against blacks. The remaining were spread out across other racial groups.

“Woke” activists, politicians, and media make much of the fact that the percentage of deadly force incidents against blacks is greater than the percentage of blacks in society, claiming this must be because of racism. After all, if black people make up 13 percent of the population, they should also make up 13 percent of arrests, convictions, and incidents of use of deadly force, right? On the surface, that argument seems to make some sense. However, another fact must be considered: FBI crime statistics show that the 13 percent of Americans who are black are responsible for about 50 percent of the murders in this country and about 38 percent of all violent crime.



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So, since a major part of a police officer's job is to go where crime is, they are far more likely to encounter a black man as the perpetrator of a violent crime than blacks' percentage of the populace would suggest, and more of those encounters are likely to turn violent. Since another aspect of a police officer's job is to use force — even deadly force — when needed, it only makes mathematical sense that a disproportionate number of uses of deadly force would involve black men. Consider that these are crimes for which the perpetrator is likely to decide to risk his life in fleeing cops and attacking the cops when they come to arrest him. This means that for the safety of the community as a whole (and for the safety of the police officer as an individual), the use of force — including deadly force — is often inevitable.

These numbers do not speak to the underlying reasons why America sees disproportionate violence, rape, and murder committed by black men in particular and black people in general — when the differences between the white population (61-percent white, non-Hispanic and 13.4-percent black) is taken into consideration. But while it would be admittedly ignorant, ridiculous, and racist to use those numbers to claim that black Americans are somehow inferior to whites, it would likewise be ignorant and ridiculous to use the numbers showing that police shoot more black men *per capita* to claim that cops are racist.

But with these numbers readily available to anyone with both the inclination and the ability to research, liberal politicians and their accomplices in the liberal media feign ignorance. The facts do not fit their narrative. Or their agenda.

That agenda is — as stated in the first paragraph of this article — to defund or abolish police departments or to *at least* have them answer to civilian review boards or federal oversight. While the idea of defunding or abolishing police departments is considered too extreme to yet enjoy wide favor, that may be just the point. By casting civilian review boards (CRBs) as the “reasonable” approach by comparison, many cities may move to join those that already have CRBs.

Like defunding or abolishing police departments, CRBs are a dangerous “solution” to a problem that this writer has already demonstrated is rare. Furthermore, besides the checks and balances already listed in this article, there are other multiple layers of oversight in place to hold police accountable. In fact, checks and balances abound.

For instance, police departments have internal review boards; police chiefs investigate their own officers' conduct; state police investigate criminal complaints against police officers; elected officials — including county commissions, city councils, mayors, and county sheriffs — have authority to hold police officers and departments accountable; state and county grand juries are able to hear cases and deliver indictments; and district attorneys can bring charges.

Furthermore, the idea that CRBs are needed to provide oversight for police departments is itself a faulty idea. When a doctor is suspected of having acted improperly, he or she can be brought before a medical review board to determine the facts of the case. Those review boards are made up of doctors. Lawyers suspected of improper actions are brought before the Bar Association, made up of lawyers. Other professions have similar review boards made up of men and women in those professions.

When it comes to police, though, the plan for CRBs ignores the basic principle that review boards are best when they are made up of those who understand the requirements of the job. They know what the standards are and can recognize when they are, and are not, being met. Instead, CRBs are made up of a



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panel of civilians who have never worn a badge or had to make life-and-death decisions in a fraction of a second, but are empowered to judge that which they know not.

While juries in trials are likewise comprised of civilians who are not police officers, this is not that. The differences are crucial: Juries are made up of randomly chosen peers while CRBs are made up of people who — usually for political reasons — volunteer for the position; juries hear all of the available evidence, for both the prosecution and the defense (including expert testimony), while CRBs routinely only consider “evidence” indicating the guilt of officers; and jury trials are presided over by a judge, whose job is to keep the trial on track and inform the jury of what can and cannot be considered “evidence,” while CRBs are given free rein to make up their own rules and define their own powers. In a jury trial, the power is divided between the prosecutor, the defense, the judge, and the jury. A CRB acts as prosecutor, judge, and jury while the “defense” is usually non-existent. Fortunately, its power stops short of that of executioner.

To make matters worse, since the narrative is that all police officers and departments are corrupt and untrustworthy enforcers of “systemic racism,” CRBs undoubtedly attract those who accept that false premise. In other words, the anti-police element is given authority over local police departments. This is a recipe for disaster.

Allowing the very mind-set — and sometimes the very *people* — who fomented and worked to spread the anti-police sentiment responsible for the war on police to take control of those police is to surrender.

And the “solution” of federal control over police would only make the situation even worse. The old saying that “you can’t fight city hall” is an exaggeration. You actually *can* fight city hall — though it is difficult to do so. But imagine that decisions — and therefore *responsibility* — for police were consolidated in Washington. Abuses would be much more difficult to address if police followed orders and were beholden to directives from federal bodies. The red tape would prove nearly impenetrable.

A far better approach would be for concerned citizens to work together to “Support Your Local Police, and Keep Them Independent!” For information about joining or forming a Support Your Local Police (SYLP) committee in your area, visit www.jbs.org/sylp.

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