

# Example by StudyDriver

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## History of Police Brutality Example

### Police Brutality

Police brutality has played a major role and has left a big impact on today's society. For example, on September 16, 2016, nearby recordings of Officer Betty Jo Shelby clearly shows her firing an unexpected gunshot at Terence Crutcher, an unarmed black man, ultimately striking him in the chest. Sadly, Mr. Crutcher later died from the painful wound given off from the bullet. Despite this tragedy, Officer Shelby was eventually acquitted by several jurors for the crime she committed. This case gained national attention with some saying this has demonstrated both the increased pressure to hold officers responsible for using lethal force and the difficulty of convicting them of a crime (Walinchus, 2017, para. 2). There has been an increase in the amount of cases where officers have used excessive force and have not been held responsible for using their power in a corrupt way. For many years there have been many opinions on this idea stated in ways such as, Law enforcement killings of black men that have prompted a national debate about race relations and the use of force (Walinchus, 2017, para. 1). Sad to say, many Americans are blind to the fact that police brutality towards certain races has been a problem for a long time. Considering recent incidents, it can be concluded that police brutality is racially motivated.

## History of Police Brutality

History always finds a way to repeat itself when it comes to the topic of police brutality. In one instance, Marquette Frye, a black man, was pulled over for driving reckless in a black Watts neighborhood in Los Angeles. Frye was harassed by officers, while bystanders gathered around and witnessed an argument turn into a physical altercation between a black man and police officer. Nevertheless, they grew angry noticing that what they witnessed was just yet again another racially influenced incident. The riots that became stronger were reportedly spurred on by residents of Watts who were embittered after years of economic and political isolation (A&E Television Networks 2018, para. 1). They began to attack the police until reinforcement came along and started arresting hundreds of displeased people. Throughout the day, riots rose and began to damage and cause fires at many local stores and buildings in the area until National Guardsmen were ordered to cease them. Shown by statistics, The five days of violence left 34 dead, 1,032 injured, nearly 4,000 arrested, and \$40 million worth of property destroyed (A&E Television Networks 2018, para. 2). Before the riots struck, the Watts community already struggled with unemployment rates rocketing, housing becoming unstable, and schools continuing to struggle. Once the riots broke out, these issues became more of a problem for the community. The outcome of this devastating bloodshed left a deep scar in American history.

Another nationally well known incident occurred near the end of the civil rights movement on a warm summer day, July 23, 1967 in Detroit, Michigan. Around this time, people had strong beliefs of things stated as Accusations of racial profiling and police brutality among Detroit's black residents (A&E Television Networks 2018, para. 2). William Scott, an African American late night after-hours club owner, operated at the wrong hours during that day. The club was raided by the police in the early hours of dawn. Hundreds of onlookers watched as nearly 90 people were being taken into custody by police. As the police were finishing up their task, a fight broke out between them and the hundreds of observers. While bottles were thrown, police attempted to flee as the small war began to start while thousands of onlookers crowded the streets nearby (A&E Television Networks 2018, para. 8). Statistically shown, 43 people were dead, 342 injured, nearly 1,400 buildings had been burned and some 7,000 National Guard and U.S. Army troops had been called into service (A&E Television Networks 2018, para. 1).

Paratroopers were even called upon to patrol the Detroit streets. This devastating chaos lasted for five days and caused many people to lose their loved ones and lifetime earnings.

A similar incident happened in March of 1991, when an innocent taxi driver by the name of Rodney King was pulled over by police for speeding. Moments later, he was severely beaten by many on-duty police officers. From the footage police were seen kicking and clubbing King 56 times (Matiash & Rothman, 2016, para. 1). This was the spark for the beginning of L.A. Riots. As a result of the unnecessary beating that King received, a heavy impact was created as the brutality was filmed from inside a nearby apartment building. Since blacks have already been a target in the past, history is only continuing to repeat itself, while now there is proof such as the footage being broadcasted on national television for everyone to see. After the shocking news, Congress made it mandatory for the federal government to pay more attention to police departments. Many plans have been taken into action in ways such as The Justice Department has launched 70 investigations into state and local law enforcement agencies and has negotiated 40 reform agreements, half of which are court-enforced consent decrees (Patterson 2018, para. 2). As a result of the case, the officers who were visibly seen on tape beating King, were found innocent of any criminal charges.

## **Recent Incidents**

A hot summer day, August 9th, 2014, eventually turned to be a saddened day gaining much national attention. On that day, Michael Brown, an 18 year old black teen, was gunned down that day by an on-duty police officer. Not only was Mr. Brown killed that day, he was also unarmed and accompanied by his friend, Dorian Johnson, who witnessed the altercation go downhill. Mr. Brown and Mr. Johnson were walking in the middle of the street, headed to Browns grandmother's house right before the incident happened. As the two men and officer were disputing, two women named Tiffany Mitchell and Piaget Crenshaw were watching the altercation. Due to the incident, reports say Mitchell and Crenshaw concurred with Johnson, saying Brown appeared to be trying to pry himself away from the officer's grasp (McLaughlin 2014, para. 22). While they were tussling, the first shot rang out striking Brown. As Brown broke free and began to flee, the three witnesses said that the officer got out of his

vehicle shooting (McLaughlin 2014, para. 25). Bullets struck Brown's body as he ran, he turned around with his hands up and the officer fired several more rounds at Brown until he fell face first onto the concrete. Not only was a life taken, but many witnesses saw the incident and the jury still decided not to charge the officer with the crime that he committed resulting in the death of Michael Brown.

Along with the continuous injustices of falsely accused officers, there was many counter arguments on why these officers decided to shoot. This was shown in the case of Tamir Rice, a 12 year old clever boy, who was murdered in broad daylight due to lack of details and experience. It started on the day of November 22, 2014, when officers received a call through dispatch, that a black man at a park was taunting people with a gun. The information that wasn't given from the dispatcher to the officer was what the caller included about the individual probably being a juvenile and the gun possibly being fake.

During the beginning of the fatal moments, Officer Loehmann said that he gave commands to Tamir with his gun out and visible as he was approaching him. Officer Loehmann explained that he had to think fast because he and his partner were in immediate danger and were easy targets (Ali 2017, para. 10). The Rice family attorney stated that surveillance video shows Loehmann shooting the boy mere seconds after the officers' arrival (Ali 2017, para. 8). Officer Loehmann took the life of a little boy without full sight of what was really going on and having little experience on the force. Not only was this a miscommunication act that went absolutely wrong, it has also been used as an excuse for Officer Loehmann who fatally shot and killed a brilliant young man. As a result of the incident, the grand jury decided not to charge Officer Loehmann criminally liable for the death of Tamir Rice.

Another sad case in recent times happened on July 17, 2014, when a young black man by the name of Eric Garner was killed while unarmed on a corner on Staten Island, after being thrown on the ground and choked to death. Garner sold untaxed cigarettes on a street corner for a living, providing to the people in the community who were looking for a cheaper way of living. He was confronted by police and told officers, including Officer Justin Damico, to get away from him and would not allow them to detain or arrest him. Garner did not understand why he was getting harassed, so he then asked the question, "How can you arrest me now when I wasn't doing anything?"

(Gross 2017, para. 15). After refusing, the officers let go of him and did not come back that day. Officer Justin Damico returned to the same corner with a partner by the name of Daniel Pantaleo. That is when the infamous 15 second chokehold was put into action against Mr. Garner. As Officer Pantaleo held onto Garner's neck, his last gasps of air were used saying the three words I Can't Breathe.

Laying on the concrete and fighting for life, Mr. Garner was given no oxygen by emergency paramedics from the Richmond University Medical Center. Just as many officers before it had been stated that Although the coroner's report listed the cause of Garner's death as "homicide," no police officer has been charged in the case (Gross 2017, para.7). This was another case added on to Michael Brown's saddening death while getting no justice for them. This gained much national attention and began many debates on the issue of police brutality. Daniel Pantaleo stayed on payroll of the New York City Police Department after he murdered young Eric Garner. Pantaleo continued to be free, get paid, and live with the same benefits while Garner will never be able to experience living ever again due to the officers actions.

## **Officers not Indicted**

One of the incidents that left a major impact on the world happened on February 26, 2012 in Sanford, Florida and was not performed by a police officer but a neighborhood watch coordinator. George Zimmerman was a 28-year-old neighborhood watch coordinator for his gated community that turned the good guy with a gun scenario upside down. A young man by the name of Trayvon Martin was walking back to the home of his father's fiancée from going to 7-Eleven to get a snack. On his way back to the home, he encountered Zimmerman who was dialing the local police due to him seeing a real suspicious guy. Zimmerman went on to tell the dispatcher This guy looks like he's up to no good, or he's on drugs or something. It's raining, and he's just walking around (Botelho 2012, para. 10). The dispatcher told Zimmerman not to follow Mr. Martin but he took issues upon himself to continue following him. As he came face to face with Trayvon, they had a dispute which escalated into a fist fight. There were not many witnesses but the few that were there heard arguing, loud talking, and eventually a gunshot which came from Zimmerman's 9mm semiautomatic handgun. The bullet that was let

go from the gun pierced Martin's left chest and stayed there.

The police that did arrive were coming from the initial call that Zimmerman made. At 7:30 p.m. that evening, Trayvon Benjamin Martin was pronounced dead. After the tragedy, Zimmerman claimed Martin had attacked him, hitting him in the nose and knocking him back into the pavement. It was only then, in self-defense, that he'd taken out his gun and shot the teen (Botelho 2012, para. 21). Investigation had shown that Zimmerman did touch the gun, yet Trayvon did not. Eventually, George Zimmerman was taken into custody with his wife who was charged with perjury in June of 2012. After a bond was set for \$1 million, he was released from jail, posting his required 10% of the money owed which was \$100,000. After all of the back and forth of this trial eventually came to an end on February 24, 2015, when it was announced by the US Justice Department that George Zimmerman would not be held criminally liable for the death of Trayvon Martin. This brought many racial tensions throughout the United States. Florida placed a law called the Stand Your Ground Law saying that a claim of self defense must have evidence and not just words. Many people continue to understand that life as a African-American man is threatening to many people in this world no matter where you are. These incidents are starting to increase tremendously as the characters changing, but the script remaining the same (Smith 2012, para. 8).

Although many people are against what police officers have done to African Americans, there are some people who agree with the police officers who have committed these crimes. People who agree with those officers, believe that they were just doing what they could to protect themselves from a potential threat but in all honesty the only threat that they saw was the color of the African American skin. Several movements have been started by people against what those officers have did such as Hands Up Don't Shoot, I Can't Breathe, and the very famous Black Lives Matter. Meanwhile, people who agree with the officers who have created so much damage are campaigning against these movements. For instance, the Blue Lives Matter movement was a bill passed that if a crime is committed towards a police officer than it is stated that could lead to harsher penalties for people who commit violence against police than for those who hurt civilians (Dolan, para. 1).