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Indict the System

The Racist Justice System Turns the Victim into the Attacker

by BEN NORTON

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Sugar-coated fantasies about the United States of America as a “post-racial society” that guarantees equality before the law are and have always been precisely that: fantasies. Much like the “sugar high” induced by consuming copious amounts of physical sugar, voracious ingestion of this saccharine social delusion leads individuals to similar political and intellectual stupor.

Racism never went away. Signing a piece of paper that purports to guarantee equal rights to all citizens, regardless of race and ethnicity, does not magically whisk away the white supremacist accretions that have been embedded into the very substrata of the fundamental institutions upon which the present economic, social, and political order has been constructed.

To those at the receiving end of racial oppression, the fantastical nature of Post-Racial America™ has always been obvious. In the past few months, however, many more Americans have gotten their first glimpse of this grotesque racism, manifest in a multitude of murders of unarmed black men at the hands of white police.

*On 17 July 2014, 43-year-old father Eric Garner was standing on the sidewalk in Staten Island, New York when police approached, put him in an illegal chokehold, and strangled the life out of

him. Garner, asthmatic, cried out “I can’t breathe!” at least 11 times. The medical examiner ruled his death a homicide.

*On 5 August 2014, 22-year-old father John Crawford III was in a Walmart in Dayton, Ohio, holding an air rifle that was for sale in the store, when police gunned him down. The officers claimed they asked him multiple times to drop the air gun; surveillance footage proves that they lied, and that they shot the young man almost immediately upon seeing him.

*On 9 August 2014, 18-year-old Mike Brown was walking down the street with a friend in Ferguson, Missouri before police officer Darren Wilson shot him nine times, three times in the head.

*On 10 September 2014, unarmed 22-year-old Darrien Hunt was in Saratoga Springs, Utah, “cosplaying,” or dressing up like a samurai, with a fake decorative sword—a common activity among fans of Japanese anime and comics—before he was murdered. Police claim Hunt lunged at them with the toy sword, yet bystanders took photos of the young black man smiling and talking with the white officers, video footage shows Hunt running for his life *away* from the officers, and an autopsy proves that police shot him six times while his back was turned.

*On 23 September 2014, 14-year-old honor student Cameron Tillman was playing in an abandoned house in Houma, Louisiana with four young friends, as so many kids do, when police shot him. He bled out on the ground for 45 minutes. The police offered no medical assistance. The officers claimed Tillman came to the door with a gun, yet later contradicted their own testimony, alleging that a BB gun was found “in close proximity” to the teen’s body. Tillman’s four friends all said a BB gun was on a table, nowhere near.

*On 20 November 2014, 28-year-old father Akai Gurley was with his girlfriend, in the stairwell of the public housing unit in Brooklyn, New York in which they lived, when a police officer who wasn’t even supposed to be on patrol in the building killed him. Then, while Gurley lay dying, instead of calling for help, the officer texted his union representative.

*On 22 November 2014, 12-year-old Tamir Rice was standing in a park in Cleveland, Ohio, holding a toy airsoft gun, when police drove up onto the grass, leaped out of their car, and shot him within two seconds. Police said Rice was surrounded by people at the time and that the officer who opened fire had asked the pre-teen three times to put up his hands. Video evidence shows both of these claims to be lies.

*On 2 December 2014, 34-year-old father Romain Brisbon was bringing food to his daughter, in Phoenix, Arizona, before police killed him. Police say they approached Brisbon’s SUV before they shot him. A friend present at the incident avers that this is false. The officers claimed Brisbon reached into the waistband of his pants for a gun. Brisbon was unarmed; all he had in his pocket was a container of pills.

Unfortunately, this is only scratching the surface. There have been more black Americans whose lives have been taken from them—so many, many more.

Independent investigative journalism non-profit organization ProPublica analyzed federal data on fatal police shootings and found that young black males are *21 times more likely* to be killed by police than are young white males.