

Charlotte Police Killings of African Americans

Prompt Days of Protest

By [Abayomi Azikiwe](#)

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State-sponsored deaths further expose the racism and national oppression in the “Wall Street of the South” and beyond

Two African Americans were killed in Charlotte, North Carolina on September 20 and 21 respectively. Keith Lamont Scott, 43, a married father of seven, was gunned down by police while his wife begged for his life.

Police claimed that Scott had a weapon in his possession. His family said that he was sitting in a vehicle reading a book waiting to pick his child from school.

Corporate media reports have said a gun was found at the scene of the killing. Nonetheless, North Carolina is an open carry state and therefore why would it be an automatic death sentence at the hands of the police for being in possession of a weapon? White men frequently walk around cities and rural areas throughout the United States with weapons yet they are not routinely executed by law-enforcement.

Scott's death sparked immediate demonstrations where traffic was blocked and fires were set in the streets. As protest actions continued on September 21, local law-enforcement agents launched chemical gases and lethal projectiles at a peaceful crowd of several hundred people seeking to convey their outrage at the arbitrary use of force by the police.

During the course of the attacks by the police dressed in riot gear standing in para-military formation, another 26-year-old African American, Justin Carr, was shot in the head. Several hours after Carr was wounded it was announced by the major U.S.-based television news networks that he was dead. Later this claim was modified saying he was on life support. Soon it was said that Carr was in a critical condition. It was not until the following day that another report confirmed his death.

Meanwhile the Charlotte city administration declared a “state of emergency” and requested the deployment of the North Carolina National Guard. A curfew was imposed as demonstrations continued through Sunday September 25 which even targeted the National Football League game hosted by the North Carolina Panthers professional team.

Carr's death was assumed to have been a direct result of police actions. However, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg police chief Kerr Putney, also an African American, denied that Carr was shot by one their agents. Later a suspect in Carr's killing, African American Rayquan Borum, 21, was arrested in connection with Carr's death.

In a report published by the Charlotte Observer, “The mother of 26-year-old Justin Carr, who was fatally shot during protests in uptown on Wednesday night, told CNN's Anderson Cooper

on Friday (September 23) that her son died for a cause. Vivian Carr said her son wanted to tell his grandmother, who marched with the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., that he had taken part in the protest.” (September 25)

This same report went on to emphasize that “Police said they found Carr suffering from a gunshot wound in the 100 block of East Trade Street at about 8:30 p.m. Wednesday. Carr was shot in the head, Observer news partner WBTV reported, citing a police report. Charlotte-Mecklenburg police on Friday arrested Rayquan Borum, 21, of Charlotte on charges of first-degree murder, possession of a firearm by a felon and being a fugitive from another state.”

A Nationwide Pattern

These two deaths in Charlotte compounded the tragic news of yet another police killing of African American Terence Crutcher, 40, of Tulsa, Oklahoma on September 16. Crutcher in response to police encroachment was standing with hands raised high when he was shot to death by a white female officer Betty Jo Shelby. Following the same police narrative, the office said she felt threatened by this unarmed African American man.

Shelby was charged with first degree manslaughter in Crutcher’s death. A memorial service for the father of four was held in Tulsa on September 24 at Antioch Baptist Church with nearly 1,000 people in attendance.

An attorney for the Crutcher family, Damarion Solomon-Simmons, quoted statistics which illustrate the violent role of the police in the U.S. where law-enforcement agents disproportionately kill African Americans. The overwhelming majority of these cases result in no disciplinary action or prosecution of the police.

Simmons emphasized that “It could have been me, ... just like Terence, I’m 40 years old, and just like Terence, I’m bald-headed, and just like Terence, some people think I look like a bad dude, but just like I am, Terence was not a bad dude.” (Tulsa World)

During the course of targeting of the deceased man a police officer overhead referred to Crutcher as a “bad dude,” while a law-enforcement helicopter circled above the area where the execution took place. In additional comments during the memorial, Solomon-Simmons called for “full justice” for Crutcher, stressing that the killing was not justified.

Simmons demanded the conviction of Officer Shelby. The lawyer also suggested that the City of Tulsa provide for Crutcher’s children. Tulsa Mayor Dewey Bartlett also spoke at the funeral expressing his regret for the African American’s death at the hands of police.

Demonstrations Continue While State Actors Remains Adamant

State violence against African Americans is rooted in the history of slavery and national oppression which is the cornerstone of the American republic. It was the theft of the land of the Indigenous people and the enslavement of Africans that laid the basis for the advancement of the U.S. as the leading imperialist country.

The police, city administrations, courts and prosecutors reinforce the racist and exploitative structures by their failure to indict cops in the killings of African Americans and others through the utilization of prosecutors and judges who provide a pseudo-legal rationale for

these acts of government-sanctioned terrorism. Those who survive the racial profiling along with stop and frisk and broken windows policing, are flooded into the correctional system where millions remain incarcerated and under some form of law-enforcement supervision.

These killings have received far more media attention in recent years due to the advent of social media and alternative forms of communications often documented, directed and shared by civilians who are either victims of the state violence or witnesses in close proximity.

The partner of Philando Castile, Diamond Reynolds, streamed his execution live over Facebook which reached billions. Even though the initial post was taken down, in the meantime it was copied and reposted. These police executions of Castile in Falcon Heights, Minnesota and Alton Sterling of Baton Rouge, Louisiana sparked demonstrations throughout the U.S. and Europe.

Reynolds in utilizing social media was acting in the tradition of Ida B. Wells-Barnett who during the late 19th century through her work as a journalist brought to light the horrendous conditions that African Americans were subjected to some three decades after the Civil War and the ostensible ending of involuntary servitude. Wells-Barnett has been resurrected in the multitudes as African Americans and other people of conscience documented and disseminated images of the violent actions of the racist system.

An article published by International Business Times said “Of the 990 people who were killed by police officers in 2015, the Washington Post reported 258 of them were Black. So far in 2016, there have been 708 documented deaths in police shootings, 173 of which have resulted in the deaths of African-Americans. Although there has been increased media attention surrounding the police killings of Black people — on Saturday (September 24) videos were released of Keith Scott’s death after he was shot by a police officer in Charlotte, North Carolina — statistics show the number of police shootings has increased among all races.” (Sept. 25)

The façade of American democracy is being torn asunder. The purported “post-racial society” proclaimed by pundits in the aftermath of the inauguration of President Barack Obama, has been exposed as the subterfuge that it seeks to proliferate.

These atrocious killings of African Americans continue under the administration of the first self-identified Black president. Obama attends the funerals of slain police but has never paid tribute to any African American gunned down by the state.

Such behavior fosters the disrespect and defiance of world leaders from China to the Philippines against the U.S. government. Imperialism with a black face is no different, and perhaps even more treacherous, than the classical world domination which has characterized American domestic and foreign policy since its inception.

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