

Ferguson Unmasks the War on Black America

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Ferguson Unmasks the War on Black America A Black Agenda Radio commentary by executive editor Glen Ford “The military character and mission of the police is more clear today than when the Black Panther Party and others sounded the alarm in the Sixties.”

The brave and besieged people of Ferguson, Missouri, have already caused serious complications for the U.S. National Security State. By virtue of simply standing their ground in their own small city, the demonstrators have forced the local, county and state police to show their true, thoroughly militarized colors. Ferguson’s righteous agitators and rebellious Black youth have succeeded in pinning down in one small space the armed forces of racist repression in full view of the corporate and the people’s media, so that the whole world can bear witness to the truth of what another generation proclaimed nearly half a century ago: that, in the Black community, the police are an army of occupation.

The military character and mission of the police is more clear today than when the Black Panther Party and others sounded the alarm in the Sixties. Back then, the first SWAT teams were staking out sniper positions on city streets and the federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration had only just begun to funnel millions of dollars in surveillance technology, guns, body armor and all manner of lethal equipment to local and state police departments across the country. The term “mass Black incarceration” had not yet been coined, but it was only a matter of time before a permanent, militarized police offensive against rebellion-prone ghettos would cause unprecedented numbers of Black prisoners to flow into the greatest gulag in the history of the world.

A Force to Crush a People

White America perceived that it was at war with Black people, who no longer knew their place – and so, places of confinement were made for them; fortified dungeons to house millions. Since America tells itself and the rest of the world that it does not make war on its own citizens, and that there is a sharp and Constitutionally defined separation between the military and civilian functions of the State, the war against Black people had to be called something else – a War on Drugs, or simply a War on Crime. Therefore, it was not long before the words “crime” and “drugs” and “Black” came to mean the same thing since, really, there was only one war going on. And, it continues, still.

The young people of Ferguson, and greater St. Louis, and all of urban, suburban and rural Black America understand perfectly well that war is being waged against them. The powers-that-be every day of the year make it is crystal clear to Black people, especially Black men, that an overwhelming and lethal force is prepared to crush them – for any reason, or for no reason at all. This is the definition of a war of terror. It requires the aggressor to engage in

constant and ever escalating displays of disciplined force – which is what militaries do. By refusing to disperse, the Black people of Ferguson have compelled the police to flaunt their military nature and mission before the eyes of the world. The American National Security State is embarrassed. But it will take a social transformation – that is, a revolution – to disarm the beast.

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