

Killer Cops in America

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Cops in America kill with impunity. On average over once a day. FBI data showed 461 so-called "justifiable homicides" last year.

A euphemism most often for cold-blooded murder. A likely way undercount. Based on voluntary police reports.

No separate federal database exists. No interest in compiling one. No way to check local reports for accuracy.

Including how often white cops kill people of color. Usually unarmed/nonthreatening Black or Latino youths.

Protests against Ferguson, MO injustice still echo. Justifiable anger resonates. In late November, Cleveland police killed 12-year-old Tamir Rice.

In a park. With his sister and friend. Playing with a harmless toy pistol. What kids often do. Including this writer as a young boy.

Expect no indictment to follow. Let alone conviction of murder. Big Lies justify police killings. Claims about being threatened ring hollow.

On July 17, Staten Island, New York policeman Daniel Pantaleo killed 43-year-old African American Eric Garner.

Father of six. Called by friends a "neighborhood peacemaker." A generous, congenial person. In 2013, Pantaleo faced two civil rights lawsuits.

Involving false arrests and abuse. In one case, he and other officers ordered two Black males to strip naked in public.

To be searched. With no authorizing court-ordered warrant. Or other justifiable reason.

On July 17, plainclothes policeman Justin Damico approached Garner. In Staten Island's Tompkinsville neighborhood.

Without just cause. Garner protested justifiably. Verbally. Nonviolently. "Please leave me alone," he reportedly said.

"Don't touch me, please." From behind, officer Pantaleo put him in a headlock. Then a chokehold. Garner saying he couldn't breathe.

Repeating it several times. It didn't matter. Other officers helped Pantaleo subdue him.

Bring him down.

Handcuff him. Cellphone video evidence showed Pantaleo pushing his head into the sidewalk. Choking him to death.

At Richmond University Medical Center, he was pronounced dead. Clear video evidence showed officers waited seven minutes before giving Garner cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

In 1993, New York police authorities banned use of chokeholds. Autopsy findings showed Garner had no drugs or alcohol in his system at time of death. No head trauma.

New York's Medical Examiner pronounced death by neck and body compression. Contributing factors included prone positioning. Asthma. Heart disease. Obesity.

Medical Examiner spokeswoman, Julie Bolcer, called Garner's death homicide. A grand jury investigation followed.

On December 3, absolving Pantaleo of murder. Despite clear video evidence showing otherwise. Seen nationwide. Worldwide.

Plus witness testimonies. Jurors claimed insufficient evidence to indict. Days after Ferguson, MO's officer Darren Wilson got off scot-free.

Despite killing 18-year-old Michael Brown in cold blood. It bears repeating. Cops kill with impunity.

Not just in Ferguson, Cleveland or Staten Island. Nationwide. A national epidemic. A blight on the national conscience.

Targeting mainly Black and Latino male youths. Most often nonthreatening. Unarmed. Having committed no crime.

Courts consider this type behavior legal. Earlier Supreme Court rulings provided wiggle room. Authorizing deadly force. In "objectively reasonable" circumstances.

Impossible to differentiate from unjustifiable homicide. Courts defer to police judgments. Claims of being threatened are accepted. True or false.

Making it virtually impossible to indict cops. It's their word against witnesses. Forensic or other evidence. Objective assessments of what happens.

According to UC Irvine Law School dean Erwin Chemerinsky, recent Supreme Court rulings prevent justice.

Last August, Chemerinsky headlined a [New York Times](#) op-ed "How the Supreme Court Protects Bad Cops."

"(Making) it very difficult, and often impossible, to hold police officers and the governments that employ them accountable for civil rights violations," he said. This undermines the ability to deter illegal police behavior and leaves victims without compensation. When the police kill or injure innocent people, the

victims rarely have recourse. The court has also weakened accountability by ruling that a local government can be held liable only if it is proved that the city's or county's own policy violated the Constitution. In almost every other area of law, an employer can be held liable if its employees, in the scope of their duties, injure others, even negligently. This encourages employers to control the conduct of their employees and ensures that those injured will be compensated."

Courts protecting killer cops deny justice. "How many more deaths and how many more riots will it take before the Supreme Court changes course," Chemerisky asked?

His new book is titled "[The Case Against the Supreme Court](#)." Discussing over 200 years of High Court injustice.

A [previous article](#) explained how prosecutors manipulate grand juries. Gaming the system. Getting verdicts they want. Denying justice.

Outrage followed Pantaleo's acquittal. Hundreds protested peacefully. Dozens of arrests followed.

Garner's father asked "(w)ho can control the police department? We had a damn video tape." Clear evidence of cold-blooded murder.

Not enough to indict. Not when cops are charged. More dangerous than ever. Militarized with combat weapons. Recklessly used.

Mostly in minority communities. Against defenseless victims. Unarmed. Nonthreatening. Guilty of being Black or Latino. In the wrong place at the wrong time.

America's so-called war on terror is state terror writ large. At home like abroad. Operating lawlessly. Unaccountably.

Free to kill with impunity. Targeting America's most disadvantaged. Blacks. Latinos. Muslims. Immigrants of color. Activists for justice.

With full support and encouragement from Washington. Obama demagoguery rings hollow. Saying one thing. Backing another. Consistently on the wrong side of justice.

ACLU executive director Anthony Romero commented on Pantaleo's acquittal, saying:

"I can't breathe!" Eric Garner screamed repeatedly before he died. This was captured in a viral video of his arrest, which showed NYPD Officer Daniel Pantaleo with his arm wrapped around Garner's neck."

"Why was Eric Garner strangled? Chokeholds are dangerous. They can be lethal. And they're prohibited by the NYPD for good reason. The medical examiner ruled Garner's death a homicide on July 17th. There needs to be a shift in the culture of policing in America. A good start would be for our national leaders to come out strongly against excessive force and racial profiling. Urge the Department of Justice to ban racial profiling by law enforcement officers and require racial bias training against the use of force. Four months after Garner's death, the grand jury in Staten Island decided not to indict Officer Pantaleo. This decision follows an appalling national pattern where police officers use excessive and sometimes fatal force against people

of color and are frequently not held responsible. Eric Garner's story is sadly all too common. Police officers disproportionately stop people because of their race or engage in aggressive enforcement of nonviolent infractions in communities of color. We cannot ignore the systemic use of excessive force and discriminatory policing. Law enforcement often does not treat communities of color as equal partners in a shared, collaborative effort to ensure public safety. It's become 'us' versus 'them' where communities of color are often treated like the enemy. Trust between communities and law enforcement is deeply eroded. Police can no longer cast a broad blanket of suspicion over entire communities under the guise of preventing crime. We need greater accountability – where police are held responsible for their actions by the community. And we need police forces that truly protect and serve all communities."

What's entirely absent in America. Cops serving monied interests. Targeting people of color. Brutalizing them.

Killing with impunity. Hundreds of times annually. Nationwide. Justice systematically denied.

Revolutionary activism needed to change things. Impossible any other way. For sure not from cops or politicians.

Complicit against ordinary people. Especially America's most disadvantaged. Targeted like enemies of the state. Lawlessly. Ruthlessly.

Center for Constitutional Rights executive director Vincent Warren issued the following statement. Following Pantaleo's acquittal. Asking:

"How can anyone in the community have faith in the system now? First Ferguson, now Staten Island. The Grand Jury's failure to indict sends the clear message that Black lives don't matter. But they do. It's bad enough that broken windows policing over something as harmless as selling untaxed cigarettes led to this tragic killing; it's even worse when the officer responsible – who was caught on tape using a prohibited choke hold, no less – is not held accountable. The problem isn't one officer, though: it's systemic. We need real reform of discredited broken windows policing and of the NYPD more than ever. With the court-ordered joint reform process in our class action stop-and-frisk case *Floyd v. City of New York* finally getting underway, we have that opportunity."

Sweeping reform across the board is needed nationwide. Not as long as monied interests control thing. Complicit with bipartisan criminality.

At federal, state and local levels. Protecting America's privileged from beneficial social change.

The only solution is nonviolent revolution. Total change. Scattered reforms won't work. America's system is too corrupted to fix.

Replacing it with an entirely new one is needed. More than ever now.

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Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago. He can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net. His new book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

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