

# The Campaign of Terror against African Americans. The Ferguson Report One Year after Michael Brown and the Urban Rebellion

Department of Justice Report

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Global Research, August 04, 2015

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

*A Department of Justice (DOJ) study completed earlier this year and released to the press has been published in paperback book form. Entitled "The Ferguson Report", this 173-page study shows clearly the systematic denial of fundamental civil rights to African Americans in St. Louis County, Missouri.*

Utilizing internal communications among law-enforcement personnel and the courts, the study makes a strong case for holding the authorities criminally liable for their premeditated plans to exploit and socially control African Americans through unwarranted stops, excessive fines and jail sentences.

According to Theodore M. Shaw—Julius L. Chambers Distinguished Professor of Law and Director of the Center for Civil Rights at the University of North Carolina—in the introduction to the report, surmised that the DOJ conducted the study to unravel the political and economic context under which the developments in the aftermath of the killing of 18-year-old Michael Brown. Even though the white police officer Darren Wilson who killed Brown was not criminally indicted, in the overall context the City of Ferguson, Missouri, the municipality stands guilty for its illegal nationally oppressive and racial discriminatory policies conducted through its daily interactions with its African-American residents.

In a quote taken directly from the Ferguson Report as it relates to the ostensible Fourth Amendment rights of African Americans which are supposed to protect them from illegal search and seizure, it says that "In reviewing Ferguson Police Department records, we found numerous incidents in which— based on the officer's own description of the detention—an officer detained an individual without articulable reasonable suspicion of criminal activity or arrested a person without probable cause. In none of these cases did the officer explain or justify his conduct. Many of the unlawful stops we found appear to have been driven, in part, by an officer's desire to check whether the subject had a municipal arrest warrant pending. Several incidents suggest that officers are more concerned with issuing citations and generating charges than with addressing community needs."

The reasons in part for the aggressive policing operations against African Americans in Ferguson and St. Louis County stems from the desire to reap economic gains through excessive citations which are often reinforced by an already biased court system. Despite these observations by the DOJ investigators no criminal charges for civil rights violations were filed and consequently the situation will remain the same until the realization of a mass revolutionary movement that can effectively challenge the system of racism and

national oppression.

## What Has Changed In the Last Year?

This report was published on the eve of the first anniversary of the brutal killing of 18-year-old Michael Brown on August 9, 2014 which triggered mass demonstrations and rebellions in Ferguson along with a revival of the anti-racist struggle in the United States. A small suburb of just over 20,000 people, mainly African Americans, became the center of the struggle to recognize the value and sanctity of Black life in the United States.

As a result of the Ferguson rebellion and mass demonstrations the ongoing national oppression of the African American people was returned to its proper place as the major issue which exposes the contradictions within the U.S. capitalist system in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The White House was forced to pay lip service to the problems of police brutality and arbitrary killings in light of protests involving millions throughout the country and the world.

Newspaper editorials even within states that are allied with the U.S. questioned the ruling class' commitment to tens of millions of people who were said to be "citizens" but were treated as prisoners of war through arbitrary stops, beatings, arrests, injuries and killings. Nevertheless, despite this international political pressure coupled with burgeoning domestic unrest, there has been virtually no change within the system of repression and exploitation.

During the first seven months of 2015, over 500 people have been documented as being killed by police. Many more have been beaten, tortured, thrown into jails and railroaded through the courts to long term prison sentences.

Local prosecuting attorneys and grand juries have by and large refused to file charges against police who kill African Americans. The exception to this was what has taken place in Baltimore in regard to the death of Freddie Grey, where a rebellion occurred that caught the ruling economic interests and surrogate politicians by surprise.

The shooting death of Sam Du Bose at the hands of the University of Cincinnati authorities resulted in an indictment of a police officer. There was no reason for Du Bose to have even been pulled over leading to his deadly encounter with the white cop.

Nevertheless, most killings of African Americans, Latinos and poor people go unpunished. These blatant acts of terror are justified through the criminalization of the victims utilizing the corporate media and law-enforcement spokespersons.

Obviously the White House administration of President Barack Obama along with the Congressional Black Caucus does not view this crisis as a primary issue. Democratic and Republican candidates for the 2016 presidential race have not provided any indication that policy initiatives are in the works to restrain, prosecute and imprison police and assorted racists for the killing of African Americans and other people on a broad scale.

At the same time the U.S. maintains the highest per capita prison population in the world where the oppressed and the poor make up the bulk of inmates. Political prisoners such as Mumia Abu-Jamal, Sundiata Acholi, Leonard Peltier, Oscar Lopez Rivera and many more still languish in the dungeons of the U.S. Freedom fighter Assata Shakur continues to be denied amnesty and has relied on revolutionary Cuba for political asylum.

In the state of Michigan, Rev. Edward Pinkney was sentenced to 30 to 120 months in prison in December over trumped up charges deriving from a successful recall campaign against the mayor of Benton Harbor, Michigan who is perceived as an agent of the Whirlpool Corporation headquartered in the southwest region of the state. Pinkney is appealing his case with the support of thousands throughout Michigan and around the U.S.

#### National Movement Needed to Fight Racism and Capitalism



Ferguson, Baltimore, Charleston and other cities typify the plight of African Americans in 21st century U.S. capitalist society. The death of Sandra Bland and others who are dying in detention lays bare the hypocrisy of the so-called "human rights agenda" of the Obama administration and previous U.S. regimes.

However, until there is a revolutionary organization and movement to vigorously fight racism and class oppression at its root then there can be no real hope for the African American masses and other people of color communities in the U.S. Violence against the oppressed is carried out in a myriad of ways including economic deprivation and the destruction of public education in the cities and suburbs.

A political organization and movement led by the working class and oppressed is the missing element in the current reemergence of the popular struggle. Such an organization could fight on both the domestic and international front.

The massacre of nine African Americans in Charleston, South Carolina at the Mother Emanuel African Methodist Church (AME) on June 17 should be answered with massive demonstrations and economic consequences for the capitalist class. Also the double-digit jobless and poverty rates prevailing among oppressed youth could not escape the full attention of politicians and the ruling class interests which provides direction for their actions, if there were hundreds of thousands of organized youth and workers prepared to engage the system in a way that would not be defined by the confines of the two mainstream political parties.

The repressive and exploitative character of U.S. and world capitalism in its present phase is a reflection of weakness and not its strengths. The system is in decline and a well-organized revolutionary organization and movement could, with proper tactics and strategies, severely weaken and topple the ruling class setting the stage for the reconstruction of the U.S. and the world in the interests of the majority of the people.

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