

# When Police Kill White People

By [Margaret Kimberley](#)

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*"Are whites so committed to the modern day slave patrol that they will allow no one justice, even those who look like them?"*

On rare occasions there is some justice in this country. The white South Carolina police officer who shot Walter Scott in the back was convicted of murder and sentenced to a 20-year prison term by a federal judge. The outcome is altogether satisfactory but it is akin to a blue moon. In this country an average of three people are killed by the police every single day. Even when police are charged they are unlikely to be indicted and even then are almost always acquitted.

Just two days after the sentencing in the Scott case was announced the country was reminded of the random terrorism inflicted by law enforcement. In 2016 a white man named Daniel Shaver was killed by a police officer in Arizona and just as with Walter Scott, his murder was caught on video. Shaver had his hands raised, was clearly unarmed, but was still shot and killed by the officer who was acquitted by an Arizona jury.

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Thanks to the work of the [Malcolm X Grassroots Movement](#) we learned that a black person is killed by police, security and vigilantes once every 28 hours. On average there is a yearly tally of more than 1,000 deaths at the hands of American police. It turns out that at least one white person is also killed by the police on an average day, with a grim total of [574 in 2016](#) alone.

Shaver and other white people are collateral damage but the determination to keep black people under physical control has always had that effect. Black people are disproportionately the victims of police violence because the system demands it. Mass incarceration and brutality are not just flukes of history. They are the rawest forms of white supremacy and thrive because most white Americans want them to.

But an armed and deadly police force is by necessity a loose cannon. It can strike anyone, anywhere, and at any time. It cannot be kept under control. There is no way to ensure that the police will never stray outside of their mandate to brutalize black people. Shaver was not alone in his fate.

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The Movement for Black Lives emerged in the wake of the killings of Michael Brown, Eric Garner and Tamir Rice. Black Lives Matter chapters were founded all over the world. The group succeeded in gaining attention and inspiring action. But the mass protest that

brought it into being has largely disappeared.

That outcome is hardly surprising. For all of the attention it received, Black Lives Matter was a very apolitical organization. Its leaderless structure and the questionable politics of its founders meant that a precious moment was lost. They had to be pushed by Black Agenda Report and others to reject Democratic Party and other dubious endorsements. Hustlers like Deray McKesson used the popular struggle to make names for themselves and in so doing helped to kill off a righteous movement. The police killing spree and the impunity that goes with it continues unabated.

The jurors in the Shaver case were surely able to see that his shooting was not just unjustified. It was a cold blooded murder. They sided squarely with the police even though the evidence defied any sort of logic.

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Convicting the killer cop would have created cognitive dissonance too great for them to bear. If police killing became a punishable offense, even for a white victim, they would have to examine the basis of allowing all police to carry guns. The United States is unique among the nations that considers it civilized to have cops armed to the teeth.

The imperative to control black bodies began during the period of enslavement, continued through the days of Jim Crow and even intensified when American legal apartheid ended. The vortex can catch white people too, but by and large their group is committed to maintaining their racist system. If their own people are occasional victims then so be it.

Black Agenda Report supports the demand for black community control of the police. It is obvious that black lives would be saved if the occupying force weren't given carte blanche to murder, but other lives would be saved as well. That is the question that white America has to answer for. Are they so committed to the modern day slave patrol that they will allow no one justice, even those who look like them? For now the answer is yes. If white Americans truly believe that all lives matter they have a strange way of proving it.

*Margaret Kimberley's Freedom Rider column appears weekly in BAR, and is widely reprinted elsewhere. She maintains a frequently updated blog as well at <http://freedomrider.blogspot.com>. Ms. Kimberley lives in New York City, and can be reached via e-Mail at [Margaret.Kimberley\(at\)BlackAgendaReport.com](mailto:Margaret.Kimberley(at)BlackAgendaReport.com)*

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