

SYSTEMIC POLICE RACISM

Bad cops and racist cops unquestionably exist. So do pedophile priests. All institutions have some who abuse the power and authority of their positions. We must be vigilant and work to weed out such individuals, to hold them accountable and to better screen for them when hiring. But the mainstream media and many political leaders now accept and argue that police departments are widely infected with systemic racism. Indeed, there are increasing calls for sweeping modifications of police departments, including demands to defund the police.

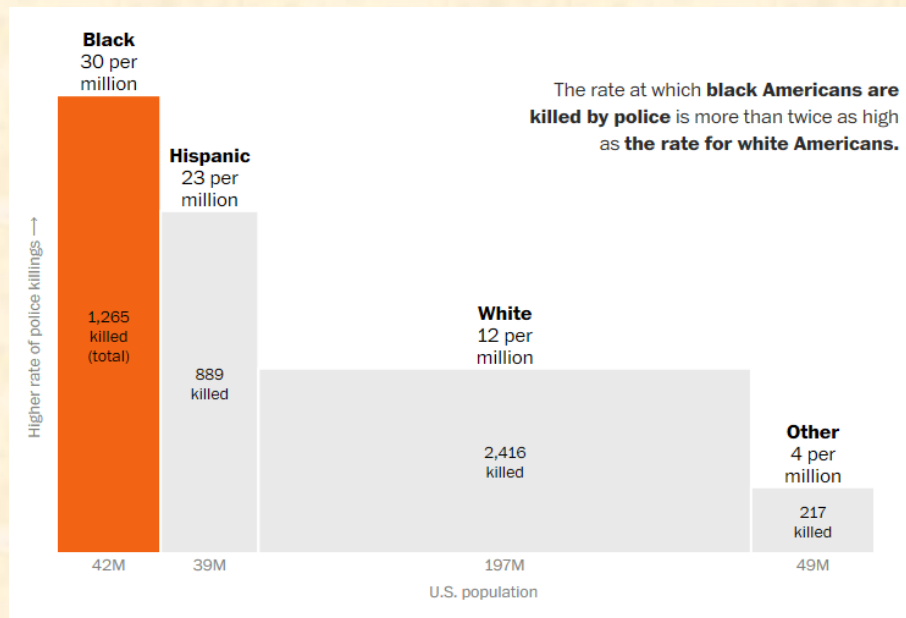
Before blindly accepting the mainstream media narrative of systemic police racism and certainly before enacting reforms based on that assumption, one should carefully consider the actual facts and data. The Washington Post (“WAPO”) has since 2015 compiled and maintained a database of police shootings. That database generally is believed to be the most accurate and comprehensive as the editors scan news articles and other sources for shootings that may not have been reported to the FBI for inclusion in its reporting.

In 2019 there were 1004 fatal shootings by police; a number that has remained relatively consistent over the past five years but that has declined dramatically since the 1970s. Of these, only 41 involved persons who were unarmed. That group unquestionably is the more pertinent measure as the shooting of an armed assailant by authorities is far more likely to occur and also more likely to be justified. Of those 41:

- 20 were Caucasian
- 10 were African-American
- 6 were Hispanic; and
- 5 were other or unknown

While half of the unarmed (and armed) people shot and killed by police are white, WAPO, politicians and the main stream media repeatedly and falsely claim

that African-Americans are shot and killed at a disproportionate rate. That claim is premised on the fact that less than 13 percent of the U.S. population is African-American but they comprise 24.4% of police shootings. As a result, it is claimed that African-Americans are killed by police at more than twice the population based rate of white Americans as shown in the following WAPO graphic.



That claim is misleading at best. The graphic above and the misleading comparison being made both use the national percentage of African-Americans (13%). One could similarly claim using a national average that Americans dislike grits or oysters when in fact many do based on regional preferences and availability. A more accurate analysis of either claim would consider the percentage in the city or region where the event happened which in many cases is far higher.

For example, 2 of the 10 incidents where unarmed African-Americans were killed by authorities happened in Baton Rouge, Louisiana where the population is 55% black. Another was in Baltimore, Maryland which is 61% black while a fourth was in Newark, New Jersey where the population is 47% black. A fifth was

in Blytheville, Arkansas where the population is 56% black. While 10 of 41 (24.4%) shootings of unarmed individuals involved African Americans at least half of those were in cities where the African-American population greatly exceeded that 24.4 percent, ranging from 47-61%. In other words, one would expect the proportion of black shootings in those areas to be far **higher** than it actually was. Instead, the rate is substantially lower meaning that *whites were in fact the ones disproportionately killed by police*.

Even when the cities with very small African-American populations such as Edmon, Oklahoma at only 5.8% and Boerne, Texas at just 1.14% are included, the **average** black population of the cities discussed herein is still 20.17% or close to the 24.4% of total unarmed shootings. If you eliminate the lowest and the highest population percentages (Boerne at 1.14% and Baltimore at 61%) to minimize the impact of outliers, the average is exactly 24.43% or statistically identical to the total percentage of shootings.

In contrast, FBI Uniform Crime Report data shows that 49 law enforcement officers were feloniously killed in 2019. Four of them were killed by vehicles used as weapons. The others were killed with firearms of various types. Of the known perpetrators, 15 were African-American and 28 were Caucasian. That roughly 2 to 1 ratio is almost identical to the one for total individuals killed by law enforcement and shown in the table above: 1,265 African-Americans (26%) compared to 2,416 Caucasians (50%). If rampant racism exists within law enforcement, the percentage of African-Americans killed by Officers should be far higher than the percentage of Officers killed by African-Americans, but that percentage actually is identical or slightly lower.

Available information regarding the 10 shootings of unarmed African-Americans during 2019 is set forth below. Note that lawyers have filed civil lawsuits in several of the cases and those lawsuits remain pending. You can draw

your own conclusions but only four of the incidents seem even remotely questionable – Whitfield, Jefferson, Mason and Griffin. That is four incidents during all of 2019.

Christopher Whitfield, Baton Rouge Metropolitan Area, Louisiana
Black Population 55%

Sheriff Deputies were responding to a call that Whitfield was stealing from a gas station/convenience market when Whitfield was killed by what was claimed to be an accidental shot. The Deputy who fired the shot claimed Whitfield struck his sidearm causing it to go off but the Officer had a criminal history that included illegal discharge of a weapon, simple battery, and resisting an officer. Whitfield also had a criminal history and suffered from an unstated mental illness. It does not appear that charges were filed against the Officer. No bodycam footage was available.

Atatiana Jefferson, Fort Worth, Texas, Black Population 19%

Ms. Jefferson was shot through the window of her home when Police responded to a welfare check call from a neighbor reporting that doors were open. The incident happened around 2:30 a.m. and Officers reportedly did not identify themselves. The victim heard a noise in the backyard, retrieved her legally owned firearm and pointed it at the window. An Officer in the yard commanded her to raise her hands but fired before Jefferson had a chance to comply. The Officer involved was arrested and charged with murder. The events were recorded on bodycam. It is unclear why this was classified by WAPO as unarmed since Jefferson clearly pointed a firearm at the Officer.

Melvin Watkins, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Black Population 55%

Sheriff Deputies responded to a call from family members asking that Watkins be removed from the home following an argument in which he plunged a screwdriver into a door. By the time authorities arrived, Watkins had entered his car and backed it out of the drive. A Deputy approached the vehicle and ordered Watkins to exit. Reports indicate Watkins then accelerated toward the Deputy who fired as he retreated into the yard, killing Watkins. The shooting was determined to be justified. No bodycam footage was available but multiple witnesses saw the event.

Channara Tom Pheap, Knoxville, Tennessee, Black Population 17.5%

Officer responded to hit and run accident. Pheap and the Officer became involved in a physical altercation where Pheap choked the Officer and attempted to use the Officer's own Taser on him. The Officer shot and killed Pheap. The Officer was hospitalized for injuries and was a Medal of Valor recipient for entering a burning home to rescue an unconscious victim. After investigation the district attorney's office found the shooting justifiable. No bodycam footage exists but the facts were corroborated by five witnesses.

Ryan Twyman, Los Angeles, California, Black Population 11.7%

Police approached a vehicle while investigating felony weapons charges for which Twyman had been convicted in the past. Twyman backed up suddenly with the open door of the vehicle striking an Officer. The Officers opened fire killing him. Bodycam video showed the events and the district attorney's office found the shooting justifiable.

Isaiah Lewis, Edmon, Oklahoma, Black Population 5.8%

Police responded to a report of an assault and found Lewis running naked through the neighborhood. Lewis attacked the Officers who attempted to subdue him using Tasers. When that failed and the attack continued rendering one Officer unconscious, the second Officer shot and killed Lewis. After investigation the district attorney's office found the shooting justifiable. No bodycam footage exists.

Marcus McVae, Boerne, Texas, Black Population 1.14%

State Police made a traffic stop and McVae fled from the vehicle into the woods. When Troopers pursued, McVae attacked them and was shot and killed. At the time of his death, McVae was wanted in California on drug charges and was out of jail on a \$150,000 bond while awaiting trial on other drug charges. He had two previous convictions for violent crimes including assault and aggravated robbery. The Officers were not disciplined or charged with any crime. No bodycam footage exists.

Marzues Scott, Blytheville, Arkansas, Black Population 56%

Police were called to a fight between employees of a convenience store. Scott fled the scene and Officers pursued. Despite repeated orders to stand down and not to

approach, Scott physically attacked the pursuing female Officer striking her several times in the head and knocking her down. When he continued advancing on the Officer, she drew her weapon and shot him once. He continued the attack and she fired a second time, killing him. After investigation the district attorney's office found the shooting justifiable. Bodycam footage confirmed the events.

Kevin Bruce Mason, Baltimore, Maryland, Black Population 61%

Police responded to a report of assault. When initially approached, Mason who 40 years previously had engaged in a shootout with police that wounded an Officer, threatened to kill the Officers who believed him to be armed. Mason then retreated into the house. After an hours-long standoff, Mason was shot and killed when he exited the house and ignored warnings to maintain distance and to get down. No charges appear to have been filed. Bodycam footage confirmed some of the events.

Gregory Griffin, Newark, New Jersey, Black Population 47%

Griffin fled by vehicle following a traffic stop. Claiming that shots had been fired from the vehicle at him, the pursuing Officer fired at the vehicle and Griffin was killed. A second man in the car subsequently was charged with possessing a firearm loaded with hollow point ammunition which is illegal in New Jersey. A Grand Jury subsequently charged the Officer on six counts, including aggravated manslaughter and the action appears to still be pending.

A similar analysis also could be conducted for the entire dataset and all of the 1004 fatal shootings by Police but there is no reason to believe the results would be different. If anything, the shooting of unarmed individuals is more likely to reflect any systemic racism, a claim the data does not support but instead refutes.

Before spending time and resources or implementing ill-advised measures to "fix" a problem the data strongly suggests does not exist, we should perhaps address other problems clearly shown by the data – and the systemic racism that in fact does exist. For example, black on black homicides far exceed the deaths of African-Americans at the hands of Police. While the data is similar for other large cities, the City of Chicago is illustrative.

In 2018 (the last year for which complete data is available) Chicago experienced 565 homicides, and residents made nearly 3 million calls to 911. 80% of the victims (roughly 452 of the total) were African-American even though blacks

make up only 30% of the Chicago population. The vast majority of victims were male. The 2018 report does not identify the race of offenders in part because all were not arrested and prosecuted. The 2011 Chicago Murder Report, however, does include the race of the offender in cases that were cleared and shows 70.5% of the offenders were African-American; compared to 75.3% of total victims. In other words, 93% of black homicides were committed by black offenders. That percentage is statistically identical to national historical data showing that homicide is predominantly intra-racial with 84% of white victims killed by whites and 93% of black victims killed by blacks.

How many African-Americans would have been murdered in Chicago without the presence and efforts of Police? How many in other cities like New York, Baltimore, Detroit and New Orleans? If black lives truly matter, then our limited resources would seem to be better directed at the scourge of violence by African-Americans against African-Americans in virtually every major U.S. city. Removing Police from those communities would almost certainly be counter-productive and would result in the loss of far more black lives.

References:

Washington Post Database

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/investigations/police-shootings-database/>

2018 Annual Report of Chicago Police Department

<http://4abpn833c0nr1zvwp7447f2b-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2018AnnualReport-05July19.pdf>

2011 Chicago Murder Report

<https://4abpn833c0nr1zvwp7447f2b-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/2011-Murder-Report.pdf>

If you have something to say about this or any of the other subjects we discuss, please click below to...

[Send us an E-Mail](#)

Author Note: Like many young men growing up in the rural South, the author owned a .22 caliber rifle and a shotgun, both of which were used for hunting and sport shooting. He no longer hunts and has passed the .22 rifle on to his son, but he still owns firearms for recreation and personal defense. He is not a member of the NRA and has no vested interest in the gun debate, but is tired of hearing heated arguments presented on both sides of the issue without bothering to learn the facts.