

2nd Question: How Is Police Brutality Connected To Racism?

Contributed by [Becca Goldstein](#)

Source: Jews United for Justice

The shooting of Michael Brown, an unarmed young Black man of 18, in Ferguson, MO on August 9, 2014, by white police officer Darren Wilson, touched off a national outcry of grief and protest. The protestors in Ferguson crying out for justice and accountability were nightly met in the streets with riot police driving armored vehicles and shooting tear gas. That protest movement intensified when a grand jury declined to indict Wilson and spread with additional news of a New York grand jury that declined to indict white officers who choked Eric Garner, a 43-year-old Black man in Staten Island, to death – captured in chilling detail on video.

These events are not isolated. As more and more stories came to light, journalists and activists have realized that we do not even have a count of all the extrajudicial police killings in this country. The killings follow a pattern: racist attitudes and assumptions create a perception of fear or threat that leads to heightened tension, faster escalations, and a lack of restraint when it comes to pointing a gun at a person of color and pulling the trigger. Ramarley Graham. Tamir Rice. John Crawford III. Aiyana Stanley Jones. Akai Gurley. Rekia Boyd. Too many more.

Police violence targeting Black people is only possible because of the underlying history of centuries of dehumanization of Black people.

Too often, our police look like a heavily armed militia, ready to control and subdue, rather than government employees charged with protecting civilians. DC, too, uses militarized policing. Jump-out squads, long used by the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), are groups of plainclothes police in unmarked cars who target Black people and communities, jumping out to question and detain young men with no provocation or probable cause, weapons already drawn. These are dangerous tactics that frighten young people, alienate the communities targeted, and sometimes end tragically, fatally.

In February, DC Councilmember David Grosso said, “The jump-out tactic is the antithesis to the community policing model that MPD promotes. Not only does it immediately escalate the tension between an individual and the police, but it makes our residents fearful of doing everyday things like walking down the street or sitting on the stoop to talk with friends.”

The Department of Justice report states in no uncertain terms that the Ferguson Police Department’s “law enforcement practices violate the law and undermine community trust, especially among African Americans.” Yet Darren Wilson, and many other police shooters, have faced no charges. In a democratic society, the police represent us all and must protect all our communities. And they must be held accountable when they don’t.