

August 31, 2014

Another Unarmed Teen Slain By a Cop

I've heard a lot about the unarmed black teenager who was shot 6 times by a white cop. There has been an outcry over the fact that it was a white officer and a black victim. While it is true that it was a white cop who killed a black teen, I think that misses the real issue.

When I was a kid growing up we had a name for police that used overly aggressive tactics for no justifiable reason: Gestapo. The term comes from the name of the police in Nazi Germany who became renowned throughout the world for their brutality and epitomized the worst possible police oppression. I suppose that now, almost 70 years after the end of World War II, many young Americans are not familiar with the term "Gestapo" or else that it does not hold the same emotional impact it did for those who grew up in the 1950s and 1960s.

The issue as I see it is that our country is turning into a police state. These 21st century Gestapo do not care whether their victims are black, white or some other color. In Ferguson, Missouri, and other areas, the victims are black (I recently saw a newspaper article which listed numerous unarmed black men who were killed by police). In northern Wisconsin, I hear about police shootings on a regular basis. Although the I don't know the specifics of these shootings, from what is reported in the news it sounds like the police are shooting first and asking questions later. It is now taken for granted that the police will show up in force to any perceived threat and gun down whoever is involved unless that person immediately surrenders and lays down on the ground. Then, when the citizen is incapacitated, a severe beating usually follows.

The issue is not race relations, it's about police brutality - an out of control police-state-culture that rewards and encourages police oppression. The "Cops" show has been on television for decades. I can't stand to watch it because of the way the police mistreat the suspects they arrest. I believe this program was intended to, and succeeded in, desensitizing the American people to unjustified police violence against citizens.

We have suffered through 30 years of increasingly conservative federal judges who keep chipping away at the Bill of Rights. The result is an authoritarian democracy where the affluent and middle class citizens sit back and watch the poor and disenfranchised get victimized by the police whose job it is to protect the wealth and status of the upper classes. We are becoming a two class society reminiscent of Tzarist Russia before the revolution.

There should be a nation-wide outcry every time a cop shoots an unarmed suspect regardless of that person's color.