

AUSA and the Police
by
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The relationship of AUSA (Afrikans from the United States of America) with police in America is not complicated. It is today, unfortunately, what it was intended to be, adversarial. Why? Let's look at the history.

Like most other things, the concept of policing started in ancient Afrika, in Kemet (or ancient Egypt). However, the police were private, their duties being to guard wealthy homes and the tombs. According to some sources, there was a joining of the police and the judicial system in the 12th dynasty (about 3500 years ago) but few details are known. What is very important is that the concept of "Law and Order" is a purely European phenomenon. In ancient Afrika and later in precolonial Afrika, there was protocol, not law, as our brilliant sister Atty. Angela Porter teaches us. To have "laws" that dictate what should not be done suggests that the nature of the society and the people is so bad that there is a need to be controlled away from your basic nature. With protocol, only proper action and behavior is expected. What does this difference say about the way of life in these two places?

In precolonial West Afrika (before the invasion and conquest by Europeans), in Songhai, there was a criminal justice system that was part of an organized governmental and administrative system. This is important to mention because many historians will have us believe that there was nothing organized in Afrika before the Europeans brought it. Again, it is important to note that the expectation of human nature was positive and laws were not needed. As the great teacher, Dr. John Henrik Clarke put it, these "Eurocentric" historians taught that Afrika waited in darkness until Europe brought the light. This is foolishness and recent studies have shown that the precolonial Afrikan systems were more advanced than Europe at the same time. This is not to say that there were not people who operated "against the grain" of the society. However, after the conquest of Afrika,

the Europeans imposed their concept of policing on their Afrikan colonies. As the Afrikans adopted and adapted to their colonial “masters” laws, they behaved like their “masters”.

In America, there were basically two origins of police. In the northern states, policing arose as a system of voluntary watchmen and paid constables. Organized police forces did not exist in the north until Boston created the first centralized municipal police force in 1838 followed by New York city in 1845.

However, in the southern states, policing started as slave patrols in about 1704 that were organized to find and return enslaved Afrikans suffering from the disease drapetomania. This was a mental disease that southern physicians diagnosed in enslaved Afrikans who chose to run away from enslavement (that’s the truth-look it up). According to Dr. Gary Potter of Eastern Kentucky University in his article, *The History of Policing in the United States*, these slave patrols also had two other functions, to maintain discipline for the enslaved Afrikans and to provide organized terror to prevent slave revolts. I would add that after the Civil War, these police were tasked with criminalizing Afrikans so that they could be arrested and forced to work, continuing free labor but not calling it slavery. In fact, the 13th amendment to the Constitution, which was ratified in December, 1865 did “free” the enslaved Afrikans but also had a slick exception. It abolished slavery and involuntary servitude except as punishment for a crime. So, the way around this for racist whites in power was to create laws that incriminated blacks for such things as not having written evidence of having a job on them at all times. Yep. You read it right. Being jobless was a crime that would result in you being forced to work without pay. Hence, the start of forced workers such as the chain gang. These laws were called “black codes” and were first passed by Mississippi and...you guessed, South Carolina (first to secede, first to start a war and first to try to reinstitute slavery). As an aside, another way of continuing slavery was sharecropping but that is beyond the scope of this article, maybe later.

With all this being said, what has changed? I would venture to say that many current day police frequently continue to criminalize AUSA. Many of these police also continue to terrorize AUSA communities all over the country, with impunity. The Black Panther Party was formed in great part as a response to police violence against AUSA in Oakland, CA.

According to the *Washington Post*, half the people killed by police are white but AUSA are killed at a rate far out of proportion to our percentage of the population. AUSA are killed by police at twice the rate of whites and AUSA women are frequently targeted. This is not even considering the people who were abused but not killed. We can call some of the names of those who were killed. This is definitely an incomplete list, but thank the Creator for cell phone cameras because we wouldn't know about many of these without the use of cell phone cameras. Call their names:

Daunte Wright in 2021- Minneapolis, MN, 20 years old driving with his girlfriend.

Andre Hill in 2020- Columbus OH ,47 years old coming out of his garage with his cellphone in his left hand.

Manuel Ellis in 2020- Tacoma, WA ,33 years old walking home from a convenience store.

Rayshard Brooks in 2020-Atlanta, GA, 27 years old was asleep in his car in a drive-through lane at a fast-food restaurant.

Daniel Prude in 2020-Rochester, NY, 41 years old ran into the street naked having a mental health episode

George Floyd in 2020-Minneapolis, MN, 46 years old allegedly trying to use a counterfeit \$20 bill.

Breonna Taylor in 2020-Louisville, KY, 26 years old sleeping at home.

Atatiana Jefferson in 2019-Fort Worth, TX, 28 years old at home with her eight-year old nephew.

Derrick Scott in 2019-Oklahoma City, OK, 42 years old restrained by police for 13 minutes

Aura Rosser in 2014-Ann Arbor, MI, 40 years old having an altercation with her boyfriend.

Antwon Rose, Jr. in 2018-East Pittsburgh, PA, 17 years old running away from a traffic stop.

Stephon Clark in 2018-Sacramento, CA, 22 years old was standing in his grandmother's back yard.

Botham Jean in 2018-Dallas, TX, 26 years old sitting on his sofa in his apartment eating ice cream.

Philando Castile in 2016-Falcon Heights, MN, 32 years old pulled over for a traffic stop.

Alton Sterling in 2016-Baton Rouge, LA, 37 years old selling CD's and DVD's.

Kalief Browder in 2015-Bronx, NY, 16 years old, hung himself after being on solitary confinement for two years without having been convicted of a crime.

Jordan Edwards in 2015-Dallas, TX, 15 years old riding in the front seat of a car driving away from police trying to stop it.

Walter Scott in 2015-Charleston, SC, 50 year old stopped for non-functioning brake light.

Jamar Clark in 2015-Minneapolis, MN, 24 years old approaching an ambulance that held his girlfriend.

Bettie Jones in 2015-Chicago, IL, 55 year old standing in front of her apartment building.

Freddie Gray in 2015-Baltimore, MD, 25 years old in a police van.

Janisha Fonville in 2015-Charlotte, NC, 20 years old at home.

Sandra Bland in 2015-Waller County, TX, 28 years old found hanging after being arrested during a traffic stop.

Eric Garner in 2014-Staten Island, NY, 43 years old allegedly selling loose cigarettes.

Michelle Cusseaux in 2014- Phoenix, AZ, 50 years old at home.

Akai Gurley in 2014-Brooklyn, NY, 28 years old walking down the stairs in his apartment building.

Gabriella Nevarez in 2014- Sacramento, CA, 22 years old, driving and hit a police car.

Laquan McDonald in 2014-Chicago, IL, 17 years old walking away from police.

Tamir Rice in 2014-Cleveland OH, 12 years old playing with a toy gun in a public park.

Michael Brown in 2014-Ferguson, MO, 18 years old walking with a friend.

Tanisha Anderson in 2014- Cleveland, OH, 37 years old having a mental episode trying to leave her house.

Aiyana Mo'Nay Stanley-Jones in 2010-Detroit, MI, 7 years old sleeping on the couch while her grandmother watched television.

Oscar Grant, III in 2009-Oakland, CA, 22 years old standing on a subway platform.

Amadou Diallo in 1999-New York City, 23 years old reaching into his pocket for his wallet to show police.

Sean Bell in 2006-Queens, NY, 23 years old sitting in a car.

George Julius Stinney, Jr in 1944-Alcolu, SC. 14 years old, executed for murder after an unfair trial.

Tyre Nichols in 2023 in Memphis, TN, 29 years old pulled over for a traffic stop (that hasn't been proven) beaten savagely by 5 AUSA cops.

While some of the officers involved have been charged and punished, far too many of them were excused, given the proverbial slap on the wrist or not even charged. This relates to the legal principle of qualified immunity which grants government officials (including police) immunity from civil suits when accused of violating a person's constitutional rights. In effect, it is a "get-out-of-jail-free" card that enables police to literally get away with murder. I don't think that all police are potential murderers or bad actors in this deadly drama, but there is an old saying, "One bad apple spoils the bunch". This is made even more problematic when we consider the "blue wall of silence" which is an informal code that prevents police officers from reporting other officers for wrongdoing. The good cops, who don't stand up for what is right could be considered to be just as bad as their colleagues who perpetrate the crimes.

I would invite the reader to look up each of the cases listed above and draw your own conclusion as to whether the police involved were justified in ending a life.

Aside from Dr. Potter's article, which is available "on line", there are two excellent books that deal with the troubled relationship of AUSA with police are: *Criminalizing A Race: Free Blacks During Slavery* by Charshee C.L. McIntyre and *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* by Khalil Gibran Muhammad.

This article is an attempt to present the problem in terms that many readers may not have considered. Topics like "qualified immunity", "the blue wall", "black codes" and policing in Afrika bear more examination. While it would be nice for us to be able to snap our fingers and solve the problem, unfortunately, it ain't that easy. Far greater minds than mine are required to study the problem and come up with solutions. Food for Thought.