

The Bullet or The Bullet Killer Cops Make Cop Killers

Written by Paris ID4600

Monday, 12 January 2009 02:44 -

Well, here we are...another new year and another high-profile cold-blooded murder of an unarmed black man by racist police. When will it stop? And what does our community do in response?

Oscar Grant, R.I.P. could've been you, could've been me. Or our brothers or fathers. Hell, it could've been our wives, sisters and mothers too, especially when sexual assault is added to the list of offenses pigs perpetrate against us. I've been saying it for years. The police do not have our best interest at heart. I've also said for years that the only language America speaks and understands is violence as it relates to people of color and those on the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder. Maybe it's time we speak back in a language they can understand.

I've seen the new efforts by the media to spin this story by attempting to create sympathy for Oscar's killer. It won't work...the brutality has gone on for too long. Even if the officer wasn't racist in this case, the end result is still the same - another black man dead at the hands of the police. And I've heard the calls for calm after our brother's murder and to stop the violence...and I disagree. That's all we ever hear when we respond vocally to brutality perpetrated against us. It's now time for people to be held responsible for their actions - physically. If an eye for an eye will make the the whole world blind, then I guess we'll all be bumpin' into shit, 'cause this has to stop now.

Of course, it's also important to analyze the fact that many of us have become desensitized to Black Death anyway. It's sad, but true. Look at the murder rates among our youth in major cities nationwide - the statistics are numbing. Where is the collective sense of outrage there? Yeah, we complain and say how sad things are, but we don't galvanize our anger into even temporary action when black on black violence occurs around us on a daily basis. It's easy to blame those who perpetrate the violence, but the reality is that society in general, and black elders in particular, have failed our youth. But that's another discussion altogether.

In some instances it really is better to be feared than loved, and right now, nobody fears black people but other black people. In this country, police, corporations and government all do whatever they want to do, with no fear of retribution and no accountability to the public. They either lawyer up or pay fines when caught doing wrong. That's not where the problem started in terms of their collective dealings with us, of course (racism set it off), but that's where it is now. In many other countries authority figures fear the people...not the other way around. We need to be more like them.

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I've said for a long time that the only way real change would ever occur here is if those in power were concerned about their actual well-being when making decisions that affect all of us. As it stands, they don't. So I say, let 'em start coming up missing. Let Johannes Mehserle come up missing for Oscar Grant. Let Michael Oliver, Giscard Isnora and Marc Cooper come up missing for Sean Bell. Let Powell, Koon, Wind and Briseno disappear for Rodney King. Hell, while we're at it, let the members of congress feel the heat for repeatedly funding these racist and illegal wars - wars which result in not only profiteering for them and the death of people here and abroad, but in economic violence being visited upon those who can least afford the hardship here at home by way of budget reductions in social services and education to pay for these same wars.

Because the cold, hard reality is this: IN AMERICA, BLACK LIFE MEANS NOTHING. Nothing that is, unless you're an entertainer or sports figure. But the average brother or sister? Forget about it. Don't let the "Obama-era" euphoric kool-aid fool you. Racism still exists in the country, and the struggle did not magically disappear once he got elected. Make no mistake about it: Oscar Grant is us, and his situation is a reality shared by far too many.

Hopefully we won't see the same course of events take place that always seem to happen - brutality/murder, then outrage, the protest, then acquittal, then more outrage...followed by a cooling off period and eventually back to business as usual. That's why I don't fu*k with protests - the powers that be do what they want to do regardless of what the people say. They damned sure didn't listen to the millions of people who hit the streets in every major city in America during our lead up to the Iraq war. Besides, as a Black man and someone who's concerned with our condition, I don't advise any of us to engage the police unnecessarily. Too many of us are in the system as it is, and too many of us get brutalized as it is.

All that aside, the best course of action for most of us is to minimize situations that actually call for us to have interaction with the police at all. But if you are ever in a situation that calls for dealing with law enforcement, it is best to know your rights when engaging with police, as well as some common sense solutions:

The following is meant to give a brief overview of law enforcement and how to protect yourself from unnecessary legal entanglements. Of course, OSCAR GRANT adhered to these principles - which is why we are outraged - but it's still good info to pass on. Besides, if it's on, it's on...but here's a brief rundown of things everyone should be aware of:

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This government's system of laws exists to maintain the dominance of those in power, and the police are its armed enforcers. If you doubt this for a minute, look at who are the selective targets of local laws: The homeless, the young, the poor, dissenters. Globally, look at who dies and who gets rich from our wars and other disasters.

For 250 years in this country, the government and their enforcers have consistently fought against people working for liberation: Indigenous resistance, land reformers, slave revolts, abolitionists, labor organizers & workers, free-speech advocates, women's and civil rights workers, anti-war and anti-globalization protesters, and recently, animal rights and environmental activists.

Your relationship with the police is at heart adversarial. While there may be cops with hearts of gold, the job of all police is to arrest and prosecute you. As such, it is almost never in your best interest to cooperate with them.

Keeping yourself safe and resisting the police state comes down to these simple principles:

Non-cooperation: If you talk with the police, you could unintentionally hurt yourself, your friends, or others.

Do not consent to searches: Never give law enforcement the okay to examine your pockets, car, backpack, or home.

Remain silent: Say nothing except "I'm going to remain silent, and I would like to see a lawyer."

Talk to a lawyer: Never take advice from the police, they may try to trick and mislead you.

Use trust and intuition: Work only with people with whom you have a history of trust. Without

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being paranoid, trust your intuition.

RIGHTS DURING A POLICE ENCOUNTER

In a police encounter these rules will help protect your civil rights and improve your chances of driving or walking away safely. From here on out, we are talking about your legal "rights" guaranteed by law. Though in our view, what you can do and what you can do legally are two different things. All of these rights also apply to minors and non-citizens.

KEEP PRIVATE ITEMS OUT OF VIEW

This is common sense: Always keep any private items that you don't want others to see out of sight. Legally speaking, police do not need a search warrant in order to confiscate any illegal items that are in plain view.

STAY COOL & POLITELY ASSERTIVE

Police are well armed and often unpredictable, so remaining cool and calm will keep you safe. Treat them with the caution you would treat a dangerous, wild animal.

Be polite and yet assertive to ensure that your rights aren't trampled on. Some officers may come on heavy if you are not absolutely submissive, but standing up for your rights will keep you safe in the long run, in court when it really matters.

Determine If You Can Leave

You don't have to talk to the police. As soon as an officer approaches you, ask the officer, "Am I free to go?" If you get an answer other than a definitive "No," gather your stuff and leave

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without another word.

You have the right to end an encounter with a police officer unless you are being detained or arrested. Don't waste time trying to determine your status. Test if you are free to go, and then go. If you aren't free to go, the officer will make it perfectly clear.

USE THE MAGIC WORDS

If you are detained or arrested, use the magic words:

"I'm going to remain silent. I would like to see a lawyer."

Do not talk to police. Wait to talk to a lawyer representing you. Even casual small talk can come back to haunt you. Anything you say can, and will, be used against you.

Cops have numerous tricks to get you to talk. They can and do use fear, solitude, isolation, lies, advice, playing you against others, and even kindness to get you to cooperate. Don't be fooled. If you need to say anything, repeat the magic words.

Keep in mind the credo: If no one talks, everyone walks. Regardless of what you are told by an investigating officer, you have nothing to gain by talking to the police...and everything to lose.

REFUSE TO CONSENT TO SEARCHES

Officers seeking evidence will often try to get you to allow them to search your belongings, your car, or your home. Refuse to consent to a search, with the phrase:

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"I do not consent to a search."

Usually, a search request will come in the form of an ambiguous statement, such as, "I'm going to ask you to empty your pockets." Answer such requests unambiguously. Repeat as many times as necessary.

You are under no obligation to allow a search. The only reason an officer asks your permission is because he doesn't have enough evidence to search without your consent.

Police officers are not required to inform you of your rights before asking you to consent to a search. If the officer searches you in spite of your objection, do not resist. Your attorney can argue that any evidence found during the search was discovered through an illegal search and should be thrown out of court.

DO NOT TRY TO BARGAIN

Police officers will often tell you that your cooperation will make things easier for you, and many people hope to be let off easy if they are honest and direct with the police. The only thing it makes easier is the officer's job. Do not let the threat of arrest scare you into admitting guilt. Better to spend a night in jail, than years in prison. Ask to speak with a lawyer, and remain silent.

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE HELP

If you feel your rights are being violated, hold tight until you can talk to a lawyer. If you don't have your own lawyer the court will appoint the public defender to defend you. For more information about your rights, law education, and what to do if your rights were violated, check out:

Midnight Special Law Collective <http://www.midnightspecial.net> 510-261-4843

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ACLU of Northern California <http://www.aclunc.org> 415-621-2493

National Lawyers Guild <http://www.nlg.org> 415-285-5067

There may also be legal help in your community that will specifically help you if you are a senior, low-income, homeless, or a non-citizen. Ask around in your community.