

Solving Problems

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Through my research, I hope to understand and gain knowledge on how police brutality has gotten worse with time and find ways in which we can put an end to it. Not only has this recently become a highly discussed topic in all of the United States, but heavily in Virginia. Police brutality is a problem because police officers are supposed to be equal and fair to everyone. However, many of them discriminate against minority groups, mainly African Americans. Police brutality takes our country back to times of discrimination when we should be advancing. In my opinion, police officers should put aside their political or social beliefs when putting on the uniform. When wearing the uniform, their job is to serve and protect every citizen, no matter their race. It is evident that police brutality is occurring, therefore not every police officer is doing their job correctly. A change is definitely needed.

In today's society, police brutality has grown to be a major issue. Police brutality began a long time ago, however it has become a bigger issue due to recent events that have occurred. For example, the most recent or controversial form of police brutality was the murder of George Floyd (Greene, 2020). This occurred in Minneapolis by a police officer named Derek Chauvin on May 25th, 2020 (Greene, 2020). The murder of Floyd is considered to be police brutality because the police officer used unneeded excessive force, making him unable to breathe. George Floyd didn't use any force towards the officer, however the officer pinned him to the ground and pressed his knee to Floyd's neck. Floyd was laying on the ground saying, "I can't breathe," but the officer ignored him. George Floyd soon died due to suffocation. Floyd's death sparked a need for social change and an uproar in the media. People began coming together by protesting and rioting for a change in police behavior. "This became a movement and started on social media with the hashtag, #blacklivesmatter" (Borysovyh, Chaiuk, Karpova, 2020, p.327).

The Black Lives Matter movement's mission is to, "Eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence in black communities..." (Borysovyeh, Chaiuk, Karpova, 2020, p.326). People participating in this movement want to see a change in the way African Americans are treated by not only police officers, but by people in general. The mistreatment of African Americans has been going on for decades, but people are beginning to use their voices to speak up now more than ever. In fact, the Black lives matter started in 2013 when a White man, George Zimmerman, killed a Black teenager named Trayvon Martin (Borysovyeh, Chaiuk, Karpova, 2020). By protesting and rioting, they are working "For a world where Black lives are no longer systematically targeted for demise" (Borysovyeh, Chaiuk, Karpova, 2020, p.326). These protests occurred online and in public which forced people to begin having conversations about race.

In Virginia, a major city that has been targeted by these protestors is Richmond. A lot of history has been made in this city and an important statue, the Robert E. Lee monument, is located there. To my knowledge, the Lee monument represents white supremacy. Throughout the Black Lives Matter movement, this statue has been vandalized by protestors and rioters. The reasoning for this is because it represents something that ties into the unfair treatment of African Americans and other minority groups. African Americans have protested and spoken out many times over the years, but their voices were never truly heard. In 2020, people for the movement came together and rioted in many states all over the United States, including Virginia. According to the news, buildings were burned and destroyed, stores were vandalized and looted, and streets were filled with determined crowds.

Another example of police brutality occurred on November 25th, 2014. A police officer shot and killed a Black teenager named Michael Brown. On November 25th, a grand jury refused

to indict the officer who killed him (Flores, 2020). After this, many incidents of police brutality against Black men and young boys across the United States occurred (Flores, 2020). These events created a movement and started protests for Black Lives Matter as well (Flores, 2020). The United States has clearly had a lot of history with police brutality and these are just a few examples. “Due to all of these deaths of African Americans by cops and the lack of criminal repercussions for the officers who committed the violence, protests for social change have occurred across the United States” (Lacoe, Stein, 2018, p.859). Police officers in the United States seem to hold more power with their title than officers in other countries. For example, United States officers are known to kill far more people compared to law enforcement in other countries (Lacoe, Stein, 2018). With that being said, minority groups are proven to be more likely killed at the hands of police officers than whites are (Lacoe, Stein, 2018).

The acts of these police officers have negatively impacted their reputations and people’s perceptions of them. One of the main groups that these acts have affected the most are minority groups (Lacoe, Stein, 2018). Minority groups now question the intentions of police officers and their perceptions of them have changed tremendously (Lacoe, Stein, 2018). In my opinion, this also affects how the younger generations will see cops. In today’s society, it’s almost as if everyone hates them. However, not all cops are bad. “There is a perception that most police officers are good people and not demons committing genocide on Blacks” (Chama, 2019, p.206). Therefore, younger generations should have hope and strive to be the change that this movement is seeking. In reality, younger generations may have a tougher time trusting police officers due to everything they have witnessed while growing up.

A solution for the problem of police brutality is body-worn cameras. “Body worn cameras are being implemented quickly across the United States” (Koslicki, Makin, Willits,

2019, p.569). These body worn cameras could prevent officers from committing an act of police brutality. This is because a camera will be on them at all times, therefore they would not be able to get away with excessive force or unfair treatment. By implementing these cameras in law enforcement agencies across the United States, promising findings in the reduction of police use of force have been found (Koslicki, Makin, Willits, 2019). Due to these findings, the body worn cameras are quickly being used in many agencies across the United States and in other countries (Koslicki, Makin, Willits, 2019). The cameras will reveal a cop's true character and will create more positive interactions between police officers and people. "Their frustration, anger, and resentment of the police led to an increased focus on police accountability and transparency, with BWCs viewed as an important tool for improving police-citizen interactions" (Koslicki, Makin, Willits, 2019, p.570-571).

Another way in which this problem of police brutality could be solved is through continuous protests. Protests are known to be the best way for people to make their voices heard, therefore people who support the Black Lives Matter movement should continue to do it. The Black Lives Matter movement has been protesting for years and it's just now beginning to work in hopes of seeking a social change. However, I think the best way to protest is by peacefully standing up for a belief and not rioting. "When it comes to protest, this means maintaining order, protecting property, and preventing injury (including to themselves)" (Reynolds-Stenson, 2018, p.51). A change in the way African Americans and other minority groups are treated by not just the police, but by people in general will only be reached if protests are done respectfully and peacefully. Within the past year, this movement has blown up and many people are for it. The reason for this is because so many people have come together to protest for this change, therefore I believe it should be continued to solve the problem.

Police brutality has been a problem for many years and it has not been proven to get any better with time. Everyone should be treated equally by those who are meant to treat everyone fairly. Police officers continue to treat minority groups differently from Whites and it should not be able to go on any longer. There have been ways proven to help reduce police brutality as a whole. I think things need to be taken into action as soon as possible. This can be solved by body worn cameras and by continuing protests for this movement that began years ago.

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