

Racist Murder In America And The Bifurcation Of The Modern World System

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Intro

Our society is a historical social system, meaning it is an overarching structure that operates according to certain rules and exists and has existed in time and space (historically). That historical social system is capitalism. Capitalism is a world economy predicated on the endless accumulation of capital (productive materials and goods used for the further acquisition of more of these things). This process is fed by a class struggle in which capital tries to squeeze more and more out of work forces and work forces resist this squeeze. Thus a division of labor has been created by the capitalist world economy that allots specific roles and rewards to hierarchically organized social groups. Among other social lines this division of labor has been organized along is “race”.

“Race” is a nonsense. It doesn’t actually exist. Anthropologist Robert Sussman tells us that “race” is a cultural and ideological myth, there are no sub-species of humans, our evolutionary history has not allowed for even the slightest speciation to occur. Instead we have simply developed different cultures based on our group historical experiences.¹ Race itself is simply a post-facto justification for a specific ethnic organization of the aforementioned division of labor. This division of labor is “white supremacy”, those socially designated as members of the “white race” are allotted better roles and rewards than those socially designated as members of other “races”. Let us keep this in mind as we introduce another key aspect of the story.

Social systems, like all systems, move toward and away from equilibrium. Once they establish themselves their rules of operation keep them going and drown out processes that are outside themselves so that those processes become “noise”. However, the contradictions inherent in the rules of operation for the system eventually lead away from equilibrium and the noise, in effect, becomes too loud to ignore. This creates “bifurcation” where multiple possibilities assert themselves creating real historical “choice”.

For reasons we will not go over here capitalism is now approaching it’s point of bifurcation. Suffice it to say that capitalism has run up against it’s political, cultural, and geographic limits. It’s existed for 500 years and continual accumulation of capital can’t continue forever. However, here we will explore how the recent uprisings against racist police brutality in America which have not failed to garner international solidarity are expressing empirically the fact of approaching bifurcation. Let us start with a consideration of the racial division of labor in the United States as it effects black people.

Evolving Anti-Black Racism In America

Of course the starting point for our discussion of anti-black racism in America will be chattel slavery of black people. Since America’s founding oppressed social strata were exploited to build it’s capitalist economy. First it was the labor of indentured servants and then it was the labor of enslaved black people. Racism, being the post-hoc rationalization for divisions of labor, was invoked to cast black people in the eyes of white American society as sub-human, naturally deserving of enslavement. When the civil war ended racism did not end with it. It’s post-hoc nature allowed it to be ideologically recast.

¹ The Myth of Race, Sussman, 2014

Now, instead of black people as sub-human, black people were cast as predators, eternally criminal by nature. This went along nicely with penal justice, “criminal justice” based on taking a social group and casting them as fundamentally different, “other”, and deserving of punishment. So began the mass incarceration of black people, of course not because black people were generally more guilty of wrong doing, but only because they needed to be organized within the division of labor for the requirements of capital accumulation. This is borne out by the facts that black people were incarcerated for trivial or non-existent infractions (black codes made minor violations for white persons serious offenses for black persons) and that the incarcerated black people were simply put back in service to former slave holders through convict leasing by the state.

The racism of “fear” of the predator-criminal allowed the mass incarceration of black people to continue to this moment and constructed the war on drugs, nothing else but a way to incarcerate black populations. A “prison industrial complex” sprang up to put prisoners to work for a pittance. There is then the matter of the police forces in the United States.

Police in the United States supposedly exist to protect citizens using minimal force. In reality they have always been nothing other than the black patrol. Police forces in the United States were organized from slave patrols designed for catching runaway slaves and terrorizing black populations into submission in minority white, majority slave regions. The police allowed and perpetrated lynchings (another form of penal “justice” enacted by whites against black persons) as well as enforced Jim Crow and black codes. Today they enforce the war on drugs. The 4th amendment prohibiting unwarranted search and seizure of citizens and the Posse Comitatus Act criminalizing the making of the police into a military force have been systematically ignored and watered down to allow for the development of stop and frisk (the authority to stop and search anyone an officer can describe as “reasonably suspicious” as opposed to the stronger legal standard of probable cause) and Special Weapons and Tactics units (militarized police units). The former exist to use the war on drugs as an excuse to perpetually monitor black and latino people in public spaces, to dehumanizing extents, and the latter to use the war on drugs to conduct urban warfare against black people while they sleep in their homes (barging into households at night using military equipment to serve warrants). The role of the police as the black patrol has lead to countless and publicized murders and attacks of and on black people. Let us examine some high profile cases.

Trayvon Martin

Martin was a black teenager who was staying with his father in a gated community as his father hoped that time away would help put an end to adolescent troubles. George Zimmerman is a mixed race man who at the time of Trayvon’s stay in The Retreat At Twin Lakes had organized a community watch for the area. The economic crises of 2008 lead to the migration of black persons from housing projects to the aforementioned community. The watch was a way for the community to control this population, control, as in suppress an enemy.

Zimmerman had shoved the watch down the community’s throat (though it seems they were not unwilling to go along) and was growing increasingly paranoid at the mere existence of black people there, calling police regularly to report nothing more than incidence of existing while black. It was during one of these incidence that Zimmerman saw Trayvon walking home from the convenient store. On the phone he blurted out “these motherfuckers always get away” and

proceeded to chase Martin even as the person on the other side of the line said “we don’t need you to do that”. What we know is that a confrontation between the two then ensued leading Zimmerman to kill Trayvon with his gun.

The phone audio evidence suggests that Zimmerman was looking for confrontation despite claiming that Trayvon jumped out at him, as does the testimony of Trayvon’s friend Rachel Jeantel who was on the phone with Martin during the incident, which was essentially made null when the prosecution failed to prepare her for being cross-examined in court by a defense lawyer that had interrogated her for an extended period of time. If the prosecution had used Zimmerman’s calls to the police, the testimony of Jeantel, and Zimmerman’s gusto as an aspiring police officer with fear of the black people around him as well as his own record of assaulting a police officer (what ultimately crushed his dreams of becoming a real member of the force), a strong murder case could have been made. However the prosecution dropped the ball on all items and it was ordered that race be left out of the case completely, despite the obvious hate crime connotations. The prosecution used this to carefully purge the potential black jurors from the proceedings during juror selection. Essentially, George Zimmerman is still free because the prosecuting attorneys failed to do their job and because his defense team made sure to purge the case of any racial connotations to the killing on his part while also subtly casting Trayvon in the aforementioned black predator light. There is also the stand your ground legislation that lobbied into being by the NRA in Florida. It essentially gave white people the authority to treat the world as their castle where anyone who tress passes, as in English common law, is legitimately subject to lethal force.

Michael Brown

Michael brown was a fresh high school graduate who had worked tirelessly to achieve this honor in a school system where drop out was the norm. When walking in the street with a friend he was confronted by officer Darren Wilson. Wilson shot brown 7 times delivering two head shots to kill the young man. All the physical evidence and legitimate eye witness testimony (which was thrown out in court in favor of testimony from someone who was not even in the area at the time) suggest beyond reasonable doubt that Wilson killed Michael in cold blood. This includes Wilson’s own testimony which expects us to accept that a police officer could not handle a black adolescent without purposefully shooting him in the head from a distance. Wilson was never brought to court because the white police department and prosecutor essentially ignored the case. Wilson himself confirms that he was allowed to drive himself back to the station and tamper with evidence up to washing off Michael’s blood. There was never even a real incident report.

Rodney King

Rodney king was a black man who got involved in a high speed chase with the police. Once apprehended officers, while being captured on video, beat king to the point of brain damage. The officers were acquitted. The biggest punishment meted out was 30 months in prison. According to a civil rights activist and lawyer interviewed by NPR, in LA at the time the police were nothing less than an occupying army and even affluent black persons including celebrities were subject to harassment.

George Floyd

George Floyd was a black man who was pinned to the ground in degrading fashion by his neck. He continually told officers that he could not breathe, but officer Derek Chauvin continued to press his knee directly on the back of Floyd's neck. Floyd's last moments of gasping for air and pleading for help were captured on video which has been seen around the country and no doubt around the globe. After major unrest in Minneapolis where Floyd was killed the officers involved were charged, Chauvin was charged with murder. He may still receive a large pension.

None of these cases are exceptional. Tamir Rice was killed for playing with a toy gun, Eric Garner was strangled to death for selling loose cigarettes (allegedly), Freddie Grey was either killed by criminal negligence, or murdered, for running at the site of police (I wonder why he would do that) and for possessing a legal knife falsely labeled a switchblade, and Breonna Taylor was killed for sleeping in her house. All victims of the black patrol.

Movements for Justice and Bifurcation

Technology has allowed the activities of the black patrol to be seen by the public. The first such case was King. After his abusers were acquitted LA erupted in violent unrest. In the twenty first century the delayed charging of and not guilty verdict for George Zimmerman sparked a massive protest movement across the country demanding justice and the slogan "Black Lives Matter", used as a rallying cry for modern civil rights activism. In Baltimore Grey's death sparked riots. Michael Brown's murder lead to what could easily be described as a war between the Ferguson population and militarized police. Last, but not least, an ongoing protest movement exploded as a result of Floyd's murder. The Brown and Floyd protest movements garnered international solidarity.

What we have is a spontaneous chain of uprisings starting with the LA riots. Masses of people across decades of time and a whole nation of space have decided that they no longer want any part of the murderous division of labor they are ensnared in. Remember, when noise which a system could at one point block out gets too loud, that system approaches it's terminal crises. When a social system approaches bifurcation the real power of social movements increases as a result of decreasing stability. At that point we enter the time of trouble.

As a social system destabilizes society destabilizes. Civil conflict unfolds and state structures can no longer beat it out of existence. The Martin, Brown, and Floyd movements as well as the Baltimore and LA riots were massive social conflagrations that shook local governments to their core and in the case of the Floyd protests is shaking the US nation-state to it's core. The Martin protests forced the Sanford chief of police to step down and the state attorney to recuse. The LA riots caught the brutal and ever-present police force completely off guard and thus barely any effective response was mounted. In Ferguson protesters did open battle with militarized police forces on the street and in Baltimore an impoverished population rose up. Today president Trump is looking more and more desperate to rein in the ongoing protest movement. Even sending in troops wasn't enough and doing so quickly stained his image. Minneapolis has declared that it will dismantle it's police department. Trump had to hide in the Presidential bunker overnight while protests raged in DC.

Point being, it's getting louder in here...

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