

The Wrong War

*By Sheriff David A. Clarke Jr.,
Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office, Wisconsin
MA Security Studies Homeland Defense and Security
US Naval Postgraduate School*




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Before August 2014, not many people could have located tiny Ferguson, Missouri on a map, nor could they have told you that it was a suburb of St. Louis. That all changed the moment that a white Ferguson police officer, named Darren Wilson, had an interaction with one of its citizens, named Mike Brown, who is black. Since then, Ferguson, Wilson and Brown have become almost legendary household names.

A feeding frenzy of media outlets, race provocateurs, prominent politicians, anarchists and every other group sensing a self-serving opportunity to exploit the unfortunate incident to advance their agenda converged on Ferguson. What followed were weeks of violence and attacks on the entire police profession. Unfortunately, race is, has been, and always will be an explosive issue in America. What is not needed in these

volatile situations is to have people in high profile positions pour fuel on an already smoldering fire. America did not witness its finest hour when war had been declared on the American police officer.

Some of what occurred in the aftermath of the police use of force in Ferguson was expected from people like perpetual grievance peddler Al Sharpton and anarchists from the Occupy Movement. Some of the anti-police rhetoric, however, surprisingly came from high profile politicians.

What I have seen is a hostility toward local law enforcement officers and agencies by persons in high positions of authority. I learned a lot about the animosity that President Obama has for law enforcement early on when he said police acted *stupidly* in questioning Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. in the incident where Cambridge police responded to a burglary in progress. The police respectfully questioned Gates, who is black, to determine that he was, in fact, the homeowner. That is good police work, not racism.

Obama didn't stop there, however. He nominated Debo Adebile to be Assistant Attorney General to head the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice. Adebile inserted himself into the case of confessed cop killer Mumia Abu-Jamal, who was already represented by counsel at the time. In a *Wall*

Street Journal column (Feb 2014) by US Senator Pat Toomey and Philadelphia District Attorney R. Seth Williams, they opined that it was one thing to provide legal representation and quite another to seize on a case and turn it into a political platform from which to launch an extreme attack on the justice system. They continued that when an attorney chooses that course, it is appropriate to ask whether he should be singled out for a high-level national position in, of all things, law enforcement.

At a Major County Sheriffs meeting in Washington, D.C. in 2014, sheriffs made it clear to guest speaker Attorney General Eric Holder that they opposed the nomination of Adebile to head the Civil Rights Division, to which Holder replied, "I hear your concern." Nearly every law enforcement group in America opposed Adebile's nomination to the USDOJ. Obama forwarded the name nonetheless. That, to me, meant they don't care what we in law enforcement think.

To be clear, President Barack Obama, Attorney General Eric Holder - the nation's top law enforcement officer, and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, did not cause the violence that occurred following the Ferguson grand jury decision that Officer Wilson acted reasonably in defending his life. But these three did provide a pathway for unjustified cop bashing and cop hating leading to calls to kill police officers. Instead of



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calling for calm, these influential voices piled on. They called for completely transforming American policing in a one-size-fits-all model.

In one interview, President Obama said that our nation's police "are poorly trained and have a fear of people who do not look like them." I reject that notion out of hand. In the aftermath of the rioting in Ferguson, the President said that we need to *understand them*, instead of immediately condemning the violence and telling rioters that they need to find a more socially acceptable way to deal with their frustration. There was an opportunity for the President to remind the public of their obligation to comply with a police officer's lawful commands and deal with any complaints later through proper process. Instead, race politics trumped responsibility.

Holder even invoked the name of Emmett Till into the Ferguson discussion. Till was a 14-year-old black kid visiting family in Mississippi when he was kidnapped at night at gunpoint by two white men after he was accused of flirting with a white woman. Till was later found dead floating in a river. That was not even a police-related case, nor was it police use of force. Additionally, Holder said, "We're going to end racial

profiling in this country once and for all." No instance of racial profiling was even alleged in the Brown or Garner cases. He made a blanket statement insinuating that police officers and agencies engage in unlawful, systematic targeting of minority citizens simply because of the color of their skin.

New York City Mayor de Blasio talked of fearing for the safety of his son should he come into contact with police, even though the statistical reality is that his son faces far greater threats from New York City gang violence than by police use of force. He pledged change, but did not indicate what that change is going to be or look like. He has indicted an entire police department as racist, and with a broad brush has trashed the pride, character, and integrity of New York's finest, the same officers who protect him and his family on a daily basis. Are cops perfect? No, far from it. But they put on their uniform and go out every day to protect their community from crime and violence. There is real meaning to the term 'the thin blue line.' If not us, then who? Certainly not USDOJ or White House officials living in ivory towers far removed from life in an American ghetto or the complexity of policing in those environments.

President Obama, Holder and de Blasio could have shut this anarchist cop-hatred movement down. Instead of extoling the virtue of our communities' finest in unambiguous terms - virtues like courage, honesty, service, sacrifice, honor and character - they decided to score a few cheap political points with select constituencies on the backs of the American police officer. What made this worse was that the police had no such platform to defend themselves against this slander, and charges that were false, dangerous and unjustified. This whole movement of cop-bashing is built on lies, myths and distortion, and Obama, Holder and de Blasio know it.

They have caused irrevocable damage to professional policing and undermined the trust that minority residents need to have in their police officers. Some of the best police work has been the result of self-initiated policing where cops probe based on reasonable suspicion. That may decline, and the loser will be minority residents living in high crime areas. They demand aggressive, lawful, reasonable, fair and assertive policing. Obama, Holder and de Blasio have created a tipping point with the psyche of our officers who are beginning to wonder if this work is even worth it anymore. That's how damaging this irresponsible and inflammatory rhetoric is.

Holder doesn't have one shred of evidence that law enforcement officers engage in systemic, widespread or institutional racist practices. Not one credible study proves the emotional belief that white police officers use an inordinate amount of deadly force against black males or force in general. In fact, every study I have read indicates the opposite. Use of deadly force, when compared against the amount of police/citizen interaction, is so rare that it is not worthy of a national discussion. More white males are killed in police deadly force incidents than black males according to research by Dr. Richard Johnson in a University of Toledo study, and it isn't even close. In the period he examined (January 1, 2009 – December 31, 2012) 61% of males killed by police were white compared to 32% black.



President Obama, Holder and de Blasio ought to go to the National Law Enforcement Memorial in Washington, D.C. and stand in front of that wall that has the inscription of 20,000 law enforcement officers who were killed in the line of duty. Maybe then they will begin to understand. When any law enforcement officer is killed in the line of duty, every cop in America feels it personally as a little bit of us dies with them. I attended the wake of NYPD Officer Wenjian Liu and met his family. Obama sent White House officials to the funeral of Mike Brown, and Holder met with the family of Brown, where evidence supports that Brown had just strong-armed a convenience store clerk and was attacking a police officer, attempting at one point to disarm him. That says a lot.

President Obama, Holder and de Blasio have benefited politically by throwing our nation's finest under the bus in front of certain demographics, like they did post-Ferguson and Staten Island, New York. I refuse to let them have it both ways.

Every person killed by a police officer deserves a thorough and transparent investigation and review. Facts and evidence should be applied to the rule of law standard to make a determination of what happened and what should be done, if anything, not by the emotional and impassioned plea of a mob.

The grand jury in Ferguson got it right. Darren Wilson acted

reasonably under the law. Although the grand jury decision in Staten Island raised some eyebrows for some observers (not me), it is not evidence that our system of justice is broken. It is imperfect, not broken. Imperfection is part of the human condition.

Author and scholar Thomas Sowell, in a thought-provoking piece on the rule of law said, *If people who are told that they are under arrest, and who refuse to come with the police, cannot be forcibly taken into custody, then we do NOT have the rule of law, when the law itself is downgraded to suggestions that no one has the power to enforce.*

If we need to have a national discussion, let it begin with a review of the failed government policies that have spawned the American ghetto where more assertive, aggressive policing is required to protect its overwhelming number of law-abiding people. Leave oversight of the police to local oversight processes.

The mission statement of the United States Department of Justice reads, in part: *To ensure public safety against threats foreign and domestic; to provide federal leadership in controlling and preventing crime; to seek just punishment for those guilty of unlawful behavior.* My hope is that the next Attorney General of the United States DOJ sees local law enforcement as an ally and not an adversary in pursuit of a safer America. ✪

OF COURSE I DON'T MIND HANDCUFFS, OFFICER.
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