

ON AUGUST 9, 2014, MIKE BROWN WAS SHOT TO DEATH BY POLICE IN FERGUSON, MISSOURI.

DAYS OF PROTESTS, RIOTS, AND LOOTING FOLLOWED, ACCOMPANIED BY A MILITARIZED POLICE FORCE COMPLETE WITH TANKS AND ASSAULT RIFLES.

ALONGSIDE POLICE REPRESSION, LIBERALS, POLITICIANS, AND BLACK LEADERS HAVE CALLED FOR CALM AND NON-VIOLENCE.

HERE ARE TWO RESPONSES IN DEFENSE OF RIOTING, AND AGAINST ALL POLITICIANS, MANAGERS, AND THOSE WHO WOULD CONTROL OUR RAGE.

FUCK ALL POLICE, ALWAYS AND FOREVER.

## LET US NOT BECOME POLICE, LET US NOT BECOME SHEEP

1. What happened to Mike Brown is a tragedy that can't be put into words. A less spoken tragedy is that it's the day to day reality for so many of us—especially those of us who are young, who are people of color, who don't fit the cops' idea of an acceptable, law abiding citizen. How often do the police kill someone? In St. Louis, it seems like almost every month. We often don't do anything about it, or feel like we can. The last few days have been different.

2. People in Ferguson have shown-through gathering, talking and debating with each other, protesting and rioting— that this tragedy won't be yet another one placed on our already over-burdened backs.

3. Day to day, we don't have a voice. Working people, people of color, poor people, the disenfranchised - we don't have an official media that will argue our interests like the rich and middle class. We don't have a police force we can call like the middle class or an army like the rich. We only have each other. Large protests and rioting gives us a voice, gives us power. These actions let us take back some of our dignity.

4. The 1960s saw many urban uprisings: riots and looting where fed-up, voiceless people were able to have a voice and, for once, the nice things that are constantly kept out of our reach. One of the police and government's biggest fears is that people will realize we don't need them and their mentality.

5. In response to the urban uprisings of the '60s, police developed a two-fold strategy. First, that police from then on would have counter-insurgency training, gear and weaponry, and would use it as their day to day way of patrolling neighborhoods where poor people and people of color live. We see the effects of this constantly: getting pulled over not by one cop but 3-5 cars worth, having ourselves groped, our shoes taken off, having the doors of our homes kicked in.

The second way police began this new era of policing was by making sure protests were over before they started: forming relationships with "community leaders" and making sure that when there are moments of power (large protests, riots) the community figures (clergy, celebrities, media) call for calm. Police try to get protesters to come forward to denounce protesters, take leadership positions, and start policing the rest of us. Police can handle a dozen or so leaders, they can't control a street of 1000+ people. If you're advocating these tactics, remember, so are the police.

6. These two sentiments are so common now, most clergy, family members of the slain, and media will call for calm before being officially asked to by police. The flip side to calls for calm is: who's brave enough to get on the news and calling for rioting? Remember: it's legal to denounce rioting and illegal to call for it, which is why we only hear about how bad it is, even though many of us know differently.

7. The law and the courts are cobwebs for the rich that they can brush off and chains and shackles for the rest of us, a continuation of the legacy of slavery. The justice system is not broken, this is how it's supposed to work. This country was founded on genocide, slavery and exploitation - the judicial system has always reflected that. There are more people locked up and on parole and probation now than there were slaves in 1850. Working with the police and with the government to get justice for Mike Mike is a cul-de-sac - a dead-end intentionally created to destroy our energy and take power away from us again. "Fool me once, shame on

you. Fool me twice, shame on me" as the saying goes.

8. The only time the law serves us is when we put so much pressure on the system as a whole, that they're forced to sacrifice one part of themselves to save the rest. Normally, nothing happens to killer cops other than paid leave, but if people refuse to accept it (protests, riots) then those in power are forced to sacrifice one officer to protect the image of the police and the city government in general. The riots after Martin Luther King Jr. was shot, the Oscar Grant riots that led to the killer cop going to prison, show the power, strength and honor of large gatherings, of protests, of rioting.

Even if the calls for calm are genuine, they're wrong. If you look at cases where people calmly marched on the sidewalk, politely asking the very people murdering us to do something about the murders versus times when people have had large uncontrolled protests and riots, almost only the riots have gotten convictions. Or more specifically, times when protesters used all tactics - rioting among them.

9. Whether or not you agree with those who want to have power and a voice outside of walking on the sidewalk, and listening to clergy and politicians, don't publicly denounce individuals. You're putting whoever you denounce at great personal risk. You're giving information to the police (snitching) and you're putting people into the police's hands. Have you forgotten what it's like to be in their grip? How can you - in the name of justice against the police and for the victims of the police - turn innocent or guilty people over to them? If we disagree, let's talk about it, but let's not ever use the police to solve our problems. As we know, the police only lead to more violence and more repression, not justice.

10. This is about race. With the legacy of slavery (did it every really end?), racialized poverty and the prison system, how could it not be? One way to confront racism is to stick together and attack the sources of racialized violence: the police, the prison system, etc. Let's keep our anger, our words, our rocks and our scopes aimed at the enemy, not each other. Let's keep this from becoming black vs. black, black vs. white, etc, but instead people vs. the police, people vs. the city government: the have-nots vs. the haves. People vs. those who have the power to jail, beat and murder black people or any people on the streets of our cities.

11. Look out for each other? Yes. Become police? No. The tear-gas firing, rubber-bullet shooting officer has the same effect as the calm, neon vest-wearing former protester turned protest marshall/peace police who forces their fellow protesters back on the sidewalk. Both (consciously or not) stop us. Both try and take away our voice, reduce us to 2-dimensional sound bites, and claim to know what's best for everyone. Both police and protest marshalls don't see us as people but as sheep. Don't respect those trying to take over everything: if no one leads, we all lead. If 1-20 people lead, only 1-20 people have a voice.

Our greatest strength is everyone learning how to think about this situation for themselves and help each other figure out how to talk about what we're experiencing, act on ideas and beliefs as well as our emotions. Don't become the police - refuse to wear the neon vests. Don't police each other - let us all express ourselves. Don't respect the handful of people who are trying to take this away from all of us by becoming the police and by appointing themselves the leaders.

**Don't let them turn you back into sheep.**

## HEY, STEP BACK WITH THE RIOT SHAMING

As you may have heard, a young black man named Michael Brown from Ferguson, Missouri was shot many times and killed by a police officer on August 9 of this year. A bit of a caveat before my rant: I'm angry and it comes out a bit here. Sorry not sorry.

On August 11, 1965, the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles exploded after a confrontation with police grew to a critical mass. The neighborhood smoldered for six days. Almost a thousand buildings were looted and burned to the ground. The unrest marked an important turn in the struggle against an overtly racist America. That was forty-nine years ago today.

Listen: police in this country attack poor people of color. It's happening. Like, it's still happening. Every day. All across the country. It's been happening. The story of America is an uninterrupted chapter book of brutality and horrific violence. Racist violence in America is a story with no interludes.

The narrative of "progress" steadily advances divorced from the reality on the streets. For all the online discourse about oppression, identity, and 'shaming', there is a disturbing lack of insight and nuance when it comes to riots, vandalism, and looting in the wake of these unsettling acts of violence against people of color. So I thought I'd put together my responses to the phenomenon of "riot shaming" - the policing of young black and brown bodies in the aftermath of police murder.

### Five Rebuttals for the Riot Shamers

#### 1. "This distracts from the message."

No it doesn't. If you think this is a distraction, take a deep breath and focus. It's not "about one person". It's about fearing the loss of your family and friends at the hands of police. It could happen at any moment, and Michael Brown's murder reminds us of this. He was quite literally supposed to start college today. It's possible to have compassion and sympathy for the bereaved and still act out against the systematic exploitation of communities of color. If you can't do these two things at once, it's time to examine your commitment to a world without this terrifying syncopation of police violence and economic starvation.

As for distracting the media, well ... Attempting to appeal for mainstream media visibility in this age of instant information is a pathetic neutralization of our capacity. Let them cover the sensation if that's what they'll do. Our resentment should not be engineered by their attention span.

#### 2. "Destroying 'your own neighborhood' won't help."

I'm not sure how people who make this argument imagine 'owning' a neighborhood works, but I'll try to break it down: we don't own neighborhoods. Black businesses exist, it's true. But the emancipation of impoverished communities is not measured in corner-store revenue. It's not measured in minimum-wage jobs. And no, it's especially not measured in how many black people are allowed to become police officers.

White flight really happened. Go look it up. And insinuating that simply because all the white people left certain neighborhoods following desegregation doesn't mean they are suddenly 'ours'. This kind of de facto 'self-determination' is so short-sighted it makes me wonder how we can even talk about gentrification and segregation usefully if we think black people somehow 'have all these neighborhoods'. We don't have ghettos. Ghettos

have us. Prisons have us. Sports teams own us. Record labels own us. We don't have shit.

#### 3. "Looters and vandals are criminals."

I grew up afraid to put my hands in my pockets at the store. For us "can I help you find something?" means something very specific. Young people of color are presumed guilty. Police cars slow down when they pass us on the street. They search our pockets and dump out our bags. On our way to and from school. To and from work. If we walk through a wealthy neighborhood, we might get shot. A third of us have been to jail. The law protects this kind of targeting, so yeah, we're criminals. We are criminals because we are seen as criminals. We were criminals long before we climbed through broken windows. We were criminals long before we 'refused to disperse'.

#### 4. "Black community leaders oppose violence."

First of all, this is kind of a baseless generalization. One of Martin Luther King Jr.'s lesser known quotes 'riot is the language of the unheard' keeps me grounded here. In fact, did you know that MLK and many other non-violent black activists employed armed guards in the 60s?

Besides, all of this talk about 'violence' this and stereotypes that is just so unhelpful. Let's maybe talk about the fact that in cases like this police deliberately censor footage gathered, in some cases arresting photographers for fear of sparking unrest. You know why that is? Because they understand what most riot shamers don't: if you corner injured people, there is no where to go but against. Judging people's commitment to 'the cause' based on whether they can bottle up their reasonable frustrations, and finding selective affinity with only those who can say from safe distance to 'turn the other cheek' is part of what sparks these riots in the first place.

#### 5. "Reform the justice system, don't riot."

Something tells me people who make this argument haven't really looked into the prospects of this task. Let's be real, this 'justice system' people suppose is possible has been the subject of political and economic philosophy for hundreds of years. I got news for you: it's not looking up. The 'fair' economic system that a reformed justice system would require is a myth.

"So are you saying we should just give up?" That's what people ask me when I say things like this. My response: "eh, how about just not reducing everything to patience and progress?" Don't ask kids to wait around and dodge bullets until the system treats us fairly. Just stop putting that on them. Believe it or not, you don't have to save the world. And you sure as hell ain't going to do it on Twitter. Just step back with the riot shaming, and work on your perspective.

In closing, I'd like to offer a message to the youth: with murderous cops on the loose, the safest place to be a young black or brown person in America is in the streets with all of your friends. Stay tight.

**Police apologists: if you still think a few looted shops 'distract from the message', wait until you see the guillotines.**

NEVER SNITCH, EVER / COVER YOUR FACE / BRING A CHANGE OF CLOTHES / DITCH YOUR PHONE / DON'T BRAG / FUCK SHIT UP /STAY SAFE / NEVER SNITCH, EVER / COVER YOUR FACE / BRING A CHANGE OF CLOTHES / DITCH YOUR PHONE / DON'T BRAG / FUCK SHIT UP /STAY SAFE / NEVER SNITCH, EVER / COVER YOUR FACE / BRING A CHANGE OF CLOTHES / DITCH YOUR PHONE / DON'T BRAG / FUCK S