

Police racism rages

You walk down the street, your whole life ahead of you, until a police car comes up behind you. Some will claim that you continued walking, others that you attempted to draw a gun. Either way, your life ends when that officer shoots you to death.



BY NICOLE ZELNIKER
STAFF WRITER

For those of you who don't know, Mike Brown, an African-American teenager from Ferguson, Missouri, died at the hands of a local police officer on Aug. 9. Unfortunately, racially charged incidents like this can and do happen even in Greensboro.

"A Vietnamese woman (was) shot here," said Director of the Bonner Center for Community Service James Shields. "A lot of people think this is something new, but if you think about the ... communities of color, it's always been that way."

According to the Center of American Progress, even though people of color represent 30 percent of Americans they make up 60 percent of our prisons.

"What do the jails in Greensboro consist of?" asked sophomore and Greensboro resident Taylor Brown. "African-Americans and other (minorities). Even on the news, you never see white men being arrested."

Even as a teenager, Brown experienced racism through the police.

"I've had one interaction with the police," said Taylor Brown. "(They) decided to profile me (because) I'm an African-American person ... I was only seventeen."

Among young adults, problems prevail. "One girl was accused of attacking the police when they really attacked her," said Community and Justice Studies major and junior Leah Meservey.

Instead of holding our officers accountable, we give them more guns.

"People (get) upset about the fact that the police are using military hardware," said Chair and Visiting Assistant Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies Jeremy Rinker.

Even within the police department, racism rages, according to Tara McKey, former Greensboro police officer.

"I couldn't wear headphones at my desk, but all the white employees (could)," said McKey. "(My colleagues') treatment was different than mine. I got remedial work (while they) got to go on a conference."

One only needs to look at Greensboro's history to understand why this happens here.

"Slavery was adopted ... here," said Meservey. "Seeing the background of white and black people (makes sense)."

Not surprisingly, most of these incidents occur in lower-class neighborhoods.

"The majority of the policing happens in poorer neighborhoods," said Shields. "I doubt very seriously if a kid in an affluent neighborhood were walking in the streets that he would be arrested."

Among Greensboro's homeless population, many are considered criminals just for being on the streets. "It's a problem when people see others as a nuisance just for existing," said senior and project coordinator for Church Under the Bridge Noelle Lane.

"When you pay more taxes, you get better treatment," said Lane.

Increasing police accountability could lead to a solution.

"My father was a cop for 30 years," said Shields. "One of the things that he pioneered was a police-community relations office ... to have a place where you could talk to someone you could trust."

Types of training also need to be addressed. "Anti-racism training (would get) people to understand their privilege," said Rinker. "That kind of training would be the first step."

Next, we need to worry about our own capacity for caring. Just like in the Mike Brown case, middle-aged Hispanic neighborhood watchman George Zimmerman shot and killed another African-American teenager named Trayvon Martin in 2012. As outraged as the public was, that passion for justice died out all too soon.

"What I'm afraid of is, just like Trayvon Martin, at some point, the sexiness of the whole story will go away and we'll go back to things like the ice (bucket) challenge or whatever," said Shields. "We'll forget about it until the next guy is shot."

Anti-racism training and holding police accountable could put an end to race brutality by police. Police officers are human, too. They aren't monsters, as some think, but they also aren't invincible.

Regardless, we need to put an end to the racist stereotype plaguing the ones meant to help us.

"Currently police are seen as untouchable," said Rinker. "That's not structural. It's cultural."

Social media 'slacktivism' enacts change

BY BANNING WATSON
STAFF WRITER

2014, the Year of the Heroic Slacker. Slacktivism, or low-effort activism on the internet, is the way of the future and that might not be a bad thing.

Many think the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge qualifies, but if it does, it is surely slacktivism at its finest and maybe the first step towards legitimate Social Media Activism.

The genius of slacktivism lies in the fact that anyone can do it for almost no cost or effort. The viral success of the IBC is the reason that the ALS Association reports donations totaling \$94.3 million in the past month "compared to 2.7 million during the same time period last year (July 29 to Aug. 27)," including 2.1 million new donors. This is also the reason why activism and slacktivism alike are turning to social media to determine their futures.

Certainly great for raising awareness, the IBC also raises some skepticism. It's undeniable that people are more aware of ALS, or Lou Gehrig's Disease, than potentially ever before, but does that mean people are more informed

about ALS?

"When you hear that phrase 'raising awareness', ... does that mean that it has higher name recognition or that people actually understand more about it?" said Chris Henry, assistant professor of psychology. "Is the public being educated about what it is?"

Henry and other educators interviewed for this article all seemed skeptical of the actual educational value and with good reason. Of the dozens of IBC videos this author viewed only two delved into what ALS is, the state of research and why their participation was important.

"The IBC does get people talking about ALS, but the dialogue does not seem to extend past commentary of the cute or creative videos people post of their own participation in the challenge," said a special needs teacher at Gateway Education Center. The teacher went on to say that the honorable intent to raise awareness and educate was overshadowed by the social media fad into which the IBC evolved.

Henry suggested that, for many, the motivation behind making a

public display of generosity might be conformity or not wanting to be left behind on a trend, rather than an attempt at education or raising awareness.

However, not everyone was so disparaging about IBC. Henry was willing to term the IBC videos and donations as pro-social behavior, regardless of the motive, and felt it might have involved more people in activism, or slacktivism, than otherwise would have been involved.

For people like Glenn Dobrogosz, executive director of the Greensboro Science Center, and his staff, it was more personal than simply following a social trend.

"We had a close friend and board member who died from ALS recently," said Dobrogosz in an email interview. "It was something we felt strongly about. We would only participate in something that had purpose and meaning attached to the mission and values of the staff."

The IBC is proving that social media activism, coupled with clever marketing, can have meaning and be an effective means of raising awareness and funds without trivializing the cause. Maybe this is the new gold standard.

Teachable Moments:

ACTION

September 5 (1 - 3 p.m.)
East Gallery Founders
Student Panel: Get Involved in
Community Justice Efforts

*Chelsea Yarborough, Holden Cession,
& Jon Macemore*

September 5 (4 - 6 p.m.)
Founders Porch
STUDENT SPEAK OUT

**We
Are
Aware.**

AWARENESS

September 10 (1:30 - 2:30 p.m.)
East Gallery Founders
Profiling & Police Training Panel

**We
Are
Action.**

AWARENESS & ACTION

September 13 (9 a.m. - 5 p.m.)
Community Center
Understanding Racism

October 8 (1:30 - 2:30 p.m.)
East Gallery Founders
Social Justice Bazaar

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Join the Guilford College Community as we learn how to create an accountable and equitable society together.

For more information contact 336.316.2433 | mrc@guilford.edu