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# OPINION

## Stop the War on Young Black Men

BY MARC H. MORIAL



I had originally planned to use this column to denounce the July 17 death of Eric Garner, a 43-year-old, unarmed black man following the unlawful use of a chokehold by New York City police officers who suspected Garner of selling untaxed cigarettes on a Staten Island street corner. Garner, an asthmatic who repeatedly yelled, "I can't breathe!" while being wrestled to the ground by at least five officers, died at the scene, leading to calls of police brutality from his family and members of the community.

I had planned to point to the death of Eric Garner as the latest in what has become an all-too-frequent occurrence in communities of color across America – the excessive and often fatal use of force by police against young, unarmed black men. Then came the Aug. 9 fatal police shooting of 18-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo.

Brown, who was unarmed and was preparing for his first year in college, was stopped and then shot by Officer Darren Wilson for the alleged crime of jaywalking, or specifically according to Ferguson police chief Thomas

Jackson, of "walking down the middle of the street blocking traffic." I have never witnessed a situation more poorly handled than this one.

For almost two weeks following Brown's death, his family, community and outraged citizens across the nation have sought answers and justice from the local authorities, who have been slow to respond and quick to blame the victim, leading to intense demonstrations.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Michael Brown's family. Now that the Justice Department and FBI have entered the investigation, we have confidence that justice will ultimately prevail. Attorney General Eric Holder is doing the right thing by conducting a comprehensive parallel investigation and not waiting for local authorities – a refreshing departure from the traditional approach. But this is not enough.

The tragedies in Ferguson and Staten Island are not isolated incidents. Just four days before Brown's death, on Aug. 5, police shot and killed 22-year-old John Crawford in a Beavercreek, Ohio Walmart, after responding to a call that a man was wielding a gun in the store. It turns out that Crawford was holding a BB rifle which he had picked up while shopping in the store. Clearly, racial suspicion and harass-

ment of black men, especially by law enforcement, has become an often deadly epidemic in many parts of the country. That is why we are urgently calling upon the White House, the Department of Justice and congressional leaders to review and address the ongoing pattern and practice of racial violence and systemic discriminatory treatment by law enforcement in so many of our communities.

Too often, tactics like the "broken windows" strategy result in the targeting of communities of color for enforcement of minor offenses. Too often, there is a rush by police and the media to portray black male victims who have been killed by whites as "thugs" as we saw with Trayvon Martin, Ramarley Graham, Jordan Davis, and now with Michael Brown – particularly regarding the Ferguson Police Department's attempt at character assassination by releasing the store video of Michael Brown and attempting to deceptively link it to his killing. Add to that the militarization of police departments and the overuse of tear gas, stun grenades and other tools of war in response to largely peaceful demonstrations, as we have seen in Ferguson, and a toxic relationship between police and the communities they are sworn to protect and serve is all

but certain.

Let's be clear. There is no justification for looting, property destruction and otherwise breaking the law in the name of the First Amendment, and the irresponsible actions of an ill-intentioned few do not represent the legitimate grievances of an entire community. The civil rights movement has always been and continues to be one of peaceful – yet effective and strategic – protests and actions that have initiated massive change.

As we look to solutions to ensure that a higher value – a human value – is placed on the lives of our black men, legal remedies are absolutely needed, but this is essentially a problem of the heart. Until white Americans and police departments begin to see and treat young African American and Latino males with the dignity and deference afforded to their white counterparts, nothing will change. The death of Michael Brown has once again exposed the widespread and dangerous mistrust that exists between law enforcement and too many communities of color in America. For the sake of our nation, our communities and equal justice, we must bridge that divide.

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## Ferguson Exposes Issues of Race and Class

Real tragedy is lack of empathy for humanity

BY DR. ALISHA MORELAND-CAPUIA



Tension is high and trust is low. Events in Ferguson have uncovered deep seated issues of race and class in America. The city of Ferguson belongs to America and the trauma that has fallen on Ferguson is America's trauma.

Fundamental childhood lessons can assist in framing and perhaps understanding Ferguson. Let's start with the concept of inclusion. Recall childhood - find yourself at the playground and teams are being selected for kickball. Remember

what it felt like to not get picked. There were typically two responses to not being selected; 1) your self-esteem was lowered or 2) hurt feelings, exclusion and anger contributes to acting out

aggressively. Certainly, you can recall a time like this that impacted your childhood experience.

It is not my objective to oversimplify an exceedingly complex situation in Ferguson, but everyone can identify with what it feels like to not be included. Now let us broach another universal feeling, that of fear. Fear is a natural and universal response to threat and or perceived threat.

Have we considered that this is the state (traumatization) in which the people of Ferguson find themselves?

Fear unwoven and unchecked

easily translate into trauma and trauma unwoven and unchecked can easily lead to aggression. Let us consider a protracted history of trauma combined with a history of exclusion.

The real tragedy here is the lack of empathy for humanity – we are talking about children and families, people, fellow Americans.

The solution – the people of Ferguson must be seen as a vital part of humanity. They must be treated with respect and dignity. They must be heard and understood. A trauma-informed approach must be applied – being trauma-informed means that one can understand the impact of fear and trauma. Understanding fear and trauma expands the capacity for empathy and humanity is the centerpiece.

When the lights are out; cam-

eras are gone and America moves on to the next crisis, what will be the strategic solution for peace and keeping humanity as the flagship in Ferguson?

One solution is to employ trauma-informed approaches with the community of Ferguson. These steps should include the developing greater capacity for empathy – we can all identify with fear and not being included.

Resources should go to the community to improve living conditions for the people of Ferguson. It's important to establish a greater sense of community and work towards the goal of inclusion in the political, social and economic milieu of Ferguson

There should be a change in how we ask questions: Don't look at what is wrong with Ferguson, it is more powerful,

meaningful, and transformative to ask what happened to Ferguson.

Ferguson should employ a community policing model. The police of Ferguson must get to know the people, it's about basic humanity.

It's also important to understand what impacts one part of America, impacts all of America. Dr. Maya Angelou said it best: "We are all human; therefore, nothing human can be alien to us."

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