

OPINION

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Shocking Videos on Systemic Police Violence

I can't watch another police killing

BY JOSHUA SERRANO

Philando Castile and Alton Sterling became the latest black Americans to turn into Twitter hashtags when videos of their deaths at the hands of police circulated on social media.

But I couldn't bring myself to watch them.

I still remember the helpless frustration I felt, my stomach twisting in knots, as I watched the video of Eric Garner being choked to death while screaming "I can't breathe." Over and over again, I subjected myself to the emotional and psychological trauma of watching someone who could have easily been me being murdered.

Afterward, I decided that it's

not worth my wellbeing to ever watch another video like that. That's meant taking long breaks from social media and TV news.

But it's not like I can't see what's going on.

In my 23 years as a New Yorker, liberal and conservative mayors alike — from Rudy Giuliani to Bill de Blasio — have aggressively targeted struggling black and Latino communities in the city with policing.

Coupled with the war on drugs that the U.S. has been waging on poor communities of color for decades, that means poor black people are more likely to have encounters with the police. And we've all seen how those encounters can end.

Similar patterns play out all over the country. Despite a news cycle driven by the latest videos of black people dying at the hands of police — with individual circumstances endlessly debated each time — it's beyond clear that the

men and women who are killed aren't just unlucky people in isolated encounters.

Instead, as Supreme Court Justice Sonya Sotomayer writes, "They are the canaries in the coal mine whose deaths, civil and literal, warn us that no one can breathe in this atmosphere."

There's ample data to support that the U.S. has a big problem with police violence and racially biased policing. According to The Guardian, nearly 600 people have been killed by the police so far this year. And young black men are 9 times likelier than other Americans to die at the hands of cops.

Shocking videos will come and go. But this violence will be present regardless of whether we're watching. The problem is systemic, and demands a systemic solution.

That means analyzing federal, state, and local laws that drive patterns in police behavior and leave no room for accountability. This can give us specific things to rally

around for change.

For example, special prosecutors, not secretive grand juries, should prosecute all police officers accused of unjustified shootings. And every department should have civilian review boards empowered to conduct independent investigations and provide oversight.

Congress should strengthen existing laws against systemic police misconduct by lowering the legal threshold for bringing civil rights lawsuits against police departments, and allowing private citizens and organizations to bring pattern-or-practice lawsuits, not just the Department of Justice.

Additionally, when departments are found to have violated people's civil rights, instead of simply entering an agreement to reform, these departments should have their federal funding immediately suspended. And cases of abuse should be brought to trial in a federal court.

Moreover, all officers should get racial bias training, and training that emphasizes de-escalating tense situations.

Thinking systemically also means supporting community organizers and protesters working to bring the anti-blackness of policing in the United States to the forefront of our national consciousness — and applying strategic, sustained pressure on our elected officials until they do something to end police violence.

Finally, it also means keeping up on the news — while avoiding the urge to click "play" every single time there's a new video of a police shooting.

In a country with a not-so-distant history of lynching black people and leaving their bodies hanging to terrorize entire communities, these state-sanctioned executions must never seem normal.

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Capitalism with No Government Intervention is a Myth

There's No Such Thing as a 'Free Market'

BY JILL RICHARDSON

The debates leading up to the election this year will no doubt invoke the "American value" of capitalism. But what, exactly, does that mean? And what should it mean?

I'm no economist, but I took a few economics courses while earning an undergraduate business degree. Growing up in a capital-

ist society, I thought I understood the basic concepts underlying capitalism — free markets, competitive advantage, and so forth.

Then I actually read *The Wealth of Nations* by Adam Smith, the founding work that described what we call capitalism in the first place. That was a game changer.

We're all probably familiar with Smith's ideas at some level. The market regulates itself, as each of us operates based on our own self-interest. Businesses try to earn profits, and consumers try to meet their needs at the best prices. The market ensures

that the demand of consumers is met with supply from business.

The government's job, the doctrinaire thinking goes, is to get the heck out of the way. It doesn't set prices or quotas. It just lets the market function.

Adam Smith cast this arrangement in glowing terms in 1776. He was describing England during the Industrial Revolution. He thought

onized.

The British imported cotton from their colonies for their own factories, as well as wheat to feed British workers in the isles. Colonial India, meanwhile, suffered several massive famines. Even as tens of millions of Indians starved to death, record amounts of Indian wheat were exported to feed British factory workers laboring in a

in, even in Britain. The system "worked" at making some people rich. But the squalid and wretched lifestyles of laborers, including children — which inspired the writing of Charles Dickens — were its cost.

We in America have meddled in markets plenty in our own right — not least through historical crimes like slavery and colonialism. But we've also developed more benign interventions that can actually help people.

We ban child labor, for example, and enforce (admittedly inadequate) minimum wage protections. We require businesses to offer safe and healthy workplaces. We ban the sale of dangerous drugs. We try to regulate pharmaceuticals to make sure they're safe and effective.

In other words, capitalism with absolutely no government intervention is a myth — and always was.

We can debate the pros and cons of specific regulations. But if you hear a candidate claiming that capitalism means doing away with all regulations — or that any government interference in the market equates to socialism or communism — they're being dishonest.

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it was amazing that millions of individual actors, each operating based on self-interest, could so efficiently revolutionize society without any central planning at all.

Only, he was wrong.

In fact, the growing British Empire was undertaking economic interventions on a colossal scale — and would do even more in the centuries to come. The British set out all over the globe, claiming colonies in the New World and later India and Africa, setting up trade policies that benefited the British at the expense of the col-

so-called free market.

Before the Industrial Revolution, Indian textiles reigned supreme. But British authorities kept industrial textile technologies out of India in order to capture the global textile market, impoverishing the colony further.

Other British staples — tea and sugar — were also imported from British colonies. That sugar was produced by enslaved Africans in the Caribbean.

Some invisible hand.

Smith also overlooked the utter misery textile workers lived

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