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Black Lives Matter is Not 'Anti-Police'

It has been both interesting and unsettling to watch the attacks from the political right on the Black Lives Matter movement and the larger movement for Black lives. Specifically, the suggestion that Black Lives Matter activists are somehow terroristic and promote the killing of police is so outlandish that it's not only difficult to believe that anyone would even take such allegations seriously, but it's also hard to imagine someone mouthing such words in the first place.

Let's start by debunking a myth that is being promoted by the political right.

The political right and several police unions have suggested that there is a war against the police. The facts stand in contrast. The number of police killed has actually decreased.

Given this, why are we being led to believe otherwise? Simply put, promoting fear and suggesting that there is somehow a war against the police is a smokescreen to shift attention away from the actual war that has been underway, and that is a war against Black civilians by right-wing haters and out of con-



Bill Fletcher Jr.
The Global African

rol police.

This point cannot be emphasized too strongly. Not only do the

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facts demonstrate that there is no war against the police, but they also continue to demonstrate that young Black men are anywhere between seven and 21 times more likely to be shot and killed by the

police than White young men.

It is these statistics that the political right wishes us to ignore.

As a result of the attention that folks in the Black Lives Matter movement and the movement for Black lives have brought to the phenomenon of police lynchings, they have found themselves the target of those who wish to suppress any actual discussion of the discrepancy in police violence. Using the suggestion of terrorism is a time-honored technique to smash any open discourse.

Charleston who had been set up by the police were domestic terrorists.

The allegation was completely outrageous and was quickly disavowed by sensible South Carolinians. Nevertheless, the clear hope had been that such an allegation would lead to the defeat of a nation-wide campaign to free the five Charleston dockworkers.

That scare tactic did not work.

Today, such scare tactics are being reissued and for the same general purpose.

Rather than focus the attention of the country on the discrepancy in police violence and the larger negative differential in treatment experienced by African Americans compared to Whites, the hope is that fear of chaos and fear of vigilante justice against police will lead the population to close its collective eyes and simply tolerate whatever actions the police believe to be appropriate.

It will not happen.

Bill Fletcher, Jr. is the host of *The Global African on Tele-sur-English*. Follow him on Twitter, Facebook and at www.billfletcherjr.com.

Environmental Justice for People of Color

The Civil Rights Movement in the United States identified a long list of issues that were broadly considered the historical and contemporary evidence of systematic racial discrimination and injustice. With the 2016 presidential election rapidly approaching, the critical importance of environmental justice for Black Americans, Latino Americans, Native Americans and for other people of color must be reasserted.

As a young statewide coordinator for the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in my home state of North Carolina from 1963 to 1968, I saw first-hand how movements for change have to first define the issues from the perspective of the oppressed in order to have a chance of overcoming longstanding systems of racial injustice.

Golden Frinks, the SCLC North Carolina State Field Secretary, once told me, “Son, you gotta use our own definitions about these massive racial inequities without getting the permission of the perpetrators.” The wisdom that I learned from my mentor Brother Frinks has helped to guide my career over the past decades.

Thus, in 1982 during a game-changing civil rights protest led by the United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice in Warren County, N.C., I remembered what Golden Frinks had taught me. A devastating racial injustice was taking place in the state and it needed to be challenged.

I was the first person to coin and define the term “environmental racism.” This was in response to a decision by North Carolina to dump over 400 tons of cancer-causing PCB (polychlorinated



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biphenyls) hazardous waste into a state-made landfill in the middle of a Black American farming community in Warren County. Over 500 of us were arrested and jailed, but we were very success-

‘... Americans — young and old, on college campuses and in courtrooms, in our neighborhoods and through our places of worship — called on a Nation to pursue clean air, water, and land for all people’

ful in bringing national and global attention to another serious life-threatening manifestation of racial injustice.

Environmental racism is defined as racial discrimination in the deliberate targeting of ethnic and minority communities for exposure to toxic and hazardous waste sites and facilities, coupled with the systematic exclusion of people of color in environmental policy making, enforcement, and remediation.

By 1994 President Bill Clinton had issued Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations “to focus federal attention on the environmental and human health effects of federal actions on minority and

low-income populations with the goal of achieving environmental protection for all communities.” Subsequently, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) opened up a full-time Office of Environmental Justice.

President Barack Obama in 2014 issued a Presidential Proclamation to observe the 20th anniversary of the Clinton E.O. 12898. President Obama emphasized, “As we mark this day, we recall the activists who took on environmental challenges long before the federal government acknowledged their needs. We remember how Ameri-

and activists have established an effective national organization called Green For All. The mission of Green For All is to work “to build an inclusive green economy strong enough to lift people out of poverty.” I have supported and admired Van Jones’ leadership in helping to bring people of color together to advance the cause of equal justice and sustainable development.

It is also relevant to note The Guardian article titled, “Pollution isn’t colorblind: environmental hazards are killing more Black Americans,” that was co-authored by Congressman Keith Ellison and Van Jones. Ellison and Jones explained, “Thanks to people’s movements like Black Lives Matter and the Fight For 15, the call for racial and economic justice is getting louder and stronger.”

But while we are out on the streets fighting for equality, our kids are being poisoned by the air they breathe. Environmental injustices are taking Black lives — that’s why our fight for equality has to include climate and environmental justice too.”

I predict that one of the key political issues in next year’s presidential election will be the issue of environmental justice. We have to keep on making progress. The health and quality of life of our communities are at stake. While people of color now make up over 30 percent of the population of the United States, our issues, demands and interests cannot be triaged on the table of political expediency.

Witnessing so many new young leaders and activists stepping forward to gain more ground makes me optimistic that 2016 will be the year of advancement for all people of color and for all those who stand for freedom and equality.