

Comply or Die: The Only Truly Compliant Person in a Police State Is a Dead One

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[“If you don’t want to get shot, tased, pepper-sprayed, struck with a baton or thrown to the ground, just do what I tell you. Don’t argue with me, don’t call me names, don’t tell me that I can’t stop you, don’t say I’m a racist pig, don’t threaten that you’ll sue me and take away my badge. Don’t scream at me that you pay my salary, and don’t even think of aggressively walking towards me.”—Officer with the Los Angeles Police Department](#)

Americans aren’t dying at the hands of police because of racism.

For that matter, George Floyd didn’t die [because he was black](#) and the cop who killed him is white.

[Floyd, who died after a Minneapolis police officer knelt on his neck](#) for more than nine minutes, died because America is being overrun with militarized cops—vigilantes with a badge—who have almost absolute discretion to decide who is a threat, what constitutes resistance, and how harshly they can deal with the citizens they were appointed to “serve and protect.”

These warrior cops may get paid by the citizenry, but they don’t work for us and they certainly aren’t operating within the limits of the U.S. Constitution. As retired Philadelphia police captain Ray Lewis warns, [“The system is corrupt.](#) Police really are oppressing not only the black community, but also the whites. They’re an oppressive organization now controlled by the one percent of corporate America. Corporate America is using police forces as their mercenaries.”



Now, not *all* cops are guns for hire, [trained to act as judge, jury and executioner](#) in their interactions with the populace.

However, the unfortunate reality we must come to terms with is that the good cops—the ones who take seriously their oath of office to serve and protect their fellow citizens, uphold the Constitution, and maintain the peace—are increasingly being outnumbered by those who believe the lives (and rights) of police should be valued more than citizens.

It doesn't matter where you live—big city or small town—it's the same scenario being played out over and over again in which government agents, hyped up on their own authority and the power of their uniform, ride roughshod over the rights of the citizenry.

Indeed, if you ask police and their enablers what Americans should do to stay alive during encounters with law enforcement, they will tell you to comply, cooperate, obey, not resist, not argue, not make threatening gestures or statements, avoid sudden movements, and submit to a search of their person and belongings during encounters with the police.

In other words, it doesn't matter if you're in the right, it doesn't matter if a cop is in the wrong, it doesn't matter if you're being treated with less than the respect you deserve: if you want to emerge from a police encounter with your life and body intact, then you'd better comply, submit, obey orders, respect authority and generally do whatever a cop tells you to do.

In this way, the old police motto to “protect and serve” has become “[comply or die](#).”

This is the unfortunate, misguided, perverse message that has been beaten, shot, tasered and slammed into our collective consciousness over the past few decades, and it has taken root.

This is how we have gone from a nation of laws—where the least among us had just as much right to be treated with dignity and respect as the next person (in principle, at least)—to a nation of law enforcers (revenue collectors with weapons) who treat “we the people” like suspects and criminals.

As a result, Americans as young as 4 years old are being [leg shackled](#), [handcuffed](#), [tasered](#) and [held at gun point](#) for not being quiet, not being orderly and just being childlike—i.e., not being compliant enough.

Americans as old as 95 are being beaten, shot and killed for questioning an order, [hesitating in the face of a directive](#), and [mistaking a policeman crashing through their door for a criminal](#) breaking into their home—i.e., not being submissive enough.

And Americans of every age and skin color are continuing to die at the hands of a government that sees itself as judge, jury and executioner over a populace that have been pre-judged and found guilty, stripped of their rights, and left to suffer at the hands of government agents trained to respond with the utmost degree of violence.

At a time when growing numbers of unarmed people have been shot and killed for just standing a certain way, or moving a certain way, or holding something—anything—that police could misinterpret to be a gun, or igniting some trigger-centric fear in a police officer's mind that has nothing to do with an actual threat to their safety, even the most benign encounters with police can have fatal consequences.

The problem, as one reporter rightly concluded, is “not that life has gotten that much more dangerous, it’s that [authorities have chosen to respond to even innocent situations as if they were in a warzone.](#)”

[Warrior cops—trained in the worst case scenario and thus ready to shoot first and ask questions later—are definitely not making us or themselves any safer.](#)

Worse, militarized police [increasingly pose a risk to anyone undergoing a mental health crisis or with special needs whose disabilities may not be immediately apparent](#) or require more finesse than the typical freeze-or-I’ll-shoot tactics employed by America’s police forces. Indeed, [disabled individuals make up a third to half of all people killed by law enforcement officers.](#) (People of color are [three times more likely to be killed by police](#) than their white counterparts.)

If you’re black and disabled, you’re even more vulnerable.



Specifically, what we’re dealing with today is a skewed shoot-to-kill mindset in which police, [trained to view themselves as warriors or soldiers in a war](#), whether against drugs, or terror, or crime, must “get” the bad guys—i.e., anyone who is a potential target—before the bad guys get them.

This nationwide epidemic of court-sanctioned police violence carried out with impunity against individuals posing little or no real threat has all but guaranteed that unarmed Americans will keep dying at the hands of militarized police.

Consider just some of the scenarios in which unarmed Americans have been shot and killed by police:

Killed for taking public transit. Oscar Grant, traveling home on a train packed with New Year’s Eve revelers, was pulled off the train while police investigated reports of fighting, shoved against a wall, punched in the head, kned in the face, then [shot and killed by police while lying face down](#) on a train platform.

Killed for standing in a “shooting stance.” In California, police opened fire on and killed a mentally challenged—unarmed—black man within minutes of arriving on the scene, allegedly because he removed a vape smoking device from his pocket and [took a “shooting stance.”](#)

Killed for holding a cell phone. Police in Arizona shot a man who was running away from U.S. Marshals after he refused to drop an object that [turned out to be a cellphone.](#)

Killed for displaying air fresheners from a rearview mirror. Daunte Wright was shot and killed during a traffic stop over an expired registration and a [state law prohibiting motorists from hanging air fresheners](#) and other items from their rearview mirrors. Police claimed to have mistakenly used a gun instead of a Taser.

Killed for behaving oddly and holding a baseball bat. Responding to a domestic disturbance call, Chicago police shot and killed 19-year-old college student Quintonio LeGrier who had reportedly been experiencing mental health problems and was [carrying a baseball bat](#) around the apartment where he and his father lived.

Killed for opening the front door. Bettie Jones, who lived on the floor below LeGrier, was also fatally shot—this time, accidentally—when she attempted to [open the front door](#) for police.

Killed for being a child in a car pursued by police. Jeremy David Mardis, six years old and autistic, died after being [shot multiple times by Louisiana police in the head and torso](#). Police opened fire on the car—driven by Jeremy’s father, Chris Few, who was also shot—and [then allegedly lied](#), claiming that they were attempting to deliver an outstanding warrant, that Few resisted arrest, that he shot at police (no gun was found), and that he tried to ram his car into a police cruiser. Body camera footage refuted the police’s claims.

Killed for approaching police with a metal spoon. In Alabama, police shot and killed a 50-year-old man who reportedly charged a police officer while holding [“a large metal spoon in a threatening manner.”](#)

Killed for holding a tree branch. Georgia police shot and killed a 47-year-old man wearing only shorts and tennis shoes who, when first encountered, was sitting in the woods against a tree, only to start running towards police [holding a stick in an “aggressive manner.”](#)

Killed for crawling around naked. Atlanta police shot and killed an unarmed man who was reported to have been “acting deranged, knocking on doors, [crawling around on the ground naked.](#)” Police fired two shots at the man after he reportedly starting running towards them.

Killed for hunching over. Responding to a domestic trouble call, multiple officers with the Baltimore County police forced their way inside a home where they proceeded to open fire on an unarmed 41-year-old man who was [hunched over in a defensive posture](#). The man was killed in front of his [two young daughters](#) and their mother.

Killed because a police officer accidentally pulled out his gun instead of his taser. An Oklahoma man suspected of trying to sell an illegal handgun was shot and killed after a 73-year-old reserve deputy [inadvertently fired his gun instead of his taser](#). “Oh! I shot him! I’m sorry!” the deputy cried out.

Killed for wearing dark pants and a basketball jersey. Donnell Thompson, a mentally disabled 27-year-old described as gentle and shy, was shot and killed after police—searching for a carjacking suspect reportedly wearing similar clothing—encountered him [lying motionless in a neighborhood yard](#). Police “only” opened fire with an M4 rifle after Thompson first failed to respond to their flash bang grenades and then started running after being hit by foam bullets.

Killed for telling police you lawfully own a firearm. Philando Castile was shot and killed during a routine traffic stop allegedly over a broken tail light. As he was reaching for his license and registration, Castile explained to police that he had a conceal-and-carry permit.

[That's all it took for police to shoot Castile four times](#) in the presence of his girlfriend and her 4-year-old daughter.

Killed for leaving *anywhere* at all when a police officer pulls up. Deravis Caine Rogers was killed after starting to drive away from an apartment complex [right around the same time as a police officer pulled up](#). Despite the fact that the police officer had no reason to believe Rogers was a threat or was suspected of any illegal activity, the officer fired into Rogers' passenger side window.

Killed for driving while deaf. In North Carolina, a state trooper shot and killed 29-year-old Daniel K. Harris—[who was deaf](#)—after Harris initially failed to pull over during a traffic stop.

Killed for shopping at Walmart. John Crawford III was shot and killed by police responding to reports of an armed man in an Ohio Walmart. Crawford, shopping and talking on his phone, had been [holding an unpackaged pellet gun](#) that had been sitting on a store shelf.

Killed for being homeless. Los Angeles police shot an unarmed homeless man after he [failed to stop riding his bicycle](#) and then proceeded to run from police.

Killed for brandishing a shoehorn. John Wrana, a 95-year-old World War II veteran, lived in an assisted living center, used a walker to get around, and was shot and killed by police who [mistook the shoehorn in his hand for a 2-foot-long machete](#) and fired multiple beanbag rounds from a shotgun at close range.

Killed for playing in a park. Tamir Rice was shot and killed in an Ohio park when a police officer [mistook the 12-year-old's toy airsoft pistol](#) for a real gun.

Killed for having your car break down on the road. Terence Crutcher, unarmed and black, was shot and killed by Oklahoma police after his car broke down on the side of the road. Crutcher was [shot in the back while walking towards his car with his hands up](#).

Killed for being in your own apartment. Botham Jean was shot and killed when a police officer entered Jean's unlocked apartment, mistaking it for her own and [mistaking Jean for a burglar](#).

Killed for staying up late. Atatiana Jefferson, up late playing video games with her 8-year-old nephew, was shot and killed after neighbors who were concerned about that the lights were on in the house asked police to do a wellness check.

Killed for holding a garden hose. California police were ordered to pay \$6.5 million after they [opened fire on a man holding a garden hose](#), believing it to be a gun. Douglas Zerby was shot 12 times and pronounced dead on the scene.

[This is what constitutes "law and order" in the American police state.](#)

Making matters worse, when these officers, who have long since ceased to be peace officers, violate their oaths by bullying, beating, tasing, shooting and killing their employers—the taxpayers to whom they owe their allegiance—they are rarely given more than a slap on the hands before resuming their patrols.

This lawlessness on the part of law enforcement, an unmistakable characteristic of a police state, is made possible in large part by police unions which routinely oppose civilian review

boards and resist the placement of names and badge numbers on officer uniforms; police agencies that abide by the Blue Code of Silence, the quiet understanding among police that they should not implicate their colleagues for their crimes and misconduct; prosecutors who treat police offenses with greater leniency than civilian offenses; courts that sanction police wrongdoing in the name of security; and legislatures that enhance the power, reach and arsenal of the police, and a citizenry that fails to hold its government accountable to the rule of law.

Indeed, not only are cops protected from most charges of wrongdoing—whether it’s shooting unarmed citizens (including children and old people), [raping and abusing young women, falsifying police reports](#), trafficking drugs, or soliciting sex with minors—but even on the rare occasions when they are fired for misconduct, it’s only a matter of time before they [get re-hired again](#).

Much of the “credit” for shielding these rogue cops goes to influential police unions and [laws providing for qualified immunity](#), police contracts that “[provide a shield of protection to officers accused of misdeeds and erect barriers to residents complaining of abuse](#),” state and federal laws that allow police to walk away without paying a dime for their wrongdoing, and rampant cronyism among government bureaucrats.

It’s happening [all across the country](#).

This is how [perverse justice](#) in America has become.

If you’re starting to feel somewhat overwhelmed, intimidated and fearful for your life and your property, you should be, because as I point out in my book [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#), the only truly compliant, submissive and obedient citizen in a police state is a dead one.

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This article was originally published on [The Rutherford Institute](#).

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Featured image: Brutal: A Minnesota police officer sprays protesters with pepper spray at the weekend (Source: Morning Star)

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