

Racism and National Oppression in America: Renewed Rebellion in Ferguson Exposes U.S. 'Human Rights' Fraud

Obama administration encourages calm amid national outrage

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With the refusal of a grand jury in St. Louis County, Missouri to bring any charges against the white police officer who gunned down unarmed 18-year-old Michael Brown on Aug. 9, President Barack Obama has revealed his incapacity to address the African American national question in light of the reigniting of rebellion and mass demonstrations in Ferguson and other areas around the United States.

In the aftermath of the announcement of the decision not to prosecute Wilson, Obama told a White House press conference that people should accept the grand jury decision. He later suggested that any rebellion in response to this travesty of justice would be the wrong thing to do.

When asked by reporters if he would travel to Ferguson, Obama was noncommittal. Later on Dec. 1 there was an announcement from the White House that the administration was convening meetings on the situation involving the latest upsurge in anti-racist demonstrations.

Related to Obama's attempt to distance himself from the situation surrounding Ferguson, a close ally of the president, Gov. Deval Patrick of Massachusetts, told the NBC Meet the Press program on Nov. 30 that "I think the reason it's a quandary is because the federal government is investigating right now. And you don't want to appear to influence that investigation."

Contrasting the hostility and indifference to the conditions of African Americans facing state violence by the police, the masses in Ferguson went into the streets and have remained there to carry out exactly what the administration had repeatedly refuted. This sense of anger spread immediately throughout the country with mass demonstrations organized from coast to coast.

A determined, mass anti-racist movement has engaged in social media campaigns, civil disobedience and violent unrest across the U.S. in the only rational response to the blatant killing of African American youth Michael Brown and other victims of police violence. The Obama administration's Justice Department investigation into the killing of Brown has not resulted in one indictment or lawsuit against Wilson or the local law-enforcement authorities in Missouri which not only killed Brown and covered up the crime, but has also engaged in the use of brutal force using militarized tactics to suppress protests.

“Human Rights Racket” Condemned Around the World

These developments come at a time when Washington has engineered attacks on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), the Russian Federation, the Republic of Sudan, Syria, Iran and other states accusing them of human rights violations. Yet the administration has initiated no concrete programs to improve the plight of African Americans, particularly youth, who remain trapped in low-wage employment, joblessness, poverty and deadly racial profiling policies carried out by police and the courts leading to the use of lethal force and mass incarceration.

Perhaps the strongest denunciation of racism in the U.S. came from the DPRK which blasted Washington in connection to its role in the passage of a United Nations resolution condemning Pyongyang for alleged rights violations, and then relating this to the Ferguson rebellion. The DPRK foreign ministry and human rights commission responded in detail to the role of U.S. imperialism both domestically and internationally.

The DPRK foreign ministry in a statement issued on Nov. 28 said:

“As regards the incident, U.S. President Obama let loose a spate of irresponsible remarks that the U.S. is a country built by law and it is necessary to accept the decision of the judicial authorities only to spark off bitterer resentment among the protesters. Whenever an opportunity presents itself, the U.S. authorities bluster that the human rights of all people are guaranteed in the U.S. in a legal and institutional manner and only individual cases contrary to them occur sometimes.”

This same statement went on to note that “such individual human rights abuses are taking place one after another and have reached a systematic and wide-ranging and extremely grave phase. The occurrence of nationwide protests at present goes to prove that the U.S. human rights regime is beset with serious problems. The U.S. president in his public appearance tried hard to justify the clear racial discrimination by law, an indication that the U.S. human rights standard is wrong.”

Criticism came from additional quarters including the Russian foreign ministry which said on Nov. 26 that:

“The authorities’ actions make it clear that they chose to crack down hard on protests against police brutality and against a crime that went unpunished despite being evidently racist in its nature. The scope of public outrage and the disproportionate reaction by law-enforcement bodies again confirm that this is not a separate incident, but a deep systematic flaw in U.S. democracy that has failed to overcome a deep racial rift, discrimination and inequality.”

A foreign ministry spokeswoman for the People’s Republic of China, Hua Chunying, was asked during a media briefing on Nov. 25 for a reaction to the situation involving the unrest surrounding the grand jury decision in Ferguson, said that “The case you mention is a U.S. internal affair. But I would like to say that there’s no such thing as perfection when it comes to human rights regardless of whatever country you’re in. We have to improve the record of human rights and promote the cause of human rights. We can learn from each other in this area.” (Wall Street Journal)

From the perspective of a national liberation movement, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) wrote in a statement on Ferguson that “This comes as no surprise the United States’ legal system is historically and at present a perpetrator of massive violence and imprisonment against Black people, just as U.S. imperialism is such a perpetrator against people and nations around the world. As Palestinians, we are familiar with the injustice of colonial, racist courtrooms, mechanisms of a racist state, which sentences our people to prison en masse while wrapping the perpetrators of crimes, murders and genocide against our people in a cloak of ‘legality.’”

In one leading newspaper in South Africa, the Daily Maverick, writer Richard Poplak observed that videos of officers attacking protester represented “an American city aping South African archival footage. It’s a reminder that in divided countries, with histories of institutionalized racism, reconciliation without actually reconciling... justice is not just impossible, but a massive cover-up, a ruse used by power.” (Nov. 26)

An Egyptian newspaper, Al-Wafd, featured a headline in the aftermath of the grand jury decision which read “An uprising against racism in the USA.”

Even close European allies of the U.S. such as France criticized the atmosphere prevailing inside the country. French Justice Minister Christiane Taubira posted a message on her twitter account Nov. 26, writing: “Racial profiling, social exclusion, territorial segregation, cultural marginalization, firearms, fear, (is a) fatal cocktail. Kill them before they grow,” she said, referencing a book published on the plight of African Americans in the educational system.

In a later interview over French Radio, Ms. Taubira continued saying:

“I can’t make value judgments on the institutions of the United States. And yet it’s clear when the sense of frustration is that strong, that deep, that long-lasting and that huge, there is reason to question whether people trust these institutions.” (Nov. 27)

The Struggle Against National Oppression is Pivotal in the U.S.

Until racism and national oppression is uprooted in the U.S. there can be no peace or security, let alone democracy. The slogan “no justice, no peace” is a poignant one which arose during the Rodney King rebellions of 1992 in Los Angeles and beyond and maintains its relevance to the present upsurge.

The capitalist system still requires the super-exploitation of oppressed peoples. As a result successive U.S. administrations have failed repeatedly over the last five decades to placate the African American people through legislation, executive orders, token politicians and verbal platitudes.

What the rebellion in Ferguson indicates along with the nationwide anti-racist demonstrations that have shutdown shopping malls, downtown streets, highways, etc., is that African Americans remain in the forefront of the struggle for the genuine transformation of the U.S. into a non-racist society. Until that change is brought into existence there will be ongoing unrest that will reach even higher levels of participation and seriousness.

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