

The World Must Judge America's Human Rights Abuses

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Black people in this country are brutalized by police on a daily basis. That has always been true but thanks to modern technology there is a steady stream of proof caught on video. Accessing the internet means inevitably being confronted with awful imagery such as Marlene Pinnock being beaten by a highway patrolman in California. We see Eric Garner murdered by the NYPD, pleading that he couldn't breathe.

These videos may or may not assist with prosecutions. Footage showed the late Rodney King being beaten by California police in 1991. The officers were indicted, a rarity, but a jury acquitted them anyway, making a mockery of the old saying "seeing is believing." Common sense wisdom doesn't count for much if it threatens to upend white supremacy. No matter how seemingly iron clad the case, police rarely face criminal charges.

Such was the case of [Milton Hall](#), a mentally ill black man shot to death by Saginaw, Michigan, police on July 1, 2012. A camera inside one of the patrol cars shows Hall, surrounded by police, armed only with a small pen knife. He is unable to harm anyone, given that he was surrounded by seven cops and a police dog, yet they fired forty-six shots with fourteen of them striking and killing Hall.

Local prosecutors did not charge the officers and the Obama/Holder Department of Justice [did not see fit](#) to do anything either. After investigating they concluded that prosecution was not warranted. "Even if the officers were mistaken in their assessment of the threat posed by Hall, this would not establish that the officers acted willfully, or with an unlawful intent, when using deadly force against Hall. Accordingly, this tragic event does not present sufficient evidence of willful misconduct to give rise to a federal criminal prosecution of the police officers involved."

The [ACLU of Michigan](#) not only pushed for local and federal action, but has taken its protest to a new and very important level. On October 27, 2014, [Mark Fancher](#), Racial Justice Project Attorney for the ACLU of Michigan, testified before an international body regarding the federal government's refusal to prosecute Hall's "death by firing squad." The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ([IACHR](#)) is an arm of the Organization of American States. It is mandated to "promote the observance and protection of human rights in the hemisphere."

The IACHR does not have the power to punish any individual or government for Hall's killing, but the hearing had a very important purpose. ACLU of Michigan Legal Director Michael Steinberg [put it simply](#). He called the testimony "a wake-up call for the desperate need to address police misconduct against the black citizens of this country." He added, "The power behind these international tribunals is to draw attention to the problem and to put pressure

on the United States to abide by human rights principles.”

The United States must be condemned before the nations of the world. Americans should not be allowed to behave as if human rights abuses only occur in far away nations while police in this country commit murder in broad daylight without fear of punishment.

The refusal of the federal government to charge Milton Hall’s killers is a bad omen for anyone wanting to see justice done for Michael Brown. Black Agenda Report has already revealed how the Justice Department [uses media leaks](#) to claim that the “bar is too high” to prosecute the officer who shot and killed the fleeing teenager.

Obama and attorney general Eric Holder have no intention of prosecuting police murder, no matter what videos or other evidence show. Barack Obama is just not that into black people. Instead he sends Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson to pacify an angry public and fool them into thinking that black people will have reasons to hope. Sharpton and Jackson made appearances in Saginaw as they did in Ferguson, Missouri, but the presence of the two “leaders” accomplished nothing, as the Obama administration intended all along.

Rodney King finally had another day in court after the acquittal sparked an uprising in Los Angeles. Fifty three people died, millions of dollars in property was damaged and the political system was frightened. Federal prosecutors in the Bush administration charged the officers with civil rights violations. They won convictions against two of them and they later served time in prison.

Riots should not be a means of guaranteeing justice but the deck is stacked against black people who are victimized by police. If Eric Holder doesn’t prosecute Michael Brown’s killer any resulting violence ought to be called the Barack Obama Riots. President Kill List is able to make the case for punishment when it suits him. The man who claims the right to designate and kill terrorists shouldn’t be allowed to claim that there isn’t enough evidence to prosecute real criminals at home.

The ACLU of Michigan is to be commended for taking this action of exposing American injustice to the world. Just as the United States government calls for sanctions and boycotts of countries it doesn’t like, the rest of the world ought to penalize this country for the continuation of unpunished violence directed at black people. Legal cases must be made against the United States at the IAHR and with any other entity which can bring our plight to the world. Expecting Obama and Holder to act on our behalf is just a foolish dream.

Margaret Kimberley’s Freedom Rider column appears weekly in BAR, and is widely reprinted elsewhere. She maintains a frequently updated blog as well as at <http://freedomrider.blogspot.com>. Ms. Kimberley lives in New York City, and can be reached via e-Mail at [Margaret.Kimberley\(at\)BlackAgendaReport.com](mailto:Margaret.Kimberley(at)BlackAgendaReport.com).

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