“Cops kill more white people than Black people.”

There are an estimated 5.7x more white people in America than black people—so yes, by sheer numbers, white people are killed by police more. But cops don’t kill white people simply because they’re white, and Black people are killed by cops at a rate 3X higher than white people, often when unarmed. That’s a glaring inequality, and it exists because of race. And hey, consider this: the fact that police brutalize and kill people is a problem IN GENERAL, which is why we should all be against police brutality. Yes?


“The problem is Black people commit more crime.”

Correction: crimes committed by Black people are more reported, and/or over-attributed in a corrupt system that values arrest quotas. As part of gentrification, there is often a higher police presence in diverse neighborhoods than in white neighborhoods. This means there is more police surveillance in general, AND more instances of new white residents calling law enforcement on people of color for perceived misdemeanors. (Like noise complaints, “behaving suspiciously, etc.”) More “crimes” being attributed to Black and Latinx people is more reflective of excessive police presence and white people making the calls, not “proof” POC actually commit crimes more frequently.

theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/12/the-criminalization-of-gentrifying-neighborhoods/546837/}

“Well, what about Black-on-Black crime?”

We’re discussing RACISM, and Black people don’t kill each other because they’re Black, firstly. Secondly, if you compare white and Black neighborhoods with similar income levels, you see similar rates of crime. But systemic economic inequality is a factor that people forget. So if you use comparisons that put together both wealthy and upper income class neighborhoods (that are predominately white), and middle/low income neighborhoods (that have more POC), it skews the data. Poor people commit more crimes because economic insecurity leads to those crimes; it just so happens that Black people are still at an economic disadvantage because of the enduring consequences of America’s racism throughout history.

theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/apr/09/kill-clinton-black-culture-systemic-inequality-problems

“What about gun violence in Black neighborhoods like Chicago?”

The above info on economic inequality applies here too. Also, this isn’t directly related to this conversation.

“If people just followed the law, they’d be fine.”

A) Whether or not someone committed a crime does not mean they deserve to be killed. Cops are not judge, jury, and executioner. B) Innocent people have been killed for “fitting a description,” or for misdemeanors, or “by accident,” or because a cop felt like it and didn’t fear repercussions. And rarely is justice served. C) The law and the system protects white people in ways it does not protect Black people, Indigenous people, or people of color.

“White privilege isn’t real.”

Consider: Brock Turner. Also consider: white shooters are miraculously apprehended safely, yet unarmed Black people are killed with alarming frequency. Look, there’s not enough space here, but the info on this guide indicates SOME ways white privilege is real. In essence, white is seen as the default “normal”; white people often receive the benefit of the doubt in ways POC don’t because of stereotypes and lack of representation in media; and because of CENTURIES of history rooted in racism/oppression, white people have advantages and systemic power that Black people don’t.

Learn more: tolerance.org/magazine/fall-2018/what-is-white-privilege-really

“ALL LIVES” CAN’T MATTER UNTIL BLACK LIVES DO.
“Many of the people killed had criminal histories.”
That doesn’t matter and isn’t relevant in the moment when a cop is making an arrest. A past criminal record (which is often unknown!) doesn’t justify the use of excessive force or murder, especially if someone is subdued. Cops are not judge, jury, and executioner. Also, many of the cops who are killing people have prior “on the job” offenses or murders on THEIR records, yet they’re still on duty causing harm. That should be your ACTUAL point of concern.

“Why can’t they peacefully protest in a way that doesn’t disturb anyone?”
A) How do you feel about Colin Kaepernick? B) The point of protesting is to create sustained disruptions to the status quo, forcing people in power to create change. This has worked multiple times throughout history. C) The protests remain peaceful unless or until the cops deliberately use tear gas and “non-lethal” bullets (that can maim and kill).

“But the rioting and the looting!”
The majority of protests are entirely peaceful. Others are peaceful until the cops turn them into riots with tear gas and “non-lethal” bullets (that can maim and kill). That can lead to others taking advantage with chaos/looting, often detracting from the goals of the movement. “Small businesses shouldn’t be destroyed” and “there is a problem with racism and police brutality that needs to be addressed” can and MUST coincide. Don’t focus on the property loss at the expense of the repeated loss of lives that’s been occurring for years. If you allow those few instances to direct your attention away from the reasons for the protests, you’re playing right into the hands of those trying to change the topic—the media, the police, and the politicians who prefer orderly status quo to change. If you’re primarily seeing select news of property damage, but no evidence of hours of peace and repeated police violence, ask yourself WHY.

400+ instances of police violence at protests:

“How come [other race] doesn’t protest?”
X Derailing
A) They probably do, or DID, and you’re just not aware of it. B) If they did now, would you personally actually be listening to them, or dismiss them? and C) Bringing this up perpetuates the “model minority myth,” which is the idea that some minorities have achieved higher success and are “better” because they keep their heads down and work hard. It’s erasure that encourages people to not speak out against injustice, and also pits minorities against each other.
tolerance.org/magazine/what-is-the-model-minority-myth

“White people have been oppressed too!”
X Derailing
Are white people oppressed in Western societies, right now, BECAUSE OF THEIR RACE? No. Can white people be oppressed in other ways UNRELATED to their skin color, like sexuality or gender or economic status or ableism? Of course, but that’s a different conversation, and racial oppression is currently what we’re discussing.

“Well, I don’t see color.”
You may mean well by saying this, but what you’re actually doing is invalidating the experiences of anyone who isn’t white. You can’t discuss and change problems if you refuse to acknowledge they exist in the first place, nor can you support those whose skin color and cultures differ from yours. We are all human and should strive to be kind, yes. But in a society filled with microaggressions and overt racism and injustice, we are not all equal, and we must listen to each other’s experiences. We also can’t forget to value the things that make us unique or celebrate the beauty in diversity, especially when those differences are often used to perpetuate oppression. You truly need to “see color,” hear people’s different stories, and honor them by working against racism.

“ALL LIVES” CAN’T MATTER UNTIL BLACK LIVES DO.
HELPFUL REBUTTALS FOR RACIST TALKING POINTS

This isn’t meant to be comprehensive or the angles you have to take, but it’s a good starting point or reference guide for hard conversations. Feel free to share!

“Blue Lives Matter.”
Being a cop is a choice; being Black isn’t. White people can stop being cops by simply taking off their uniform for the day (or quitting) to remove themselves from danger; Black people can’t stop being Black or experiencing the repercussions of racism, hence necessary activism. Cops getting hurt or killed while on the clock is an occupational hazard they signed up for; Black people didn’t sign up for living with those real fears, and they can’t escape them.

“Not all cops brutalize and kill people.”
and/or “It’s just a few bad ones.”
The ones who DO kill and brutalize rarely face true consequences, because the system is broken. When someone says “there are no good cops,” it doesn’t mean no good person has ever become a cop. What it DOES mean is that American policing is set up as a system that doesn’t allow for what we’d expect a “good cop” to be. The supposed “good cops” are complicit in supporting a system that lets the worst of them get away with horrible things; this is called the blue wall of silence. And any cops who DO try to speak out against corruption are often punished for it; for example, read about Adrian Schoolcraft. The problem isn’t “a few bad apples,” but rather “the whole tree.”

“Why isn’t anyone talking about how many good things cops do?”
People do, all the time, in feel good stories. But it’s difficult to separate genuine “good” from what is often well-timed cop propaganda that tries to get people to stop speaking out, or delegitimizes voices for change by implying any problems are about individual cops rather than the system. Recently and frequently, cops kneeling for photo ops at protests have gone viral, but then later in the day those same cops used tear gas and violence on protesters. Also, some of the cops who go viral for “good deeds” may have a history of violence on their records. The bottom line? It’s difficult and/or harmful to praise people who are part of such a broken system that kills and harms innocent or unarmed people.

“Cops are human too. Are they just expected to do nothing while getting screamed at?”
Yeah, actually. If customer service people can take abuse, the “protectors of society” should be able to. Being a cop is a high pressure job, and they need to have the mental fortitude to not allow emotions to cloud their judgement and/or lead to violence. Things like anger management training, background checks on records of violence, mental wellness checks, etc. are the bare minimum that should be happening, but aren’t—nor would it be enough.

“So what’s the solution?”
Defunding and/or abolishing the police. Now, that sounds crazy if you’ve never heard of it before... but allow me to quote the people who know what they’re talking about. Essentially, we currently ask cops to solve too many of the world’s problems—meaning at best they’re ineffective and at worst, actively harmful. So: “We’re talking about a gradual process of strategically reallocating resources, funding, and responsibility away from police and toward community-based models of safety, support, and prevention. The people who respond to crises in our community should be the people who are best-equipped to deal with those crises. Rather than strangers armed with guns, we want to create space for more mental health service providers, social workers, victim/survivor advocates, religious leaders, etc.—all of the people who really make up the fabric of a community—to look out for one another. Crime isn’t random. Most of the time, it happens when someone has been unable to meet their basic needs through other means. By shifting money away from the police and toward services that actually meet those needs, we’ll be able to get to a place where people won’t need to rob banks.” This is just a start. See below to understand more!

Quote source & more info: mpd150.com/faq/ • Campaign for 8-Step Plan: 8toabolition.com

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