

COMMENTARY By DR. DHANPAUL NARINE

Being Black in the Wrong Place: All Lives Matter

Keith Childress, Bettie Jones, Kevin Matthews, Leroy Browning, Roy Nelson, Miguel Espinal, Nathaniel Pickett, Tiara Thomas, Cornelius Brown, Chandra Weaver... and 102 others. What do they have in common? They were Black people that were killed by the police in 2015. These killings amounted to nearly twice per week.

Here are other findings: Nearly one in three Blacks killed by the police was unarmed. A total of 37 per cent of Blacks in 2015 were killed despite the fact that they were only 13 percent of the US population. Unarmed Blacks were killed at five times the rate of unarmed whites in 2015.

What is also disturbing is the fact that, 'only 10 of the 102 cases in 2015 where an unarmed Black person was killed by police resulted in the officers being charged with a crime. The conviction of police officers occurred in only two cases.' In 2016 the number of Blacks killed by the police is so far 136 and there is still a few months remaining in the year. How many officers have gone to jail for those killings? The answer is none.

In the space of two days America watched trigger-happy cops using their weapons to gun down Blacks for no apparent reason. The first was Alton Sterling from Baton Rouge in Louisiana. The videos show Sterling being shot at close range. There is no evidence that shows Sterling reaching for a gun or having any object in his hands.

The killing of Sterling has understandably caused outrage in the Black community. Many questions were asked as to how this could happen given the publicity in the Michael Brown case only a year ago. It was also in April in 2015 that Walter Scott in North Carolina was gunned down by police for a broken taillight. Scott was shot eight times in the back. In July 2016 a tragedy took place in Minnesota

that sent shockwaves in America. It too involved a broken taillight.

When people thought it couldn't get any worse Philando Castile became the latest statistic in the growing list of police killings. The camera this time was operated by Castile's fiancé, Diamond Reynolds, and we had the surreal experi-

ling and Castile led to demonstrations in various cities across the United States. It also opened the gates of the media houses for a plethora of analysis as to why black men are killed by the police. But another tragedy was to happen in Dallas, Texas. Five police officers were killed and seven others

Obama who was on a visit abroad said that 'deep rooted biases should be rooted out.' He stated that if communities are mistrustful of the police it makes it difficult for law enforcement officers to do their job. Black lives and blue lives matter but the data show that 'black folks are more vulnerable to these kinds of incidents' Mr. Obama said.

He further added that their deaths were a 'wrenching reminder of the sacrifices that law enforcement make for the American people and when people are armed

be taken to heal the wounds? How can we as a nation bring law enforcement and minorities to listen to each other? Malik Aziz, the Deputy Chief of Police in Dallas said, 'we have devolved into separatism and we have taken our corners. Let's be honorable men and women and sit down and say that we cannot let this happen again.'

Diamond Reynolds sat in the car in which her boyfriend Castile was shot. She was heard using the word 'sir' on a number of occasions as her daughter Dae'Anna sat in the back of the car.

In fact there were times when the daughter tried to comfort her mother.

Ms. Reynolds is smart and has summed up the problem confronting America in a few sentences. She said, 'The thing that happened in Dallas, it was not because of something that transpired in Minnesota. This is bigger than Philando. This is bigger than Trayvon Martin. This is bigger than Sandra Bland. This is bigger than all of us.' Ms. Reynolds statement touches the heart of the racial divide in America in which Blacks see themselves as being discriminated against and deprived of sound education and economic opportunities.

The Mayor of Dallas Mike Rawlings has urged Americans to step up and heal the wounds. Race, he said, is complicated. A starting point might be to acknowledge the fact that all lives matter. It is a good sign that opposing groups embraced each other in the streets of Dallas.

Dr. Brian H. Williams, a Black surgeon that worked to save the police offices in Dallas said, "I don't understand why people think its okay to kill police officers. I don't understand why black men die



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in custody and they are forgotten the next day. I don't know why this has to be 'us' against 'them.' This has to stop."

President Obama spoke in Dallas and called for understanding and togetherness. The speech went down well with Americans. Mr. Obama said, 'I see people who mourn for the five officers we lost, but also weep for the families of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile. In this audience I see what's possible.' It was, however, left to the Rev. Al Sharpton to suggest concrete ways to ease the tension. According to Rev. Sharpton, 'We need proper policing in the US, not criminalization of entire groups or people or movements. We need good cops to help us root out the bad ones. And we need everyone to voice his or her outrage and discontent in a peaceful manner. Then, and only then, will the substantive reform we seek transpire.'

Rev. Sharpton wants equal protection under the law. He wants cops to live in cities and neighborhoods that they patrol. The patrols give the feeling in some communities that there is an army of occupation around and this can cause tension. In addition, he said there is need for extensive cultural and diversity training and a strong community policing program in which the local community works with precincts to help shape policy. These won't magically solve the problem but they are necessary steps.

The call to action by NBA stars Carmelo Anthony, Chris Paul, Dwayne Wade, and LeBron James was powerful. Let the healing begin!

The views expressed in this column are solely those of the writer and do not necessarily represent the views of the THE WEST INDIAN.



The Interfaith Service in Dallas attracted a wide cross-section of America. Let Peace be the watchword.

ence of having the Castile tragedy being played out live on social media.

All accounts describe Castile as an upstanding person that never had a problem with the law. He worked in the city's public school system and was helpful to the children. The president of the Minneapolis NAACP chapter is Nekim Levy-Pounds. She said, 'we're demanding accountability. We're demanding a change in our laws and policies that allow these things to happen. Too often officers are taught to shoot first and ask questions last, and that's completely unacceptable.'

The killings of Ster-

wounded in what was the deadliest incident for law enforcement since the September 11, 2001 tragedy in New York.

According to reports the killer was Micah Xavier Brown, a military veteran that opened fire in ambush style. As the nation reeled from the tragedies there were further attacks against the police. In Bristol, Tennessee, a police officer was shot and wounded; in St. Louis a police officer was shot in the back of his neck; in Valdosta Georgia, a police officer was shot by a man that placed a 911 call and there were other forms of abuse that the police has had to face.

President Barack

with powerful weapons it makes it more deadly and more tragic.' This statement opened up once again the debate on gun control.

Mr. Obama came in for criticisms for his statements. Ben Carson accused him of playing politics by injecting gun control into the tragedy. Rep. Pete Sessions, whose district includes parts of Dallas, said that these incidents occur because we are 'weak at home.' Rep. Roger Williams, also from Texas, accused Obama of contributing to the hostility by doing little to protect the police.

The question is: where do we go from here? What steps can