



## **BlackEconomics.org**

### **“Monologue on George Floyd’s Murder by Rob Robinson”**

This monologue on Georg Floyd’s murder considers the realities of the case itself, public economic aspects of the case, and anticipates steps that might be adopted to reduce violence against, and the loss of life of, Black Americans by the nation’s police force.

#### **The Case**

*He was arrested after an employee at a grocery store called police to accuse Floyd of trying to pass a counterfeit \$20 bill.*

Five or six days after the fact, I had to go to Google—accurate or not—to identify the trigger action that led to Floyd's murder. That is where we are. The media has failed persistently to provide essential facts about the case. In the end, we should ask: “Should the potential passing of a \$20 counterfeit note lead to death and, with the related butterfly-effects, the destruction of property, personal injury, and the requirement for police and National Guard services that will ultimately cost taxpayers (you and me) tens of millions of dollars—if not over one hundred million dollars?”

The family, public officials, and news pundits are speaking about justice. "I want justice for my brother!" Of course, justice is just another word for revenge. That is looking forward without looking backward. If we want to stop our fathers, brothers, uncles, and sons from being murdered by police, then we need to look backward to look forward.

What we should be clear about is that the reason Floyd was put face-down on the pavement in handcuffs was because a store clerk had enough power to get the police to come out to a Cup Foods Store on a meager \$20 matter. Black folk have got to understand that this is the problem—right there.

#### **Public Economics of the Case**

The only time I ever called the police in my life was in Houston, Texas in 1983. I had gone to Houston to link up with my girlfriend. That evening, we went out to a club. We came out of the club at about midnight, but could not find her car. We realize that the car has been stolen. I called the Houston Police Department and they say, "We don't come out for stolen cars." It was a nice car costing about \$15K, which was a sizeable sum at the time. But \$15K in stolen property of a

Black person could not get the police to come out and investigate. But today, a mere \$20 concern at a commercial establishment is sufficient to bring out four policemen to resolve a “crime.”

When an ambulance comes to your home to take your senior citizen father or mother to the hospital, you know that they are going to charge Medicare, correct? But you know Medicare is not going to pay the full amount. Therefore, you know that you will be sent a bill for the remainder. The cost of the EMS (Emergency Medical Services) truck and the salaries of the EMS first responders are paid for by you because you pay local property taxes as a homeowner. But the EMS is still going to charge you for part of the cost of the service.

You do know that Floyd paid sales taxes whenever he bought Cup store items. Do you think that, if the store clerk had disrespected him, then he could have called 9-1-1 and the police would have come out to the scene?

Now flip the switch. Cup Food Store is likely only paying sales tax, which they pass on to you, to the local government. Therefore, we should ask: “Why is the local government subsidizing Cup by providing ‘security services’?” I just looked up the Publix Foods Store Corporation, which operates mainly in the Southern US, and they had gross revenues of \$36.4 billion for 2018. Even after income taxes, Publix had \$2.4 billion in net earnings. As you know, Cup Food Store is in business to turn a profit too. Consequently, if Cup cannot acquire a machine that can verify the authenticity of a \$20 note, and hire their own security, then shame on them.

If Cup Food Store had the counterfeit detecting device, and if the bill was counterfeit, then the clerk should have simply passed the bill back to Floyd and denied the sale. End of story.

When the store clerk went on to report the “counterfeit,” then the police department should not have sent “patrol” officers out to confront Floyd. They should have called the Secret Service (SS) arm that is responsible for counterfeit enforcement. The SS arm should have come out to find out from whence Floyd obtained the \$20 note, and to ultimately arrest the counterfeit ring leaders. That is, unless Floyd produced the counterfeit currency. Last I heard, counterfeiters are using plastic. Interestingly, subsequent to Floyd’s murder, we have heard nothing about counterfeiting in Minneapolis?

An important point to note is that not a single one of the Black men killed unjustly in the last few years have been killed in the driveway of their home after police were called in response to domestic violence. To name a few: There was Michael Brown and a few Black & Mild cigarillos from Ferguson Market and Liquor Store; there was Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge and what looks like a concern about selling CDs in front of the Triple S Food Mart; there was Trevon Martin walking through the Retreat at Twin Lakes (a gated community) carrying Skittles that he had just purchased from a convenience store; and now there is George Floyd at a Cup Food Store. These Black men were all killed just outside of, or just after some transaction with, something akin to a 7-Eleven convenience store.

Again, why are local governments subsidizing these commercial establishments by providing security services?

## Steps to Reduce the Violence

The problem is that the police cannot just go around patrolling, approaching, and harassing Black people. Police must have a pretext. A traffic stop is the most often-used pretext. As far as I know, the police are making counterfeit money to give to Black men.

Black Americans have to tell government how we want it done. It is not that White men do not know how to end police brutality and the killing of Black men. However, doing so would remove the most effective control measure available to them. You do not have to be a bully to know that it is dangerous to take your foot—or your knee—off the neck of a man you have face-down on the pavement. You do not know what the man might do to you if you permit him to get to his feet.

I would like to take this time to list the following steps that should be adopted to reduce the death of, and violence against, Black Americans at the hands of police:

- Limit the interaction between the police and Black men by, for example, putting an end to police responding to calls from businesses about petty theft or selling cigarettes outside of a business.
- Limit the number of police. We do not necessarily need more Black police. We need fewer police and, of those remaining, we will end up with a higher ratio of Black officers.
- There are about 1 million police in U.S. Around 100,000 are assigned to public schools as SROs (School Resource Officers). End SROs. Eliminate police from schools. PERIOD!
- Eliminate around 400,000 other officers. Just do it by attrition. For example, just eliminate local police departments and county sheriffs operating in the same district. Consolidate the county deputies and the officers of local municipalities. Do not listen to police chiefs and sheriffs because they will not want to eliminate a single officer.
- Cull out every function not directly connected to the function of peace officer. For instance, school crossing guards are not police officers. Traffic cops are not peace officers. State highway patrol officers should perform the function of directing traffic, not what we now call police officers.
- Accompany a nationally coordinated plan to reduce the police force from 1 million to 500,000 with a change in their mission and their name from “police officer” to “peace officer.” Their entire focus should shift from so-called law enforcement to peace keeping.
- The investigative function of local police should shift to a state agency. That state function should include an arm or division known as the “arresting” or “in-custody” division.
- Every officer on the payroll right now, each one, from the chiefs on down need to undergo the most strenuous psychological evaluation possible. In the future, it needs to be almost impossible to pass this evaluation. Those officers who have been on the force for years and are “crazy,” mentally unstable, manic depressive, bipolar, whatever, need to be immediately medically retired.<sup>1</sup> You almost never hear commentators speak about this aspect of what is happening with the killing of Black men by police. Too many officers are military veterans and many of those under 40 are likely to suffer from PTSD (Post

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<sup>1</sup> “Crazy” includes those who operate using irrational racist principles. It is worth noting that in Derek Chauvin's “crazy” head, killing George Floyd over a potentially counterfeit \$20 note was worth it. Chauvin had already gone un-convicted in a case involving another killing at the hands of the police along with fellow police officers in 2006.

Traumatic Stress Disorder) from service in Afghanistan or Iraq. They are good people otherwise. Perhaps, we thank them for their service, but we must get them out from having the role of toting a gun as a major part of their job.

- Restrict peace officers from working more than eight-to-twelve hours in any single 24-hour period. (The exact number of work hours permitted should be determined by a study.) Peace officers who work excessively experience fatigue, which severely and negatively affects their ability to serve effectively. As you know, fatigue and exhaustion are highly deleterious to performance in occupations requiring highly, fine-tuned motor skills and snap decision-making. This restriction means that peace officers should be prohibited from engaging in part-time work or from operating a business during time off from duty.<sup>2</sup>

How quickly can we implement these steps? Let us give it two years and try to collapse it down from there.

Will it reduce the number of Black men killed by the police? Yes. These steps should come with that mandate. It does not require Black men to do anything. It does not require Black fathers to give their sons "the talk." The government does not need to make more affordable housing available, or close the achievement gap, or increase employment for Black men, or provide more loans for young Black men, or require more convictions of police murderers of Black men—although all of these actions should be given due consideration also.

Now policymakers can establish a national commission and spend \$52 million to produce a report in five years. However, the just-described steps represent a roadmap to getting us started and a significant way down the road to ending this scourge of police killing and 21st century lynching of Black men.

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<sup>2</sup> This restriction may necessitate an increase in current compensation to ensure that high-quality peace officers continue to be attracted to the force.