

Teaching Note

A Community Unraveled: Police Shooting in Ferguson, MO

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Critical Incident Overview

This decision critical incident describes events which took place within the community of Ferguson, MO following the shooting of an unarmed African American teenager by a White police officer that resulted in mass protests and national debates on racial inequities, police abuse of power, law enforcement militarization, and community protest. Students are asked to discuss both the police department's and officer's role in this situation, the community's response, and whether or not the department bears any responsibility for the level of protests which followed the shooting.

This decision critical incident may be applied to classes in Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management, as well as classes dealing with ethics, diversity, cultural studies and general management. This critical incident can also be applied to courses dealing with law enforcement procedure, policy and practices.

Research Methods

This critical incident was written based on information taken from publically available documents and published news articles. The names of the individuals and agencies involved have not been disguised.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this assignment, students should be able to:

1. Examine the need for transparency in releasing public information by FPD with regard to the shooting and its aftermath.
2. Develop strategies for creating positive community interactions when dealing with diverse communities
3. Review and examine FPD's responsibility to investigate and prosecute allegations of police abuse.
4. Analyze the importance of diversity in the hiring practices of FPD.

5. Analyze and discuss crisis management strategies that can be effective for use by FPD and other police agencies

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss how FPD could have better handled the release of information concerning the shooting and its aftermath. (LO 1)
2. Did FPD respond to community unrest in an effective manner? Was it too much or too little? (LO 2)
3. How should FPD prepare itself for a grand jury decision amid investigations of abuse of authority and excessive use of force? (LO 3)
4. Given the demographics of the community, why does FPD have an all White police force? Discuss the need for FPD to have a more diverse workforce. (LO 4)
5. Given their method of handling the disturbances that occurred after the shooting, what would have been an effective crisis management strategy for FPD to use? (LO 5)

Answers to Discussion Questions

1. **Discuss how FPD could have better handled the release of information concerning the shooting and its aftermath. (LO 1)**

In the immediate aftermath of the shooting, FPD clamped down and put a damper on all information concerning the cause of the shooting and, more specifically, the name of the officer involved. Police officers seemed to rally behind the “Blue Wall of Silence”, and strongly supported the actions of the officer involved in the shooting. This caused a significant amount of outrage from the community, as they wanted answers and were being provided with none (Huffington Post, 2014).

People clamored for information that would explain why an unarmed teen was shot by the police; why his body was left to lie in the street uncovered for more than four hours; and when would the officer be charged with his death. Yet, no information seemed to be forthcoming from FPD or town officials. Neither the officer, the police chief, or any other member of the police department or city administration were offering comments on the situation.

Media reporting on the incident seemed to be more informative than FPD. Interviews were reported with persons who indicated that they had observed Jackson with his hands raised when he was shot, video recordings of the aftermath, and audio recordings made by persons who said they heard the shots as they were made, were all reported in the daily news articles that appeared, not only in local publications but national media, such as CNN and Fox News, as well.

When FPD finally released the officer’s name, they also released a copy of a surveillance video from a convenience store that implied Jackson and his friend had been involved in a strong-armed robbery several minutes before the shooting. This merely inflamed the feelings of frustration and anger against the police, raising more calls of racial profiling, claims of past and continuing police misconduct and abuse, and caused more protestors to engage in heightened levels of violence and disorderly conduct. Members of the community seemed to feel that the release of the surveillance video was nothing more than an attempt to further demean Brown’s worth as a human being and victim of what they believed to be police abuse.

These issues alone indicated that FPD had likely not given proper consideration to the public relations aspects of the incident and how to properly manage them. Few activities in police-community relations are as important as those whose aim is to enhance the press and public relations of the police, and are at the core of police efficiency. Keeping the channels of information open to the public, then, is an important issue for police management (Clift, 1949).

The establishment of stronger relationships and bonds between the police and the community ultimately has a cumulative effect on the degree of trust and cooperation that is shown, and the public's acceptance of police activities and, thus, their legitimacy. This can only be accomplished by providing transparent, unbiased information which will allow the public to understand the police process and their part in that process.

So, what could have been done to make their informational process more transparent and less offensive in the eyes of the community? Daily press conferences are one likely answer. This would have afforded all the opportunity to gain relative and formative information regarding the conduct of the investigation and its current status. The use of social media technology may also have an impact in this regard. Scheduled meetings with specific core constituencies in the community may have been another response, as it is these groups (faith-based, social and fraternal organizations, local and national advocacy groups) who maintain direct and inferent contact with others in the community for the purposes of information gathering and disbursement.

These are just two of the ways that the Ferguson Police Department could have better handled their informational flow.

2. Did FPD respond to community unrest in an effective manner? Was it too much or too little? (LO 2)

Much discussion has recently been had regarding what many consider to be the over-militarization of local law enforcement agencies. In fact, in a report compiled by the American Civil Liberties Union, it has been indicated that the militarization of local police seems to encourage officers to adopt a war-like attitude and consider the people they are charged to protect and serve as enemy combatants (ACLU, 2014).

National attention has also been brought to bear on government programs which provide surplus military-grade equipment to local police departments, with numerous politicians questioning the efficacy of these programs which allow local agencies to acquire semi-automatic assault weapons, grenade launchers, mine-resistant ambush protected vehicles, and even bayonets for their use. Even the President of the United States has voiced his concern about these programs and ordered their review by his administration.

In responding to the initial protests, FPD deployed not only armored vehicles, but officers in military-type uniforms, armed with tear gas and stun grenades to bring the demonstrators into submission. This was not viewed as a positive approach to being considered as partners with the community, and seemed to spur the protestors along to commit even more acts of violence and dissent. Police attempts to control the movements of the demonstrators were also found to be impractical. In fact, a federal judge recently ruled that procedures requiring that protestors

continually keep moving rather than standing still to demonstrate were found to be unconstitutional (*Mustafa Abdullah v County of St. Louis*, 2014).

While it is not certain if any existed within the context of the Ferguson Police Department, virtually every law enforcement agency has written procedures for how to respond to public unrest and the use of force (Alpert & Dunham, 2004; Cappitelli, 2012; Trascasas & Casey-Maslen, 2014; Walker, 2007; University of Texas, 2015). It is these policies and procedures which guide the levels of response during times of crisis. Typically, most of these policies include the concepts of directed communication with protest leadership and community members.

It has been suggested that, where interactions in minority communities are concerned, police seem to be more concerned about losing control (Lipsky, 1980) than engaging in conversations with residents about neighborhood problems and making investments in existing neighborhood groups (Cortes, 1993; Glaser & Denhardt, 2010; McKnight, 1995; Stoecker, 1994). Others indicate that police may be more likely to initiate collaborative interactions in more structurally advantaged neighborhoods as well as those neighborhoods where resident participants are not necessarily representative of the neighborhood (Scott, 2002).

This type of response likely created more concern in Ferguson's predominantly African American community, as it is a well established fact that residents from areas of concentrated disadvantage have a much lower regard for police than the general public (Decker, 1985; Flanagan & Vaughn, 1996; Ruggiero & Taylor, 1997; Sampson & Bartusch, 1999). Unfortunately, it seems that in minority neighborhoods with high crime rates, police seem to offer less services to victims (Smith, 1986). It has sometimes been said that the concepts of "Protect and Serve" are only visible in predominantly White neighborhoods, while "Law and Order" initiatives are more prevalent in communities of color (Wilson & Wilson, 2014).

Thus, in the context of this incident, FPD's responses to community unrest, while certainly open to debate, were apparently too much. While the subsequent efforts of the Highway Patrol appeared to be less confrontational, these seemed to be too little and too late.

3. How should FPD prepare itself for a grand jury decision amid investigations of abuse of authority and excessive use of force? (LO 3)

Central to the issues which must be decided by the grand jury are the concepts of police abuse of authority and use of excessive force, principally deadly force. As well, there is the matter of whether race played an integral part in the decision to use deadly force.

The capacity to use deadly force is at the core of the police function (Bittner, 1970) and is viewed as a part of the organizational subculture of the police, which involves a set of understandings, beliefs, practices, and a language for talking about all problematic aspects of their work, including the shooting and killing of citizens (Waegel, 1984). It is the one unique factor that distinguishes police officers from those they are sworn to protect. However, while viewed as necessary for police officers to have the right to use it, the use of force is also the

strongest and most readily visible source for the abuse of police authority (Dunham & Alpert, 1997).

Yet several studies have indicated that police use force on an infrequent basis (Croft, 1985; Langan, Greenfeld, Smith, Durose, & Levin, 2001; McLaughlin, 1992; Reiss, 1968; Worden, 1995). And that police officers are rarely prosecuted for murder because most fatal police shootings are deemed justified by prosecutors who decline to prosecute or by grand juries that decline to return indictments (Lee, 2004).

Where race has been concerned, there is no doubt that the stereotypical face of violent crime and abhorrent behavior for many in the general public, as well as law enforcement officers, remains that of young Black men (Butler, 2004). Where criminal justice studies have considered issues pertaining to racial profiling, the use of lethal force, and criminal sentencing, such studies have indicated that race continues to influence individual decision making and behavior (Banks, Eberhardt, & Ross, 2006). However, the number of unarmed Black men killed by police between the years 2000 and 2015 (Fatal Encounters, 2015) alone gives rise to the belief that race is most certainly an issue where these incidents are involved. This is in the face of research indicating that as many as 21% of all serving police officers believe that racial profiling either exists or is condoned by their agencies (Ioimo, Tears, Meadows, Becton, & Charles, 2007).

FPD must prepare itself by considering two specific scenarios. The first will be to form an action plan in the event of a decision by the grand jury not to indict the police officer for a charge of murder, or bringing an indictment for anything less than murder. This type of decision will likely do nothing more than confirm the communities suspicions about the perceived conflict of interest on the part of the District Attorney, and add further fuel to the belief that the criminal justice system cares little about the lives of African American citizens.

However, the conflicting versions of witnesses and the seeming difficulty in nearly all jurisdictions to find police officers culpable and hold them accountable for excessive use of deadly force issues, may make this particular scenario more likely than others to occur. It is important to remember that, at this time, the officer has only been placed on paid administrative leave, a standard procedure in these types of incidents, and is presumed innocent.

The Grand Jury Chooses Not To Indict

Historically, it appears to be exceptionally difficult to indict police officers for the use of excessive force, much less to find them guilty of those charges (Bandes, 2001; Chang, 2014; Harmon, 2008, 2009; Lee & Quandt, 2014). In only two of the four more notorious excessive force cases occurring during the last two decades, that of Oscar Grant in Oakland, CA, and Abner Louima in New York, was an officer found guilty. In the other two, the now famous Rodney King case and that of Sean Bell in New York, officers were initially charged but acquitted by juries. In each of these cases, the community responded with mass protests, oftentimes violent, accompanied by vandalism, theft and personal injuries.

Consequently, FPD must prepare for this situation by attempting to mobilize sufficient numbers of personnel to deal with the expected massive numbers of protestors that will almost certainly be present. This will likely mean, because of the small size of their own force, the use of police personnel from other jurisdictions who may not be familiar with Ferguson's community or

residents, and thus have no specific stake in how the outcome of their actions may affect the community. Specific protocols and procedures should be set in place, detailing, at a minimum, the types of equipment that should be made available and how it will be used; the number of officers needed, where and how they should be deployed; the types of offenses that will be overlooked and those for which arrests must be made; areas in which protests and demonstrations may be confined to, and those which will be prohibited; access of media representatives; and the location of police command centers.

The Grand Jury Chooses to Indict

The other scenario that FPD must prepare for is the possible ruling of the grand jury to indict the officer in question. It should be understood that many in law enforcement will see this as a political gesture which panders to the calls for justice from the community, rather than a consideration of the officer's view of the exigency of the situation and his perception of the levels of personal threat that were present at the time of the shooting. This scenario may still be met with various levels of protest from the community, particularly if, after a trial, the officer is found not guilty.

In each case, FPD must formulate specific plans which deal with all possible permutations, and which take into consideration all possible community responses. They would do well to engage in early intervention procedures by meeting with community leaders, discussing their concerns, and soliciting their assistance in attempting to keep the community calm. It will be only through these measures that FPD will be successful in their plans to respond to any decision by the grand jury.

4. Given the demographics of the community, why does FPD have an all White police force? Discuss the need for FPD to have a more diverse workforce. (LO 4)

Police agencies across the country have been criticized for what has been perceived as institutionalized racism in the recruitment, retention, and promotion of Blacks and other racial minorities, with many people considering their recruiting programs to be nothing more than mere "window dressing" (Cashmore, 2002; O'Neill & Holdaway, 2007). Some have even said that current police recruitment programs do not work because of a clear lack of strategic planning in their process, out of touch marketing strategies, and a selection process which undermines effective recruitment (Deal, 2008).

Studies have also concluded that racial and ethnic minorities are still seriously under-represented in sworn law enforcement positions (Reaves, 2010; Taylor, Kubu, Fridell, Rees, Jordan, & Cheney, 2009). Recruiters are continuing to pursue unproductive recruiting strategies while hoping for different results (Johnson, 2005)

While it has been suggested by several authors that the number of minority officers currently employed may have an influence on the number of future minority hires (Warner, Steel & Lovrich, 1989; Martin, 1991; Zhao, Herbst & Lovrich, 2001), many smaller agencies, such as FPD, often find themselves at a disadvantage due to the lack of minority officers and females in their force matrix.

In many instances, it has been found that a lack of sufficient community outreach may be the cause of poor recruiting methodologies. Studies have also found that the inadequate distribution of recruiting information, inability or refusal of recruiters to take advantage of core constituencies within the community, or failure to recognize uniquely identifiable resources has been found to be the cause of some failures in police recruiting programs (Wilson, Wilson, Luthar, & Bridges, 2013). The epistemology related to recruiting for minority candidates would also seem to dictate that intense, concentrated efforts must be made towards reaching core institutions and members of communities of color (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Yosso, 2005).

Where the service of officers of color has been concerned, they have been involved in the provision of law enforcement services for more than two centuries, serving with both distinction and honor (Dulaney, 1984, 1986). In those areas where minority law enforcement officers have been employed in greater numbers, it is felt that the legitimacy of the police in the eyes of community members has been enhanced (Skogan & Frydl, 2004). It is also felt that interaction with members of the minority community has been much improved (Donohue & Levitt, 2001; Weitzer, Tuch & Skogan, 2008).

Literature also seems to suggest that African American police officers have a much greater understanding of the Black community than do their White counterparts (Decker & Smith, 1980; Dulaney, 1984; Weitzer, 2000a, 2000b). Thus providing strong benefits to their inclusion, even while this understanding seems to have little influence on their behavior towards citizens in general.

Questions remain, however, regarding the strength of police efforts to actively recruit minorities into their mix (Jordan, Fridell, Faggiani, & Kubu, 2009; Wilson, et al, 2013) And whether adequate consideration is given to core agency policies in an effort to reduce or eliminate vestiges of institutionalized racism among police ranks (Sutton, Perry, John-Baptiste & Williams, 2006).

There is no question that the profession of law enforcement has historically been dominated by White males (White, Cooper, Saunders, & Raganella, 2010), yet the mere fact that police are a central and most visible public institution within the community would seem to dictate that they retain qualified minority and ethnic personnel within their force matrices (Holdaway, 1991). The benefits accrued from more diversity in their ranks increases when citizens see that a police department has personnel who reflect a cross-section of the community. Thus generating greater confidence that police officers will understand their problems and concerns (Streit, 2001).

Agencies, such as FPD, need to make a more concerted effort to increase the levels of diversity within their ranks, thus strengthening their bonds and relationships with all segments of the community.

5. Given their method of handling the disturbances that occurred after the shooting, what would have been an effective crisis management strategy for FPD to use? (LO 5)

How the organization prepares for and handles crisis is the central issue of this incident.

All organizations need to be prepared to manage crisis situations. Crisis management is the process by which an organization deals with an unpredictable event that threatens to harm the organization, stakeholders, or the general public (Mitroff, Shrivastava, & Udwadia, 1987, p. 283). While it is impossible for any organization to predict the exact nature of a crisis, or how and when it will occur, the organization should develop a strategy for managing them more effectively. Failure to act in a proactive manner virtually guarantees that the organization will be less prepared to cope and recover from a crisis (Mitroff, et al, 1987, p. 283)

Effective crisis management should begin long before a crisis occurs. As such, the organization should establish reputational capital during non-crisis times so that it can afford to spend some or lose some capital in a crisis and still maintain a favorable post crisis reputation (Coombs & Holladay, 2006). Positive reputational assets have been linked to attracting customers, attracting employee talent, increasing job satisfaction, and generating positive media coverage. This belief is grounded in popular and practitioner writings since the academic literature offers little empirical evidence to support the perceived value of prior reputation in crisis management. Further, crisis management thinking is often viewed as anecdotal evidence to complement academic research (Coombs & Holladay, 2006).

From this perspective, organizations with a more favorable reputation prior to the crisis will suffer less and recover more quickly after the crisis. The instructor should ask the students to analyze FPD's pre-crisis reputation. At this point in the discussion, the class could analyze and discuss what the police department could have done to build a positive pre-crisis reputation. Did it appear that the strength and substance of their outreach to the community was sufficient prior to the incident?

There are four essential phases of proactive crisis management which all agencies must take into consideration. The first of these phases is Detection. This consists of the organizations early warning signs that signal an impending crisis. While no police department can predict the shooting and subsequent death of an unarmed black youth, a department can certainly be aware of how its members interact with the local community.

Preparation is the next step in the proactive crisis management model. No organization can prevent every crisis from occurring. Therefore, prevention is not the basic purpose of planning and crisis management. However, Preparation is the methods used to respond to both the reality and perception of the crisis. Preparation takes the form of safety policies, maintenance procedures, crisis audits, emergency planning and worker training.

The third step in the process is Repair. Repair represents the major structures and mechanisms the organization has in place to guide its recovery. These include emergency plans, public relations plans, and crisis management assistance.

Step Four is Assessment. At this step, the organization asks itself what it has learned from the crisis and how it can use that knowledge in the future. Here, the organization also assesses the

effectiveness of its crisis handling strategies and identifies areas in which better crisis management capabilities need to be developed.

The more the organization denies the importance of proactive crisis management planning, the more it will respond reactively to crises and “clean up” after the fact. Thus, failure to plan leaves the organization vulnerable (Mitroff, et al, 1987).

General Discussion

Prior to assigning this critical incident, the instructor should provide the students with the characteristics and issues related to police use of force, racial profiling, and a brief overview of community policing practices. Student responses may vary. The instructor may also wish to have students conduct independent research on such topics as police use of force, community policing, and crisis management. Students should be asked, initially, to respond to the following questions:

1. What levels of force used by the police should be considered as excessive, and why?
2. When community policing initiatives are emphasized, do they have an impact on the manner in which the community responds to police activity?
3. How best can organizations, such as the Ferguson Police Department, prepare for and handle crisis?

The use of force by police officers is probably one of the most inflammatory issues facing law enforcement today. Even when the use of force is not considered, professionally, to be overly excessive, questions may still arise regarding the need to use force, the type of force used, the officer’s training, departmental policy on it’s use, and the legal restraints that should be applied (Alpert & MacDonald, 2001; Harris, 2009; Klahm & Tillyer, 2010).

Legally, police use of force must fit within the limits set by the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of *Tennessee v. Garner* (*Tennessee v. Garner*, 1985). While agencies are allowed to set individual policies and procedures for when and how to use deadly force, as long as the force used is within the prescribed parameters of policy, it may be considered as being justifiable. Yet it has been reported that killings by the police have been severely under-reported (Roy, 2004).

Where the use of any level of force is considered, police officers are generally guided by training in what is known as the Use of Force Continuum, a process that defines both the level and type of force that may be used in various situations. Beginning with the least amount of force possible and ending with the use of deadly force at the extreme range of the continuum, the continuum is progressive in nature and allows officers to either escalate or de-escalate the amount of force used (Terrill, 2005; Williams, 2002). Typically, all police agencies train their personnel in the use of this continuum as a means of mitigating excessive and abusive use of force.

Government studies regarding citizen complaints of police use of force found only 8% of the more than 26,000 complaints filed with large state and local agencies to be sustained with sufficient evidence to justify disciplinary action against the subject officer (Hickman, 2006). Unfortunately, it may appear that people of color, and specifically African Americans, are overrepresented in a significantly large number of police shootings. In a joint investigation of fatal police shootings *The Chicago Reporter* found that, in ten of America’s largest cities, each with more than 1 million residents, the percentage of African Americans killed by police was at

least double their share of the city's total population (Lowenstein, 2007). This may be due, in part, to implicit bias on the part of police officers, credited with the perception that African American males are armed and dangerous (Butler, 2004).

However, in the context of this incident, an equally important factor is the levels of community cooperation, trust, and understanding that appear to be lacking where the services and personnel of FPD are concerned.

Most law enforcement agencies throughout the country practice a philosophy known as community policing. This involves consistent, open, transparent communication with core constituencies in the community, asking for and learning about their issues and concerns regarding public safety issues, responding in a manner which shows positively that police are also concerned about those issues, regardless of the makeup of the community. Community policing is a philosophy that emphasizes and promotes organizational strategies that support the use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, so as to proactively address conditions that give rise to crime, social disorder, and the fear of crime (Burns & Thomas, 2005; Painter, 1995; Peak & Glensor, 1996). In essence, it is a collaboration between police and community that identifies and solves problems, allowing all members of the community, police and citizen alike, to become active allies in efforts to enhance safety and quality of life in neighborhoods (BJA, 1994). These concepts must ultimately be built into the culture of the organization, promoted from both a top-down, bottom-up concept, and integrated into every program that the agency involves itself in.

It is the shared assumptions, values, and accepted norms of every organization that impact and define its culture, and is a key factor to organizational effectiveness (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Dennison, 1990; Zheng, Yang, & McLean, 2010).

The values and behaviors that contribute to the social environment of an organization have much to do with how it interacts with those from outside the organization. There is no doubt that the relationships between police and the community, particularly communities of color, can often be contentious. Consequently, the sharing of information between law enforcement and the public is crucial to creating safe neighborhoods and developing trust between members of society.

Additional Pedagogical Materials

For additional information, students may wish to review the information found on the following web sites:

- Community Oriented Policing Services, <http://www.cops.usdoj.gov>
- U.S. Department of Justice, <http://www.justice.gov>
- American Civil Liberties Union, <http://www.aclu.org>

Epilogue

As a result of police actions during several of the protests, a federal judge ruled that their practice of requiring protestors to continually keep moving violated their constitutional rights. A grand jury was empaneled, and after hearing testimony for nearly 30 days determined that no criminal charges would be brought against the officer involved. While the federal investigation of the shooting also determined that no criminal civil rights violations had occurred, it found what

appeared to be sweeping instances of racially biased practices being conducted by both the police department and the city court system. As a result of this report, six government officials, including the Chief of Police and the city manager, resigned from their positions.

Timeline of Events in The Michael Brown Shooting

Aug. 9, 2014: 911 call reporting a robbery at a convenience store

Aug. 9, 2014: Brown and a companion, both black, are confronted by an officer as they walk back to Brown's home from a convenience store. Brown and the officer, who is white, are involved in a scuffle, followed by gunshots. [Brown dies at the scene](#), and his body remains in the street for four hours in the summer heat. Neighbors later lash out at authorities, saying they mistreated the body.

Aug. 10, 2014: After a candlelight vigil, people protesting Brown's death smash car windows and carry away armloads of looted goods from stores. In [the first of several nights of violence](#), looters are seen making off with bags of food, toilet paper and alcohol. Some protesters stand atop police cars and taunt officers.

Aug. 11, 2014: The FBI [opens an investigation into Brown's death](#), and two men who said they saw the shooting tell reporters that Brown had his hands raised when the officer approached with his weapon and fired repeatedly. That night, police in riot gear fire tear gas and rubber bullets to try to disperse a crowd.

Aug. 12, 2014: Ferguson Police Chief Thomas Jackson [cancels plans to release the name of the officer](#) who shot Brown, citing death threats against the police department and City Hall.

Aug. 14, 2014: The Missouri Highway Patrol [takes control of security](#) in Ferguson, relieving St. Louis County and local police of their law-enforcement authority following four days of violence. The shift in command comes after images from the protests show many officers equipped with military style gear, including armored vehicles, body armor and assault rifles. In scores of photographs that circulate online, officers are seen pointing their weapons at demonstrators.

Aug. 15, 2014: Police [identify the officer who shot Brown as Darren Wilson](#), 28. They also release a video purporting to show Brown robbing a convenience store of almost \$50 worth of cigars shortly before he was killed, a move that further inflames protesters.

Aug. 16, 2014: Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon [declares a state of emergency and imposes a curfew](#) in Ferguson.

Aug. 17, 2014: Attorney General Eric Holder orders a federal medical examiner [to perform another autopsy](#) on Brown.

Aug. 18, 2014: Brown's family [releases the results of an independent autopsy](#), which determined that the teenager was shot multiple times. The same day, Nixon calls the National Guard to Ferguson to help restore order and lifts the curfew.

Aug. 19, 2014: Nixon says [he will not seek the removal](#) of St. Louis County prosecutor [Bob McCulloch](#) from the investigation into Brown's death. Some black leaders [questioned whether the prosecutor's deep family connections to police](#) would affect his ability to be impartial. McCulloch's father was a police officer who was killed in the line of duty when McCulloch was a child, and he has many relatives who work in law enforcement.

Aug. 20, 2014: [Holder visits Ferguson](#) to offer assurances about the investigation into Brown's death and to meet with investigators and Brown's family. In nearby Clayton, [a grand jury begins hearing evidence](#) to determine whether Wilson should be charged.

Aug. 21, 2014: Nixon [orders the National Guard to begin withdrawing](#) from Ferguson.

Aug. 25, 2014: [Thousands of mourners attend Brown's funeral](#). In a eulogy, cousin Eric Davis urged the crowd to go to the polls and push for change, saying the community has had "enough of the senseless killings."

Sept. 3, 2014: Nixon [lifts the state of emergency](#) in Ferguson, citing a calming of tensions.

Sept. 4, 2014: Citing the "deep mistrust" between the local residents and law enforcement officials, the Justice Department [launched a broad investigation into the practices of the Ferguson police department](#). In announcing the probe, Holder says he and his department had heard numerous concerns from people in the St. Louis suburb about [police practices, a history of mistrust and a lack of diversity](#) on the police force.

Sept. 9, 2014: Residents turn out in force for [the first Ferguson City Council meeting](#) since the Brown shooting, expressing anger at elected leaders and the police department.

Sept. 25, 2014: Ferguson Chief Tom Jackson [releases a videotaped apology](#) to Brown's family and attempts to march in solidarity with protesters, a move that backfires when [Ferguson officers scuffle with demonstrators](#) and arrest one person moments after Jackson joins the group.

Oct. 6, 2014: Chief Judge Catherine D. Perry, of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri, ruled that "The practice of requiring peaceful demonstrators and others to walk, rather than stand still, violates the constitution," and issued an injunction against the practice for peaceful, law-abiding protesters in Ferguson.

Oct. 10, 2014: Protesters from across the country descend on the St. Louis region for "[Ferguson October](#)," four days of coordinated and spontaneous protests. A weekend march and rally in downtown St. Louis draws several thousand participants.

Oct. 13, 2014: Amid a downpour, an interfaith group of clergy crosses a police barricade [on the final day of Ferguson October](#) as part of an event dubbed "Moral Monday." The protests extend beyond Ferguson to sites such as the nearby headquarters of Fortune 500 company Emerson Electric and the Edward Jones Dome in downtown St. Louis, site of a Monday Night Football game between the St. Louis Rams and the San Francisco 49ers.

Oct. 21, 2014: Nixon pledges to create an independent Ferguson Commission to examine [race relations, failing schools and other broader social and economic issues](#) in the aftermath of Brown's death.

Nov. 14, 2014: The St. Louis Post-Dispatch publishes [audio and video recordings from Aug. 9](#), including radio calls made by Wilson prior before the shooting and footage of the officer at the Ferguson police station later that day.

Nov. 16, 2014: To commemorate 100 days since Brown's death, protesters stage a "die in" in St. Louis. dozens of protesters blocked a busy intersection by lying in chalked outlines painted on the roadway

Nov. 17, 2014: The Democratic governor [declares a state of emergency](#) and activates the National Guard again ahead of a decision from a grand jury. He places the St. Louis County Police Department in charge of security in Ferguson, with orders to work as a unified command with St. Louis city police and the Missouri Highway Patrol.

Nov. 18, 2014: Nixon names 16 people to the [Ferguson Commission](#), selecting a diverse group that includes the owner of construction-supply company, two pastors, two attorneys, a university professor, a 20-year-old community activist and a police detective. Nine of its members are black. Seven are white.

Nov. 20, 2014: As anticipation grows ahead of a grand jury decision on whether Wilson should face criminal charges, Michael Brown, Sr., [releases video urging a peaceful response](#), no matter the outcome. President Obama and others also issue statements asking for calm once the grand jury finding is announced.

Nov. 25, 2014: Grand jury decides not to indict Officer Wilson, sparking further unrest in Ferguson and elsewhere

Nov. 29, 2014: Officer Wilson formally resigns from the Ferguson Police Department

Mar. 4, 2015: The United States Department of Justice delivered a scathing denunciation of the Ferguson Police Department as a revenue-generating operation that repeatedly flouted the constitutional rights of African American citizens in the community. This report outlined routine racial abuse and targeting by the police department to raise fines for the city coffers.

Mar. 11, 2015: Chief Thomas Jackson of the Ferguson Police Department resigned his position and would be paid one year of annual salary (nearly \$96,000) with health benefits, with his resignation effective March 19. Lieutenant Colonel Al Eickhoff was declared acting chief pending the hiring of a replacement.

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