

T H U R S D A Y , I

## Don's Thoughts: CitiesTake Alternate Approaches To Racial Outcry

This opinion piece comes from The Statesman.com

by Don Loucks

By now, we have all heard the names Michael Brown and Eric Garner, two black men killed by police officers.

Michael Brown was an 18 year old who stole cigars from a convenience store and roughed up its owner in the St. Louis, Mo. suburb of Ferguson last August. According to grand jury testimony and forensic evidence, Brown was confronted by a Ferguson police officer who had just received radio traffic about the robbery and spotted Brown and his pal, Dorian Johnson, walking in the street. After the officer made contact with Brown, Brown, attacked the officer in his squad car, tried to take his gun, was injured when it discharged, ran away, then turned and charged the officer, who used deadly force to stop him. The officer was no-billed by the grand jury after reviewing the evidence in the possession of the district attorney, who left the decision up to the jury.

The second, Eric Garner, attracted the ire of shopkeepers on Staten Island, N.Y., by selling "loose" cigarettes on the street in front of their shops. These cigarettes were contraband because they were smuggled in from outside of New York in order to avoid paying the insanely high taxes on them in that state. Garner was a petty criminal with over 30 arrests who had served time. Garner resisted arrest, was swarmed by police and died of complications of the hold, high blood pressure, obesity, diabetes, and a heart attack. There was a close-up, disturbing video made of that event that many, including myself, thought should have drawn an indictment against the arresting officer.

And then came the riots.

In August, there was an immediate news media frenzy in Ferguson because Brown's accomplice, Johnson, himself a petty criminal with outstanding warrants, got in front of

the cameras and errantly stated that Brown was facing away from the police officer with his hands raised and was then shot in the back multiple times. Grand jury testimony indicated that Johnson was actually hiding behind a car at the time.

Nice job, news media! That false representation cost millions of dollars in riot damage, lost businesses, lost wages, lost jobs, and lost faith in government.

Over the course of the next several months, the situation would be taken advantage of by outside agitators, communists, anarchists, and criminals bent on destroying whatever they could, especially law and order.

Communists? Upon examination of professionally printed signs handed out to "protestors," their origins were clear since they bore the different organizations' logos.

There was a major difference in the way the unrest was handled in Ferguson as compared to New York. In Ferguson, the planning for the release of the grand jury findings included a nighttime press conference, followed by a "cooling-off" period of several hours when rioters could do pretty much whatever they wanted in order to "blow off steam." What could possibly go wrong?

In New York, the police kept a tight grip on the situation, arrested lawbreakers immediately and minimized damage.

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