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WAR

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# THAT'S WAR



Sometimes Bullets Fly The Other Way

1. Amadou Diallo was shot and killed by NYPD officers in the Bronx, on February 4th, 1999. Four officers were indicted by a grand jury but quickly acquitted of all charges.

2. For example, the two officers who were killed in Las Vegas in June 2014 by Jerad and Amanda Miller. The couple was affiliated with right-wing libertarian groups such as Cop Block, and were present during the Bundy ranch standoff. On the other hand, each shooting listed above was carried out by black or brown shooters. In the cases where no suspect was identified, it often took place in predominantly black or brown neighborhoods.

An incomplete list of shootings:

December 20th: Two police officers fatally shot in Brooklyn, NY  
December 21st: A police officer was fatally shot in Tarpon Springs, FL  
December 27th: Shots fired at police officer in Durham, NC  
December 28th: Shots fired at sheriff's deputies in Dade City, FL  
December 29th: Shots fired at police officer in Los Angeles, CA  
December 29th: A shot was fired at a police officer in Statesboro, GA  
December 30th: Shots fired a sheriff's deputy in Houston, TX  
December 30th: Shots fired at a police officer in Myrtle Beach, SC  
December 31st: Shots fired at police officers in Seattle, WA  
January 1st: Shots fired at a police officer in South San Francisco, CA  
January 1st: Shots fired at a police officer in East Palo Alto, CA  
January 5th: Two police officers shot in the Bronx, NY

The cops stop you just cause you black	THAT'S WAR
Run you through the system for your prints	THAT'S WAR
When they call my hood a drug zone	THAT'S WAR
Slum lord charging you for rent	THAT'S WAR
Why they so rich and we poor	THAT'S WAR
If you young and black you sell crack	THAT'S WAR
The White House is the rock house	THAT'S WAR
George Bush coming out his mouth	THAT'S WAR
Chillin' on the corner we a 'gang'	THAT'S WAR
Po-po do the same damn thing	THAT'S WAR
When they murdered Amadou Diallo <sup>1</sup>	THAT'S WAR

Marching in the streets is a strategy of war  
Knowing self defense is a strategy of war  
Soldiers try to link with other soldiers in the war  
Revolutionaries gotta know the art of war  
- Dead Prez, 2002

In the midst of the recent revolt against white supremacy and the police across the Bay Area, some anonymous rebels cut down a freeway sign on the Interstate 580. The sign memorialized the four officers who were shot by Lovelle Mixon in East Oakland in early 2009, during another moment of rebellion after the well-known shooting of Oscar Grant.

A few days later, a black man approached a police cruiser in Brooklyn and opened fire, killing two NYPD officers. In the week afterwards, several more officers were fired upon across the United States, from Florida to California.

Before the officers shot in Brooklyn were announced dead, the state began working to capitalize off of the events. The blame was shifted to the demonstrations, and anyone that dare questioned police impunity. On the other hand, Civil Rights organizations and other participants from the Black Lives Matter protests denounced the shooting as well. Under public pressure, the moderate elements of the movement become more moderate, and attempt to reign in the radical elements, all in the name of the movement's legitimacy. Widespread anti-police sentiments are erased and replaced with a reformist agenda in an effort to distance themselves from those who would take up arms against the police.

In truth, those who have revolted against the system do bear a mild amount of responsibility for the recent shootings of police. From New York to Ferguson to Oakland, people have taken to the streets, defied the police, attacked their property and even the officers themselves with projectiles. As loosely concerted acts, they undermine the legitimacy of the police and provide a social context in which bolder self-defense measures can be taken by oppressed populations. In the cases examined here, this self-defense takes the form of shootouts with law enforcement.

In the hours after the Brooklyn shooting, the NYPD union declared that it would begin to operate as a "war-time" police department. The words shocked many, but this only serves to obscure the reality of the war being waged on a daily basis throughout the country and the world. This war is rendered invisible by how deeply it has been embedded in our everyday life, and because it is almost entirely one-sided. This war takes many forms, from being forced to pay for food and housing, to being imprisoned for even the smallest offenses. Evictions, layoffs, gang injunctions, police shootings, the list goes on and on.

When workers go on strike, or when people reclaim houses previously rendered inaccessible by private property laws, they fight back in the war. When people come together in the streets and fight the police, this is

another form of engaging in this war. The war is only noticeable, even if not perceived as a war specifically, when people fight back. So when people take up arms against the police—and not just anyone, it is less alarming to the public when white supremacists<sup>2</sup> murder police officers, which unfortunately happens more often than not—it makes this war extremely visible.

It is by rendering this war invisible that the system can maintain legitimacy. The system's tactics of warfare are normalized and internalized by eliminating or recuperating any manifestation of resistance towards them. Elimination by repression such as arrests, tear gas, and shootings. Recuperation by directing resistance into political channels such as non-profits, citizen complaints, electoral campaigns, and other compromises.

But in the last few months, resistance has been as clear as day. From New York, where people angered over Eric Garner's death have shut down traffic all over Manhattan, including the Brooklyn Bridge, to Ferguson, where they burned down dozens of buildings and police cars after the grand jury decided not to indict Darren Wilson. In the Bay Area, people took to the streets nearly every night for over two weeks, looting corporate stores, destroying police vehicles, shutting down several highways, all while defending themselves against police attacks. It is not isolated to these cities either, similar actions have taken place all over the country.

Police are not only delegitimized through other's actions however. With such a high-profile rebellion, they must reveal their true nature, even if briefly, in an attempt to eliminate it. This is why the NYPD union declares themselves a war-time police department. This is why the Police Officer Associations of SFPD, OPD and SJPD in the Bay Area announced that upholding the first amendment and protecting their officers were two conflicting interests. While risking a temporary escalation by their rhetoric, ultimately they hope this will aid them in their efforts to pacify the revolt.

Ultimately, the act of shooting police officers is a limited act of rebellion, in that it is not easily replicated by others. It remains largely a spectator sport while only a small handful of individuals carry out the shooting itself. For the most part, it also has little effect on the actual systems of policing, with the exception of New York City where officers were instructed to forgo arrests for low-level crime. But nevertheless, the fact that it is happening at all is indicative of the massive erosion of the police's public legitimacy.