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## Enough is Enough: Police Violence Plagues America



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“It is often the case that police shootings, incidents where law enforcement officers pull the trigger on civilians, are left out of the conversation on gun violence. But [a police officer shooting a civilian counts as gun violence](#). Every time an officer uses a gun against

an innocent or an unarmed person contributes to the culture of gun violence in this country.”

—Journalist Celisa Calacal

Enough is enough.

That was the refrain chanted over and over by the thousands of demonstrators who gathered to protest gun violence in America.

Enough is enough.

We need to do something about the violence that is plaguing our nation and our world.

Enough is enough.

The world would be a better place if there were fewer weapons that could kill, maim, destroy and debilitate.

Enough is enough.

On March 24, 2018, more than 200,000 young people took the time to march on Washington DC and other cities across the country to demand that their concerns about gun violence be heard.

More power to them.

I'm all for activism, especially if it motivates people who have been sitting silently on the sidelines for too long to get up and try to reclaim control over a runaway government.

Curiously, however, although these young activists were vocal in calling for gun control legislation that requires stricter background checks and limits the kinds of weapons being bought and sold by members of the public, they were remarkably silent about the gun violence perpetrated by their own government.

Enough is enough.

Why is no one taking aim at the U.S. government as the greatest purveyor of violence in American society and around the world?

The systemic violence being perpetrated by agents of the government has done more collective harm to the American people and our liberties than any single act of terror or mass shooting.

Violence has become our government's calling card, starting at the top and trickling down, from the more than 80,000 SWAT team raids carried out every year on unsuspecting Americans by heavily armed, black-garbed commandos and the increasingly rapid militarization of local police forces across the country to the drone killings used to target insurgents.

Enough is enough.

The government even exports violence worldwide, with weapons being America's most profitable export.

Indeed, the day before thousands of demonstrators descended on Washington DC [to protest mass shootings](#) such as the one that took place at Stoneman Douglas High School, President Trump signed into law a colossal [\\$1.3 trillion spending bill that gives the military the biggest boost in spending](#) in more than a decade.

Ironic, isn't it?

Here we have thousands of passionate protesters raging, crying and shouting about the need to restrict average Americans from being able to purchase and own military-style weapons, all the while the U.S. government—the same government under Trump, Obama, Bush, Clinton and beyond that continues to act as a shill and a shield for the military industrial complex—embarks on a taxpayer-funded death march that will put even more guns into circulation, and no one says a thing about it.

Why is that?

Why does the government get a free pass?

With [more than \\$700 billion earmarked for the military](#), including \$144.3 billion for new military equipment, you can expect a whole lot more endless wars, drone strikes, bombing campaigns, civilian deaths, costly military installations, and fat paychecks for private military contractors who know exactly how to inflate invoices and take the American taxpayers for a ride.

Enough is enough.

You can be sure this financial windfall for America's military empire will be used to expand the police state here at home, putting more militarized guns and weapons into the hands of local police and government bureaucrats who have been trained to shoot first and ask questions later.

There are now reportedly [more bureaucratic \(non-military\) government civilians armed with high-tech, deadly weapons than U.S. Marines](#).

While Americans have to jump through an increasing number of hoops in order to own a gun, the [government is arming its own civilian employees to the hilt](#) with guns, ammunition and military-style equipment, authorizing them to make arrests, and training them in military tactics.

Among the [agencies being supplied with night-vision equipment, body armor, hollow-point bullets, shotguns, drones, assault rifles and LP gas cannons](#) are the Smithsonian, U.S. Mint, Health and Human Services, IRS, FDA, Small Business Administration, Social

Security Administration, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Education Department, Energy Department, Bureau of Engraving and Printing and an assortment of public universities.

Seriously, [why do IRS agents need AR-15 rifles?](#)

Enough is enough.

Remember, it was just a few months ago that President Trump, aided and abetted by his trusty Department of Justice henchman Jeff Sessions, [rolled back restrictions on the government's military recycling program](#) to the delight of the nation's powerful police unions.

Under the auspices of this military "recycling" program, which was instituted decades ago and allows local police agencies to acquire military-grade weaponry and equipment, more than [\\$4.2 billion worth of equipment has been transferred](#) from the Defense Department to domestic police agencies since 1990.

Ironically, while [gun critics continue to clamor for bans on military-style assault weapons,](#) high-capacity magazines and armor-piercing bullets, expanded background checks, and tougher gun-trafficking laws, the U.S. military boasts all of these and more, including some weapons the rest of the world doesn't have.

In the hands of government agents, whether they are members of the military, law enforcement or some other government agency, these weapons have become routine parts of America's day-to-day life, a byproduct of the rapid militarization of law enforcement over the past several decades.

Over the course of 30 years, police officers in jack boots holding assault rifles have become fairly common in small town communities across the country. As investigative journalists Andrew Becker and G.W. Schulz reveal, "Many police, including beat cops, now routinely carry assault rifles. Combined with body armor and other apparel, [many officers look more and more like combat troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.](#)"

Although these federal programs that [allow the military to "gift" battlefield-appropriate weapons, vehicles and equipment to domestic police departments](#) at taxpayer expense are being sold to communities as a benefit, the real purpose is to keep the defense industry churning out profits, bring police departments in line with the military, and establish a standing army.

It's a militarized approach to make-work programs, except in this case, instead of unnecessary busy work to keep people employed, communities across America are being inundated with unnecessary drones, tanks, grenade launchers and other military equipment

better suited to the battlefield in order to fatten the bank accounts of the military industrial complex.

Thanks to Trump, this transformation of America into a battlefield is only going to get worse.

Get ready for more militarized police.

More police shootings.

More SWAT team raids.

More violence in a culture already drenched with violence.

Enough is enough.

You want to talk about gun violence?

According to the *Washington Post*, “[1 in 13 people killed by guns are killed by police.](#)”

While it still technically remains legal for the average citizen to *own* a firearm in America, possessing one can now get you [pulled over](#), [searched](#), [arrested](#), subjected to all manner of [surveillance](#), [treated as a suspect](#) without ever having committed a crime, [shot at](#) and killed by police.

You don't even have to have a gun or a look-alike gun, [such as a BB gun](#), in your possession to be singled out and killed by police.

There are countless incidents that happen every day in which Americans are shot, stripped, searched, choked, beaten and tasered by police for little more than daring to frown, smile, question, or challenge an order.

Growing numbers of unarmed people are being shot and killed for just standing a certain way, or moving a certain way, or holding something—anything—that police could misinterpret to be a gun, or igniting some trigger-centric fear in a police officer's mind that has nothing to do with an actual threat to their safety.

Enough is enough.

With [alarming regularity](#), unarmed men, women, children and even pets are being gunned down by twitchy, hyper-sensitive, easily-spooked police officers who shoot first and ask questions later, and all the government does is shrug and promise to do better.

**Killed for standing in a “shooting stance.”** In California, police opened fire on and killed a mentally challenged—unarmed—black man within minutes of arriving on the scene, allegedly because he removed a vape smoking device from his pocket and [took a “shooting stance.”](#)

**Killed for holding a cell phone.** Police in Arizona shot a man who was running away from U.S. Marshals after he refused to drop an object that [turned out to be a cellphone.](#)

Similarly, police in Sacramento fired 20 shots at an unarmed, 22-year-old black man who was standing in his grandparents' backyard after mistaking his cellphone for a gun.

**Killed for carrying a baseball bat.** Responding to a domestic disturbance call, Chicago police shot and killed 19-year-old college student Quintonio LeGrier who had reportedly been experiencing mental health problems and was carrying a baseball bat around the apartment where he and his father lived.

**Killed for opening the front door.** Bettie Jones, who lived on the floor below LeGrier, was also fatally shot—this time, accidentally—when she attempted to open the front door for police.

**Killed for running towards police with a metal spoon.** In Alabama, police shot and killed a 50-year-old man who reportedly charged a police officer while holding “a large metal spoon in a threatening manner.”

**Killed for running while holding a tree branch.** Georgia police shot and killed a 47-year-old man wearing only shorts and tennis shoes who, when first encountered, was sitting in the woods against a tree, only to start running towards police holding a stick in an “aggressive manner.”

**Killed for crawling around naked.** Atlanta police shot and killed an unarmed man who was reported to have been “acting deranged, knocking on doors, crawling around on the ground naked.” Police fired two shots at the man after he reportedly started running towards them.

**Killed for wearing dark pants and a basketball jersey.** Donnell Thompson, a mentally disabled 27-year-old described as gentle and shy, was shot and killed after police—searching for a carjacking suspect reportedly wearing similar clothing—encountered him lying motionless in a neighborhood yard. Police “only” opened fire with an M4 rifle after Thompson first failed to respond to their flash bang grenades and then started running after being hit by foam bullets.

**Killed for driving while deaf.** In North Carolina, a state trooper shot and killed 29-year-old Daniel K. Harris—who was deaf—after Harris initially failed to pull over during a traffic stop.

**Killed for being homeless.** Los Angeles police shot an unarmed homeless man after he failed to stop riding his bicycle and then proceeded to run from police.

**Killed for brandishing a shoehorn.** John Wrana, a 95-year-old World War II veteran, lived in an assisted living center, used a walker to get around, and was shot and killed by

police who [mistook the shoehorn in his hand for a 2-foot-long machete](#) and fired multiple beanbag rounds from a shotgun at close range.

**Killed for having your car break down on the road.** Terence Crutcher, unarmed and black, was shot and killed by Oklahoma police after his car broke down on the side of the road. Crutcher was [shot in the back while walking towards his car with his hands up](#).

**Killed for holding a garden hose.** California police were ordered to pay \$6.5 million after they [opened fire on a man holding a garden hose](#), believing it to be a gun. Douglas Zerby was shot 12 times and pronounced dead on the scene.

**Killed for calling 911.** Justine Damond, a 40-year-old yoga instructor, was [shot and killed by Minneapolis police](#), allegedly because they were startled by a loud noise in the vicinity just as she approached their patrol car. Damond, clad in pajamas, had called 911 to report a possible assault in her neighborhood.

**Killed for looking for a parking spot.** Richard Ferretti, a 52-year-old chef, was [shot and killed by Philadelphia police](#) who had been alerted to investigate a purple Dodge Caravan that was driving “suspiciously” through the neighborhood.

**Shot seven times for peeing outdoors.** Eighteen-year-old Keivon Young was [shot seven times by police from behind while urinating outdoors](#). Young was just zipping up his pants when he heard a commotion behind him and then found himself struck by a hail of bullets from two undercover cops. Allegedly officers mistook Young—5’4,” 135 lbs., and guilty of nothing more than taking a leak outdoors—for a 6’ tall, 200 lb. murder suspect whom they later apprehended. Young was charged with felony resisting arrest and two counts of assaulting a peace officer.

This is what passes for policing in America today, folks, and it’s only getting worse.

In every one of these scenarios, police *could* have resorted to less lethal tactics.

They *could* have acted with reason and calculation instead of reacting with a killer instinct.

They *could* have attempted to de-escalate and defuse whatever perceived “threat” caused them to fear for their lives enough to react with lethal force.

That police instead chose to fatally resolve these encounters by using their guns on fellow citizens speaks volumes about what is wrong with policing in America today, where police officers are being dressed in the trappings of war, drilled in the deadly art of combat, and trained to look upon “every individual they interact with as an armed threat and [every situation as a deadly force encounter in the making](#).”

Remember, to a hammer, all the world looks like a nail.

We’re not just getting hammered, however.

We're getting killed, execution-style.

Enough is enough.

When you train police to shoot first and ask questions later—whether it's a family pet, a child with a toy gun, or an old man with a cane—they're going to shoot to kill.

This is the fallout from teaching police to assume the worst-case scenario and react with fear to anything that poses the slightest threat (imagined or real).

This is what comes from teaching police to view themselves as soldiers on a battlefield and those they're supposed to serve as enemy combatants.

This is the end result of a lopsided criminal justice system that fails to hold the government and its agents accountable for misconduct.

You want to save lives?

Start by doing something to save the lives of your fellow citizens who are being gunned down every day by police who are trained to shoot first and ask questions later.

You want to cry about the lives lost during mass shootings?

Cry about the lives lost as a result of the violence being perpetrated by the U.S. government here at home and abroad.

If gun control activists really want the country to reconsider its relationship with guns and violence, then it needs to start with a serious discussion about the role our government has played and continues to play in contributing to the culture of violence.

If the American people are being called on to scale back on *their* weapons, then as I make clear in my book *[Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#)*, the government and its cohorts—the police, the various government agencies that are now armed to the hilt, the military, the defense contractors, etc.—need to do the same.

It's time to put an end to the government's reign of terror.

Enough is enough.