

THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS

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November 20, 2015

AGENDA

- Welcome and Introductions
- Brief Historical Overview
- Clinical and Teaching Examples
- Questions and Answers
- Closing

INTRODUCTIONS

A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW



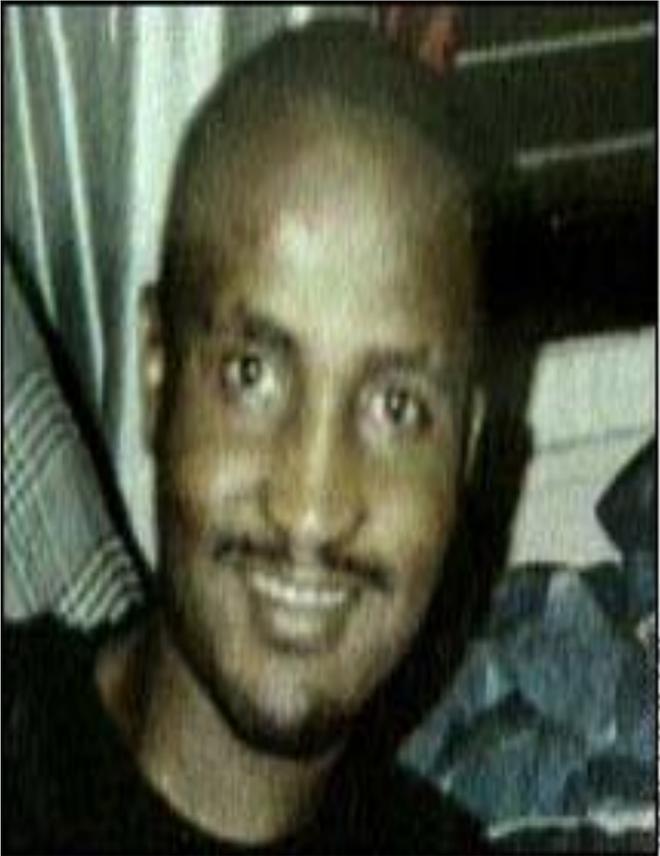
Image from: <http://gawker.com>

RODNEY KING (26 YEARS OLD)



- On March 3, 1991, King was beaten (but not killed) by LAPD officers after a high speed car chase. *King was unarmed.*
- The beating was one of the first that was videotaped and widely televised.
- Four officers were charged with assault and excessive force but acquitted.
- The acquittal triggered the LA riots.
- A subsequent federal indictment resulted in two officers being found guilty and imprisoned and the other two acquitted.

AMADOU DIALLO (22 YEARS OLD)



- An street vendor from West Africa, was shot 19 times by NYPD officers on February 4, 1999. They fired 41 bullets.
- The officers said they thought he was holding a gun; it turned out to be a wallet. *Diallo was unarmed.*
- Officers were charged with second degree murder and reckless endangerment.
- All were found not guilty.

OSCAR GRANT (23 YEARS OLD)



- Fatally shot by police officer in Oakland, CA in the early morning hours of New Year's Day 2009.
- Officers restrained Grant, who was lying face down and allegedly resisting arrest.
- According to witnesses, the police officer who shot Grant said: "Get back, I'm gonna taser him." Then he drew his gun and shot Grant once in the back with an actual gun.

VICTOR STEEN (17 YEARS OLD)



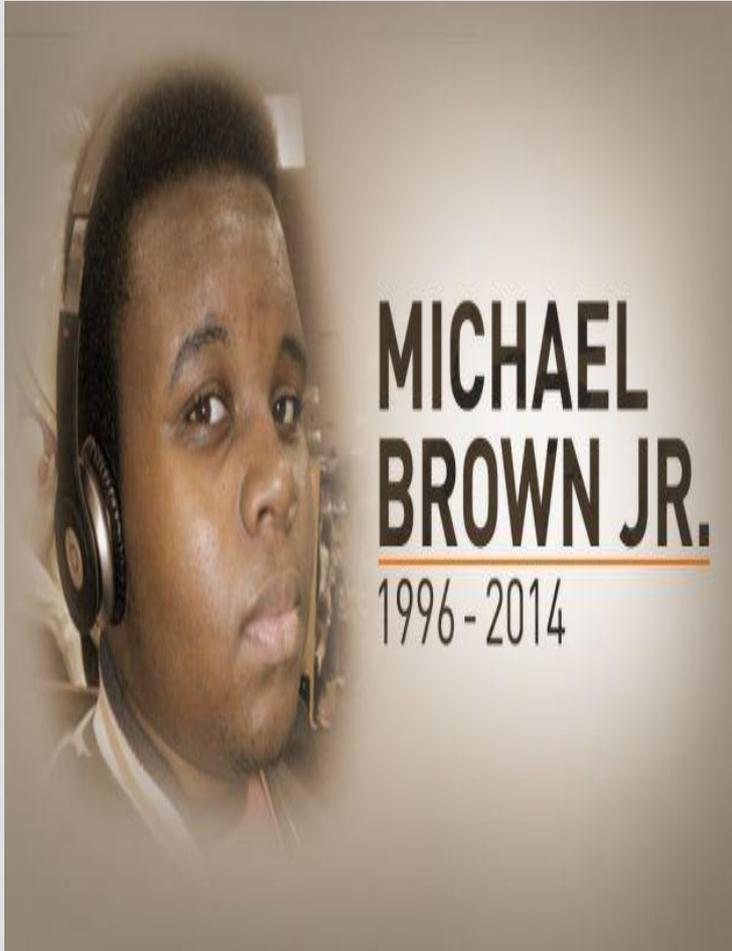
- On Oct. 3, 2009, Steen was pursued on his bike by a police officer in a cruiser in Pensacola, FL.
- Steen was unarmed but under suspicion of being on a construction site after hours.
- When he refused to stop, the officer aimed his Taser out the driver's window and fired. The boy fell off the bike and the cruiser ran over him, killing him.
- Victor was the fourth person who died in Florida in 2009 in an incident in which a Taser was used.
- No criminal charges were filed (ruled an accident) but the city settled out of court for \$500,000.

TRAYVON MARTIN (17 YEARS OLD)



- On February 26, 2012, Trayvon was shot and killed while en route from a convenience store in his family's neighborhood.
- Trayvon's killer (Zimmerman), a neighborhood watch captain, called the police to report Trayvon, as a "suspicious person".
- Zimmerman was told by the police to not to confront Trayvon. He ignored this warning.
- Zimmerman was charged with second degree murder and manslaughter but acquitted of both charges using the "stand your ground" defense.
- This **inspired the "Black Lives Matter" movement.**

MICHAEL BROWN, JR. (18 YEARS OLD)



- Killed 8/9/14 in Ferguson, MO by Officer Darren Wilson.
- Brown had stolen from a convenience store. Wilson and Brown struggled through his car window until Wilson's gun fired.
- Brown, who was unarmed, fled while Wilson pursued. He turned toward Wilson.
- Witnesses disagree about whether Brown had his hands up or whether he acted in a threatening manner.
- Wilson shot 6 times killing Brown.
- The death resulted in protests for more than a week.
- Wilson claimed that he felt threatened. On 11/24/14 a grand jury decided not to indict him.
- On 3/4/15 a U.S. Dept. of Justice Hearing cleared Wilson of civil rights violations and judged that Wilson acted in self-defense.

ERIC GARNER (43 YEARS OLD)



- Killed July 17, 2014 in Staten Island, NY.
- Approached on suspicion of selling single cigarettes illegally.
- Since 1980, he had been arrested 30 times on charges such as assault, resisting arrest, selling unlicensed cigarettes. He filed a complaint about how he was treated by police.
- He denied selling cigarettes on this occasion and complained about being harassed – so he was arrested.
- While being arrested he repeated, “**I Can’t Breathe**” 11 times.
- Medical examiner concluded that an illegal chokehold was partially responsible for his death and thus *ruled the death a homicide*.
- The key officer involved had been sued twice before for false arrest and abuse including strip searching Black men. On December 3rd, 2014 a grand jury decided not to indict any police officer for homicide.

FREDDIE GRAY (25 YEARS OLD)



- Died on 4/19/15 in Baltimore, MD after suffering spinal injuries during arrest on 4/12.
- Police claim he had an illegal switchblade.
- Investigation showed that he fell into a coma in the police van and was not secured properly.
- Violent protests occurred in Baltimore on 4/25 including burning of a CVS store.
- On 5/1 six officers were charged with crimes ranging from second degree murder to illegal arrest (claiming that the officers did not have probable cause for the arrest).
- On May 21st a grand jury indicted the officers on most charges except illegal arrest but added reckless endangerment

WALTER SCOTT (50 YEARS OLD)



- Shot in the back April 4, 2015 in South Carolina.
- Stopped for a broken tail light, fled on foot (apparently to avoid arrest for unpaid child support), apparent tussle over the officer's taser.
- June 8th, 2015: Officer Michael Slager indicted for murder.

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI- COLUMBIA



- Lloyd Gaines denied admission to the law school (1936) because he was Black. Won Supreme Court appeal but vanished at age 28.
- MU paid out-of-state tuition to stop Black enrollment.
- First Black student in 1950.
- MU closed departments that employed Black faculty.
- Numerous racial incidents were documented in a 2004 report.
- Student protests including hunger strike and notable threatened football boycott led to the resignation of the MU President.

INTERSECTIONS WITH
PRACTICE AND TEACHING

IMPACT: IN TEACHING

- College campuses are historical and contemporary sites of protest and dialog around issues of race and racial injustice
- Questions arise about how to contain and whether to address current events with students, and if so, how?
- When is it appropriate?
- Who has the right?
- Individual vs. Institutional responses

IN THE CLASSROOM

- Who is an “expert”?
- Solidarity
- Support
- Tolerance
- Managing Different Reactions

IMPACT: IN PRACTICE

- Both ethnic majority and minority clients may present with their reactions to police violence
 - Expressing Emotions:
 - Fatigue
 - Fear
 - Sense of feeling overwhelmed
 - Angry
 - Hopeless
 - Helpless
 - Confused
 - Raising Questions:
 - Will justice be served?
 - Is this an “epidemic”?
 - Is this *really* racism?
 - Is this being blown out of proportion?

IN PRACTICE

- Michael
 - “doesn’t make sense”
 - “it’s not fair”
- Patrick
 - “is it reasonable for people to be angry at me?”
 - “I am not responsible”
- Sara
 - “too much”
- FRUSTRATION
- RESIGNATION