The 'Institutional Racism' Canard

By ANDREW C. MCCARTHY | June 3, 2020 2:57 PM

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Protesters gather in the Manhattan borough of New York,, June 2, 2020. (Jeenah Moon/Reuters)

It bears no resemblance to reality — not in police forces, and not in America.

ABOUT twice as many white people as black people are killed by police. In fact, in about 75 percent of police

shootings, the decedent is not black. Of course, that is not what you would grasp from consuming media.

Take the website statista.com, specifically its breathless focus on "Hate crime in the United States" — counterfactually insinuating that any shooting involving a black victim must be a "hate crime." Here's their big headline from Tuesday: "Black Americans 2.5X More Likely Than Whites to Be Killed By Police."

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It is fiction. It is sheer demagoguery, peddled as American cities are besieged by rioters in the wake of George Floyd's killing by Minneapolis police. The falsity of the claim is demonstrated even by statista.com itself. Just three days ago, the site posted another series of bar graphs, showing that,

in fact, whites are nearly twice as likely as blacks to be shot to death by police. Here are the numbers:

Year	White	Black
2017	457	223
2018	399	209
2019	370	235
2020 (so far)	42	31

The rest of the bar graphs break out the numbers of Hispanic decedents (slightly lower than black, significantly lower than white), as well as those whose heritage is described as "other" and unknown.

Right underneath its chart, statista.com writes, "Sadly, the trend of fatal police shootings in the United States seems only to be increasing." In point of fact, it is steady — and if I wanted to play games like statista.com does, by, say, weighting the numbers to account for population growth while ignoring all other relevant factors, I could even pretend that the number was decreasing. The *Washington Post* acknowledges that fatal shootings by police have run steadily at around 1,000 per year

since 2015 — 995 (2015), 963 (2016), 987 (2017), 998 (2018), and 1,004 (2019).

As Heather Mac Donald relates in an insightful *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, blacks make up only a quarter of the total number of people killed in police shootings annually, a ratio that has held steady since 2015. The reigning canard, however, is that this 25 percent figure proves racism since African Americans make up just 13 percent of the U.S. population.

Ridiculous as this syllogism is (as we'll see, it conveniently elides more consequential factors), it still puts the lie to the slanderous narrative that police are hunting down black men. Even if we ignore the fact that an increasing number of police officers — obviously including those involved in encounters with black suspects — are themselves African Americans, the percentage of black deaths from police shootings would be much higher if blacks were being targeted.

Police do not go looking for people to shoot. In shooting situations, police are confronting crime suspects, the majority of whom are armed. But given that George

Floyd was unarmed, let's consider unarmed people killed in such encounters. Such unarmed decedents, too, were twice as likely to be white as black in 2019 — i.e., 19 unarmed whites, nine unarmed blacks. As Ms. Mac Donald observes, this ratio is not stable (and there is some looseness in what the media define as "unarmed"): In 2015, it was 38 unarmed blacks to 32 unarmed whites.

The Floyd killing has been injected into the *bien pensant* narrative of innocent, unarmed black men murdered by cops. But the number of unarmed black men killed by police is vanishingly small. As Mac Donald notes, there were 7,407 black homicide victims in the United States in 2018, the last year for which final numbers are available. Assuming a comparable number in 2019, the nine unarmed men killed in police shootings would represent just 0.1 percent of black homicides.

In stark contrast, she asserts, "a police officer is 18½ times more likely to be killed by a black male than an unarmed black male is to be killed by a police officer."

The media, the bipartisan political class, the

academy, and the commentariat concoct their "systemic," "institutional," "unconscious" racism fiction by statistical tunnel vision: We must conclude that African Americans — in particular, young black men — are being targeted by police because the percentage of killings of blacks significantly overrepresents the black population. It makes no sense, however, to look only at the percentage of blacks involved in police shootings, as if it were the only attribute that mattered — as if it were the only attribute by which blacks are overrepresented compared to their percentage of the overall population.

While African Americans are involved in two times more police shootings than their percentage of the population would seem to warrant, they commit 53 percent of murders and 60 percent of robberies — well over *four times* their percentage of the population. The political establishment would have you assume this statistical disparity is caused by institutional racism that myopically beams police attention onto black men. But we know the statistics accurately reflect reality *because crimes get reported by victims* — a large percentage of whom are black (also

outstripping their share of the overall population).

If you just focus on interracial crime, though, Mac Donald (writing this time in the *City Journal*) has crunched those numbers. "Between 2012 and 2015, blacks committed 85.5 percent of all black-white interracial violent victimizations." This, she qualifies, excludes interracial homicide. *Powerline*'s Paul Mirengoff fills in that blank: "Blacks commit around 70 percent of black-white interracial homicides." For this, he draws on FBI crime statistics for 2016. They show that, of 776 black–white homicides, blacks committed 533 and whites 243. Neither of these numbers, by the way, nor their combined total, comes anywhere close to the number of blacks killed by blacks: a staggering 2,570 — the overwhelming majority male.

The most dangerous threat to the African-American community in America is not cops. It is liberals. The United States is not institutionally racist. The political system, the criminal-justice system, and academe overflow with political progressives. The notion that they would tolerate racism in their institutions would be laughable if

sensible people were encouraged to think about it rather than mindlessly accept it. Nor could we conceivably be "unconsciously" racist. Let's put aside that to *discriminate* is to choose, and that, where it exists, racial discrimination is a conscious state of mind. The reality is that our institutions of opinion are so obsessively racialist, no one in America has the luxury of being unconscious about racism.

The African-American community is not a monolith. Like other segments of the American population, it is diverse and dynamic. The policies pushed by progressives damage the parts of it that need the most help. And the false narrative of racist police, which pressures law enforcement to back off from the communities most victimized by crime, is now destroying entire cities.

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