

I Will Not Share Videos Of Police Officers Killing Black People

I do not need to view an unarmed Black man being gunned down by a police officer to know it is wrong.

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#TerenceCrutcher. The minute I saw this hashtag trending on Facebook and Twitter, I felt an all too familiar fear. Black people only become hashtags for one reason. As I willed myself to search the name on Google, painful headlines confirmed the fear I had. My body began to beat to the blues of knowing another unarmed, innocent Black life had been lost at the hands of a cop.

As I kept searching the name, I noticed multiple links baiting me to watch the video of his murder. I ignored every one of them. I did not watch his video. I did not tell others to watch it. I did not - cannot- participate in what I believe to be the consumption of black death.

I do not watch or share videos of Black individuals being killed because I believe that they increase our being desensitized to Black death. Every time a Black person is killed on camera, media outlets blare these videos on their airwaves for society's careless consumption. From looping videos of Eric Garner wheezing "I can't breathe" to grainy images of young Tamir Rice shot dead on a playground – Black life gets reduced to snippets of death, "shared" and viewed with the click of a button.

I do not negate the need for witnesses when a crime occurs, but I oppose the careless display of Black victims and Black death. Body cameras and cell phones provide important means to evidence crime, but there is no need for these visuals to circulate to in mass media. When other violent crimes are reported on video, they are not shown to American public in between commercial breaks. Why is our death so easily consumed?



Terence Crutcher, right, with his sister Tiffany.

Demeaning disseminations of death seem reserved only for Black victims. White victims rarely have their deaths broadcast to the whole world. Doing a Google search of "video of unarmed black man shot by cops" brings up more than twice the amount of results as doing a Google search of "video of unarmed white man shot by the cops."

With the exception of Dylan Noble, most white victims of police brutality do not have their murders go viral. Black victims do not get that privilege. Along with Crutcher, Rice and Garner, the deaths of Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, Walter Scott, John Crawford, Antonio Martin, and others have ridden the airwaves onto televisions, smartphones, and computers around the country and around the world. Black lives, both living and dead, matter. To offer careless replays of Black people dying is, at minimum, disrespectful and at worse pornographic.

Has the widespread release of these videos created substantial progress towards holding cops accountable for murders for Black people? No. Have these videos helped bolster ratings for networks that often paint Black victims with dangerously racist narratives? Yes. Philando Castile's girlfriend live streamed his death in order to help procure justice for

her late boyfriend, but unfortunately the cop who murdered him is still walking free. Despite her intentions, all that was accomplished was a spectacle of his death. Justice for him remains far from reach.

If you choose to watch or share the Terence Crutcher or Keith Scott video, that is your choice. I encourage you and any others so inclined to think critically about what such “sharing” accomplishes. Many people talk about the need to showcase how brutal police officers can be and how innocent Crutcher or Scott were, but exactly why is a video of them being slaughtered necessary to make that point across? Why is it that Black innocence must be justified in such a demeaning manner?

I do not need to watch a video of a rape to know that it is wrong. I do not need to view a video of a bombing to know it is wrong. I do not need to view an unarmed Black man being gunned down by a police officer to know it is wrong.

When you talk about Terence Crutcher, or any victim of police brutality, please remember to make his humanity a central part of your conversation. If you must show pictures of him – use respectful images. Show him singing in his choir. Show him with his children. Show him studying the music he loved so much. Do not show pictures of him lying dead on the ground. Show him enjoying the life so unfairly and abruptly snatched from him.

Far from just a body lying dead on a digital screen, Terence Crutcher stands as a testament to the costs of police brutality and an example of just how fatal racism can be for Black people. He is also so much more than a hashtag. Crutcher is a human. Like Scott, Rice, Castile, and so many others, he mattered and continues to matter. His life was beautiful, and so, too, should be our sacred memory of him. Even in his untimely death we must treat him and his name and life with the respect both deserve.



Terence Crutcher, left, with his father Joey Crutcher.