

# THE CALL FOR A PEOPLES TRIBUNAL AGAINST POLICE REPRESSION AND VIOLENCE

Recent events, the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, of John Crawford III at a Walmart in Beavercreek, Ohio and Eric Garner on Staten Island in New York and the subsequent non indictments by a grand jury process manipulated by the prosecution, have stoked the anger of oppressed communities, workers and students across the country.

A movement has risen in response, not just in the areas where the police killings occurred, though the uprising in Ferguson, Missouri may indeed be considered the spark that ignited a fire that spread to many major cities and smaller localities, but places that had not seen demonstrations and militant actions in a generation in response to civil police injustice primarily youth, taking bold initiative to address what many see as an epidemic—the killing of Black men and women by law enforcement and security personnel with impunity.

Many are, rightfully so, likening the rash of killings of Black people by police, security guards and white men acting on a perceived threat imposed by a youth because of the color of their skin as similar to the period from slavery up until the modern Civil Rights movement when the lynching of Black people was common place.

A report by the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement in 2013, titled, Operation Ghetto Storm: 2012 Annual Report on the Extrajudicial Killing of 313 Black People, that the rate of the killings averages out to one every 28 hours.

This is not a new phenomenon, nor is it necessarily confined to the Black community. It is part of a continual war, on and off, covert and overt, against communities of color, especially, Black, Latino/a and Indigenous, that have faced great historical oppression, from genocide and theft of land to slavery, U.S. apartheid and the current conditions of police terror, mass incarceration, inadequate access and other systemic abuses. Between the mass incarcerations and mass deportations of immigrants, an entire generation of oppressed people, especially youth are terrorized by the judicial system in one way or another. As Michelle Alexander writes: “More black men are in prison today than were enslaved in 1850.” The political structure has failed to address the rampant killings and non-fatal police terror **carried out with impunity**. It has also by enacting so-called quality of life ordinances such as Broken Windows policing and stop and frisk given police the legal right to occupy and profile people of color in and outside their neighborhoods.

Activists and protesters have also been scapegoated, targeted and subject to preemptive arrest, at the behest of local politicians in coordination with state and federal authorities in some cases.

The people demand justice and at best there has been merely lip service paid or attempts at coopting the just anger and action of a movement bravely led by young people of color.

It must always be remembered though, that justice has always been won by determined action. As Frederick Douglass stated, “Power concedes nothing without demand. Never has and never will.”

In that spirit, the Peoples Power Assembly movement would like to propose a Peoples Tribunal to begin to raise the ire, further mobilize communities and give a voice to many who have felt unheard by the powers that be. This tribunal can help give a voice to the working class, especially low-wage workers, migrant workers, and other sectors who are repressed by police while organizing for a living wage and better working conditions.

The tribunal could provide:

- a Peoples Court
  - hear real testimony from victims and their families
  - collect data and present it to a panel of judges
  - provide video, audio and written evidence
  - address the root of the problem as the capitalist system which inherently and systematically promotes racism, exploitation and war
- workshops and panels
- will discuss proposals of actions and demands such as “Disarm the Police”, “Dismantle the Police” to expose them as nothing more than parasites and strike breakers.
- give tools for monitoring police
- give know your rights trainings

## PROPOSED DATES & VENUES:

- A commission of inquiry to hear testimony, etc on Saturday March 21 at the St. Peters Church on Lexington and 53<sup>rd</sup>
- Closing verdict and rally presented by victims of police brutality and others Thursday, April 2 at the National Black Theatre in Harlem