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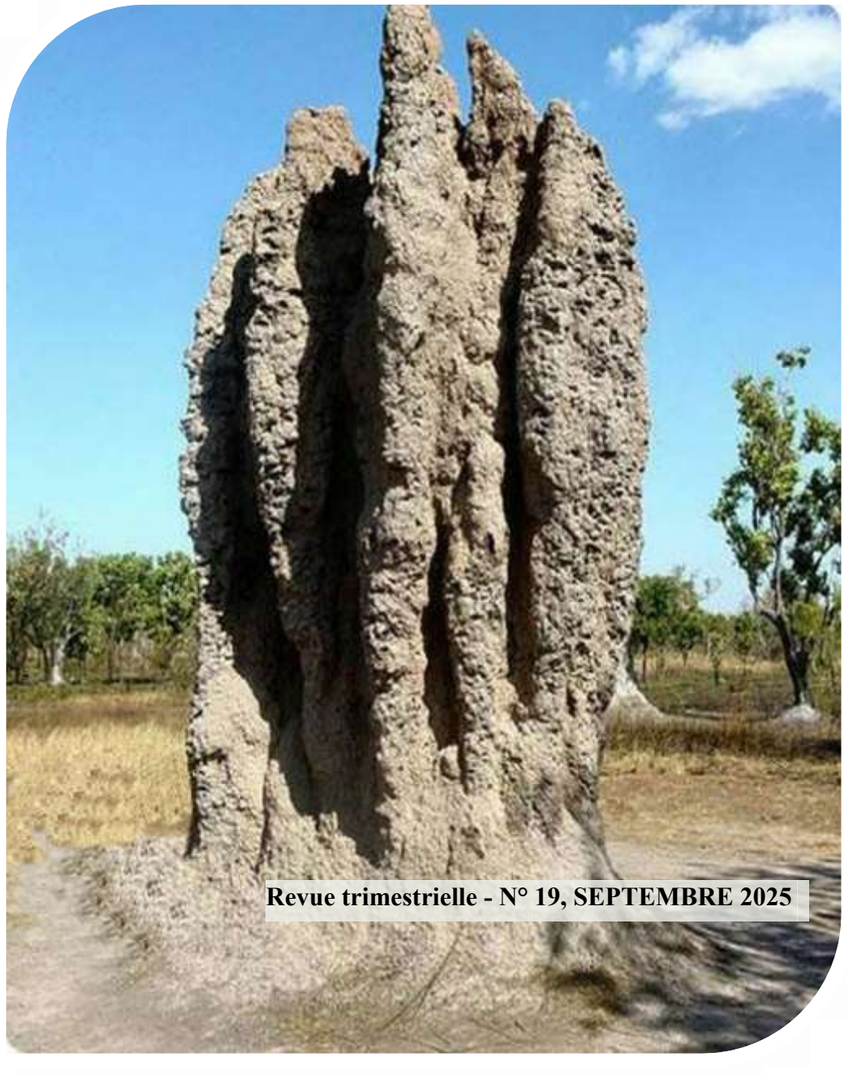

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"Dama Ninao" est une revue scientifique interdisciplinaire qui accepte et publie tous les articles relevant des Lettres, Arts et Sciences Humaines. A cet effet, elle s'intéresse aux études et théories littéraires, linguistiques, sociologiques, philosophiques, anthropologiques et historico-géographiques. La Revue "Dama Ninao", entendu "L'Entente" en langue kabyè du Nord Togo, est créée dans l'intention de matérialiser la mondialisation ou la globalisation qui s'opère avec l'esprit d'équipe et d'échanges et la désuétude du monde autarcique. Le monde scientifique universitaire ne peut échapper à cet esprit d'équipe qui fonde un creuset où « le fer aiguise le fer », les échanges se croisent, puis s'entremêlent pour aboutir à une reconstruction des connaissances scientifiques individuelles dans la collectivité.

La Revue Dama Ninao nous renvoie à la Civilisation de l'Universel du poète sénégalais Léopold Sédar Senghor, qui prône la porosité des âmes avec l'acceptation de l'autre, de ce qu'il dispose d'utile pour mon avancement : sa civilisation, sa culture, sa langue … Elle se fonde notamment sur la philosophie de Paul Ricœur qui préconise la perception de Soi-même comme un autre. Considérer soi-même comme un autre aux yeux de l'autre, nous amènerait à faire taire nos distensions et ressentiments afin de redimensionner notre espace, reconstruire notre histoire et notre société.

La Revue Dama Ninao s'est inspirée de la nature. Des insectes en miniature nous produisent de bels chefs-d'œuvre architecturaux, conjuguent leur génie créateur et leur force dans la patience et dans la tolérance. Ils créent des œuvres monumentales qui dépassent l'entendement humain, les termitières. A cet effet, la nature semble nous parler, nous guider, nous instruire dans le silence. Seules ces créations nous interpellent sans autant faire de nous des disciples. Comme la termitière qui, pour la plupart du temps, est une composante de maillons surgissant de la même matière, la Revue Dama Ninao se veut une termitière scientifique dont les enseignants-chercheurs en sont les maillons.

Au confluent de diverses sciences, la Revue Dama Ninao se propose de promouvoir la recherche scientifique et universitaire en impulsant le dialogue interdisciplinaire, le dialogue entre divers champs disciplinaires et divers contributeurs du monde universitaire.

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LIGNE EDITORIALE DE LA REVUE DAMA NINAO

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La taille des articles

Volume : 10 à 15 pages ; interligne 1.5, police 12 pour le corps du texte et les courtes citations ; police 11 pour les longues citations, Times New Roman, les références des citations doivent être incorporées dans le texte. Exemple : Guy Rocher (1968, p. 29), pas de référence en foot-notes à l'exception de quelques commentaires.

Ordre logique du texte

- Un **TITRE** en caractère d'imprimerie et en gras. Le titre ne doit pas être trop long ;

- **Nom et prénom(s)** du contributeur ou des contributeurs, **nom de l'institution** d'appartenance, **adresse mail**

- Un **Résumé (Abstract)** de 8 lignes en français et anglais, en interligne simple, suivi de 6 **Mots clés** (**Key words**)

- Une **Introduction** : elle doit avoir une problématique, une méthode et une structure.

- Un **Développement** : les articulations du développement du texte doivent-être titrées comme suit :

1-Pour le **Titre** de la première section

1-1-Pour le **Titre** de la première sous-section

1-2- Pour le **Titre** de la deuxième sous-section

2- Pour le **Titre** de la deuxième section

2-1-Pour le **Titre** de la première sous-section

2-2- Pour le **Titre** de la deuxième sous-section

3- Pour le **Titre** de la troisième section (si l'auteur de l'article le souhaite)

-Une **Conclusion :** elle doit être courte, précise et concise en mettant en relief l'authenticité des résultats de la recherche.

- **Références bibliographiques** (Mentionner uniquement les auteurs cités)

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- BERGER Gaston, 1967, *L'homme moderne et son éducation*, Paris, PUF.

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En cas d'utilisation des tableaux, ceux-ci doivent être numérotés en chiffre romains selon l'ordre de leur apparition dans le texte. Ils doivent comporter un titre précis et une source. Les schémas et illustrations doivent être numérotés en chiffres arabes selon l'ordre de leur apparition dans le texte.

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Objectifs et portée

La revue Dama Ninao, de par son nom qui signifie « entente », a pour objectifs :

- de matérialiser le monde universitaire qui est un creuset où « le fer aiguise le fer », les échanges se croisent, puis s'entremêlent pour aboutir à une reconstruction des connaissances scientifiques individuelles dans la collectivité ;
- de promouvoir la recherche scientifique et universitaire en impulsant le dialogue interdisciplinaire, le dialogue entre divers champs disciplinaires et divers contributeurs du monde universitaire.

La revue Dama Ninao a une portée scientifique et sociale. A cet effet, elle publie tous les articles relevant des Lettres, Arts et Sciences Humaines et s'intéresse aux études et théories littéraires, linguistiques, sociologiques, philosophiques, anthropologiques et historico-géographiques sur appel à contribution thématique (colloque) ou varia. Elle est un espace de rencontre, de construction et de reconstruction des réseaux relationnels et scientifiques.

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Revue Dama Ninao

BEYOND THE UNIFORM: STRUCTURAL FORCES DRIVING POLICE BRUTALITY IN THE U.S.

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Abstract: Several factors contribute to the spread of police brutality against minority ethnic and racial groups in the U.S., including systemic, social, and cultural aspects. This paper analyzes police brutality from a global perspective, considering both the direct and indirect actors involved. The documentary research, the analytical approach, and the use of Critical Race Theory facilitate an understanding of how various actors within the system contribute to the perpetuation of police brutality. Its findings identify three key levels of implication related to police brutality: the state-sponsored violence, the Criminal Justice System's implication, and the mainstream society's role in letting police brutality spread in the USA.

Keywords: police brutality, minority ethnic groups, racial groups, criminal justice system, state-sponsored violence**.**

Résumé: Plusieurs facteurs contribuent à la propagation de la violence policière à l'encontre des groupes ethniques et raciaux minoritaires aux États-Unis, y compris les aspects systémiques et socio-culturels. Cet article analyse la violence policière sous un angle plus global, tenant compte des acteurs directs et indirects impliqués. La recherche documentaire, l'approche analytique et l'application de la Théorie Critique de la Race permettent de comprendre comment plusieurs acteurs au sein du système contribuent à maintenir la violence policière. Ses résultats montrent trois niveaux d'implication dans la violence policière : la violence d'état, le rôle du système pénal et de la société dominante dans la propagation de la violence policière aux États-Unis.

Mots-clés : brutalité policière, groupes ethniques minoritaires, groupes raciaux, système de justice pénale, violence d'État.

Introduction

Referring to police brutality, A. Walker (2010, p 580) thinks it "is one of the most serious, enduring, and divisive human rights violations in the United States." He continues to say, "The problem is nationwide, and its nature is institutionalized." Police brutality is carried out by police officers, referred to as rotten apples, but individual officers cannot be strong enough to perpetuate such a controversial and combated phenomenon. Undoubtedly, they are directly or indirectly supported by public institutions, as Walker (2010) explains. Seen from this perspective, police brutality may be attributable to the incriminated police officers and to the institutions they belong to. This view is limited and contrasted in the light of all that surrounds police brutality in the U.S., by just defining the causes of police brutality to implicit bias, racism, and the blue wall of silence.

For O. Brooks (2020, p. 240), "Police officers are legally permitted to use force, and their superiors and the public expect them to do so". Taking from his citation, the law, the institution of police, and public opinion endorse police violence; they normalize it through their moral acceptance. This moral caution is also supported by Baldwin (1962), quoted by J. Nelson (2001), who thinks that the only way to police the African American community is by being oppressive. This broader and more diversified view of police brutality provides an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Police officers are just the forefront actors, the only ones who are seen when brutality occurs. However, police brutality is the product of a social system that is insensitive and immune to the sufferings of African Americans and other minorities. This article examines the underlying causes and origins of police brutality.

This study is conducted through documentary research, using an analytical approach to process the data. It employs Critical Race Theory, an intellectual and social movement that aims to highlight the relationships between race and ethnicity as social constructs, as well as the influence of social and political laws and mass media. It is meant to allow an in-depth understanding of how the whole system works to protect against police brutality, and how police brutality is used to target racial minorities at the social, political, and economic levels. Developed by legal scholars such as Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, Allan Freeman, and Mari Matsuda, among others, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, this theory posits that race is a social construct rather than a biological feature. Their objective is to understand how social, judicial, and economic systems produce racism. They also intend to fight colorblindness and promote racial equality and justice. The objectives of the CRT connect with the objective of this research, which aims to understand the system of production and perpetuation of police brutality, as part of the larger system of racism that affects racial and ethnic minority groups.

To achieve the goal of this study, the following questions are put forth for the research:

What is the role of the State in the manifestation of police brutality?

How does the criminal justice system contribute to maintaining police brutality?

Why is the mainstream society silent in front of increasing police violence?

The State, the criminal justice system, and the mainstream community are also responsible for producing police brutality for the various roles they play in the manifestation of this phenomenon. As suggested by Brooks (2020, p. 241), “The country as a whole sets stereotypes as well as biases against black Americans which inevitably leads to social misinterpretation of the safety of Americans when a black person is present”. The paper focuses on three main points: state violence and police brutality, the role of the criminal justice system, and the complicit silence of the

general public. The first part discusses the causes and the consequences of state violence in the United States. The second one emphasizes the role of police officers and federal agents on the one hand, and the role of lawyers and judges on the other hand. The last one explores the political pressure and community acceptance. It equally analyzes the role of media portrayal in public perception of violence.

1. State Violence and Police Brutality

Violence is part of life, and even if some measures, including legal barriers, aim to stop it, it always occurs. The issue with state violence is that, although no violence is acceptable or commendable, this form of violence is worse. Generally, when violence occurs, state and local governments are compelled to use all means to respond to or prevent it. In addressing violence, P. Stewart & A. Strathern (2002, p. 1) highlight the complexity of the concept: "Violence. A term written, seen, and heard everywhere on a daily basis. A problem seen as perennial and escalating. A kind of action imputed to both anarchists and to state authorities." Unfortunately, there are critical moments in the United States when all resources are deployed, including military forces, police officers, paramilitary groups, and even the National Guard, against groups of people. This usually results in the use of force, intimidation, oppression, and other forms of physical and psychological violence.

1.1. Causes of State Violence

State violence can stem from various factors, including economic and political reasons. First, State violence can be initiated to ensure the political authorities' desire to control the economy and property. During slavery in America, some rules were made to maintain slaves and their descendants in poverty, denying them the right to property and ownership. Slaves, their families, and everything they pretended to own belonged to their masters. This philosophy of the politicians and leaders of that moment aligned with their desire to own everything, nothing for the others. When there was a need, the patrollers were used to restore authority and the rule of law through excessive violence. In the antebellum South, the Black Codes were initiated and enforced by the governments in order to maintain white supremacy in all

domains, especially by preventing the newly freed men from achieving economic success. Concerning the Black Codes, G. Stewart (1997, p. 2259) made the following comment:

> The Black Codes, which thrived in the South during Andrew Johnson's 'Presidential Reconstruction' of the United States, 6 1 epitomized the region's dogged efforts to retain control of its black labor population, despite that group's nominal change in status from slaves to freedmen. Designed to force the freed slaves to work for their former masters, the Black Codes relied upon broadly defined vagrancy statutes as the central mechanism for regulating the black workforce.63 Under this system of socioeconomic domination, the prospect of being arrested and charged with vagrancy deterred black laborers from leaving their former masters' plantations.

This era was followed by the Jim Crow era, during which African Americans were kept in social injustice, according to the will of the politicians at that time. By preventing African Americans from benefiting from the same opportunities as Whites, the States desired to exclude them from the global dynamic that was underway. The jobs, the positions, and the occupations were limited for Black people during the Jim Crow Laws. It is also important to notice that, by denying African Americans the right to equal education, the Federal Government contributed to limiting their competencies and their chances of getting well-paid jobs, which hindered their economic advancement. Once again, the U.S. police and, sometimes, the Federal Troops, were used to maintain Black Americans in a situation of economic deprivation.

Second, state violence can take the form of political repression, meant to uphold control, eliminate dissent, or even intimidate protestors or marchers. Also labelled as political violence, it was largely used starting from the Civil Rights Movement (1960s-1970s) to the present. Political activism and social militancy have always been met with violent repression and bad connotations from the mainstream media, which plays the role of propaganda. Following the Jim Crow Laws, enacted by White politicians to protect the economic and political interests of Southerners, African Americans found it necessary to unite their forces and stand together, as the only means to resist and to fight this legal discrimination. Under the leadership of

African American figures such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Rosa Parks, and Booker T. Washington, African Americans created and led significant historical movements. Some key movements that went down in history rose under their leadership and through coordinated efforts. The March on Washington, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and the Selma Marches are among the most significant protest movements that occurred during the Civil Rights Movement. Altogether, the three movements, and the other great movements, were meant to protest against the political and economic injustice faced by African Americans in the post slavery America. Unfortunately, some movements, especially the Selma Marches, were met with political resistance; the local police repressed more than six hundred peaceful marchers on the first and second attempts to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Referred to as Bloody Sunday, this event marks the refusal of White America to give a plot of political recognition to African Americans in a land of freedom and equality; it was a political opposition to African Americans' access to the vote. George Wallace, Alabama's Governor at the time of the incident, had vowed to perpetuate segregation, which led him to become a prominent political figure. Unwilling to see his reputation challenged by Martin Luther King, he gave orders to repress the Civil Rights movement. According to S. Otfinoski (2018, p. 9), "… Dallas County Sheriff Jim Clark had responded to the civil rights activists. They had beaten the demonstrators with clubs and sent electric shocks through them with cattle prods." The political implications of state violence have always prevailed over the economic and social aspects.

1.2. Consequences of State Violence

State violence implies physical and psychological violence, with unprecedented consequences on both individuals and communities. Aligning with its causes, state violence has negative consequences on the political life and the economic development of African Americans in the United States of America, apart from the physical and visible trauma associated with torture and other forms of abuse.

Firstly, state violence can bring about economic instability within a community, especially if the reason for this violence is mainly financial. As a reminder, the March on Washington was framed as the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, indicating that it was partly motivated by economic concerns. Equal employment rates were at the center of the speeches pronounced that day; it was the core reason for the march, coupled with the demand for a minimum wage for African American workers. Repressing protests and marches with economic goals amounts to promoting poverty and precarity for the mostly disadvantaged people. Like police brutality, state violence, by means of incarceration, injury, or stigma, makes African Americans unable to work and makes some lose their jobs. Consequently, disability from work, reduced employability due to criminal records, and the expenses on medical and legal fees plunge African Americans into long-term and intergenerational poverty. At the community level, state violence kills the local economy in various ways. As black communities are constantly under surveillance, over policing, and military crackdowns, they are confronted with disinvestments, loss of property values, brain drain, and their corollaries like poor employment rate and poor taxes. The way state violence affects individuals and communities in the African American context also affects the global economic dynamic of the whole nation. Based on citizens' relationship to their country, in comparison with humans' relationship to their society, it is essential to say that social interactions are crucial in building a stronger community. On a broader scale, the community here may refer to the country, and the social interactions may refer to the racial relations between White and Black people. According to A. Hossain & K. Ali (2014, p. 2), "Social relationships invariably possess a physical element, which takes the form of awareness of another's presence, common objective or common interests." There should be a common objective, combating poverty at the national level, and a shared interest in developing the national economy. Otherwise, African Americans will always constitute the nightmare that will disturb the peaceful sleep of privileged White people in the United States of America.

Secondly, state violence has some important political implications, which is why it is also called political violence. In this specific context, it does not target political opponents, but it targets politically disadvantaged Black people in America. Our social life is shaped by policies, which are often motivated by underlying political ideologies and orientations. Civil rights movements in general face backlashes, labelled as political backlashes from white politicians for various, well-known reasons. Specifically, the Civil Rights Movement (1960s-1970s) met with strong resistance, with the killing of its key leaders, including Martin Luther King, due to the political ambitions of their leaders. One of the most significant movements, the Selma Marches, which led to the nation's most significant political victory, ended in a bloody Sunday. Asking for African Americans' rights to vote was too demanding in the 1960s, and Martin Luther King knew that, but it was worth the effort. At first glance, when the state governments resort to violence, they lose their legitimacy in the face of marginalized people, especially when it is unjustified. The authority becomes weak, carrying with it, local institutions such as the police and judicial power. According to M. Suchman (1995, p. 574), "Legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions." In politics, social legitimacy is better than legal authority, because when there is a loss of social legitimacy, the authority becomes a dead letter. On a second scale, state violence can cause political polarization, with the radicalization of the oppressed groups. This is one of the reasons Malcolm X led more radicalized movements and criticized the inclusive approaches adopted by Booker T. Washington and Martin Luther King. Political radicalism and racialization in politics are the direct consequences of the political violence, considered by white politicians as a way to keep African Americans out of political life. Unsurprisingly, political violence against Black people in the United States was central to the emergence of resistance movements: The Black Panther Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Black Lives Matter movement. The rise of these movements, stemming from historical state violence, contributed significantly to the political empowerment of

African Americans and had a profound impact on the nation's political life. Now, the Black community constitutes a robust and influential political force that shapes the national discourse and informs policy. Nowadays, the African Americans' cause is advocated by both Republicans and Democrats, depending on the political atmosphere and the public discourse about racism in the field.

2. Role of the Criminal Justice System

The complexity of police brutality lies in some important variables, and its manifestations encompass several domains of life, including the criminal justice system. In the U.S., the criminal justice system is a network of institutions, processes, and laws that operate at both the federal and state levels to maintain order, enforce the law, and deliver justice. Key actors, including police officers, federal agents, judges, and lawyers, are responsible for investigating incidents, collecting evidence, arresting suspects, passing sentences, and promoting justice for all citizens according to the legal principles codified in the 4th, 8th, and 14th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. Considering police brutality, the role of the criminal justice system is such that any failure of its actors is harmful to people who rely on it.

2.1. Role of Police Officers and Federal Agents

By definition, police brutality is referred to as the use of excessive and unwarranted force by law enforcement agents, targeting citizens (L. Moore 2025). The role of police officers and federal agents is clearly visible in the definition of police violence; they are the first actors operating when brutality occurs.

On the one hand, police officers are the primary agents on the ground in terms of law enforcement. Based on their roles within the police institution, which include patrolling neighborhoods, responding to emergency calls, investigating crimes, making arrests, and maintaining community policing, their actions are more visible and prevalent in the field. As they work at the local and State levels, they are the only ones who regularly interact with civilians for various reasons and purposes. Several factors contribute to police misconduct, including cultural aspects and a lack of

accountability. First, within police departments, the unspoken solidarity and the blue wall of silence are two cultures that cover up bad officers and, in the same way, encourage misconduct. By refusing to report bad apples, police departments incubate the germs of brutality and injustice inside their institutions. Second, the policies governing police brutality are made to protect police officers from guilt, liability, and prosecution. Qualified immunity is one of the policies that pave the way for police brutality by making it impossible to sue police officers and their departments in court and by protecting them from personal liability. Finally, racial and implicit bias are some dangerous factors that lead police officers to exert violence on unarmed Black individuals in a disproportionate way. As explained by Spencer et al. (2016, p. 53), "When we think about or encounter someone from a group, the stereotypes of that group come to mind automatically…". In the same way, White officers have bad memories when they come across African Americans, mostly stereotyped as criminals, which brings them to react violently.

On the other hand, federal agents are entrusted with specific missions concerning police brutality. They conduct special investigations and operate across multiple States, sometimes requiring collaboration with local police departments. Split across several agencies, like the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), the U.S. Marshals Service, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Homeland Security Investigation (HSI), and the Secret Service, federal agents work under the authority of the federal government and mostly deal with matters of violation of federal laws and national crimes. Apart from the Department of Justice (DOJ), which works to enforce civil rights, the other departments, like DEA, ICE, ATF, and HIS, are actively contributing to police brutality in various ways. First of all, the FBI played a crucial role during the Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO), which it launched in the 1950s-1960s. This program aimed to dismantle civil rights organizations, like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating

Committee (SNCC), and the Black Panther Party (BPP). The civil rights leaders at that time were harassed, and some of them were killed: Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and Fred Hampton, who was killed in an FBI-coordinated raid in 1969. Secondly, the DEA was used as a legal instrument to target African Americans in the so-called war on drugs declared by President Nixon. According to J. Fellner (2009, p.261), "Race has been and remains inextricably involved in drug law enforcement, shaping the public perception of and response to the drug problem." Federal agents play quite different roles, but still contribute to maintaining brutality all over the United States of America.

2.2. Role of Judges and Lawyers

In the criminal justice system, judges and lawyers are key actors who play distinct but complementary roles in securing justice and legal services to citizens. Their roles are crucial to the criminal justice system and of paramount importance in the lives of citizens, due to their expertise in the law and their mastery of the legal requirements in various life situations. That is why D. Smith (2024, p. 279) comments that, "The integrity of the American legal system rests on the shoulders of the judiciary. For this reason, every jurisdiction in the United States has enacted a rigorous set of regulations on judicial conduct that are strictly enforced." He also recognizes that their roles are incompatible. In their respective functions, each trade contributes to fueling police brutality.

On the one hand, judges, through the interpretation of the law, are responsible for shaping police brutality by several means. Basically, judges are neutral arbiters who are vested with the power to preside over court proceedings to ensure the rule of law. Through neutrality and impartiality, they must interpret the law, oversee trials, make rulings, and issue verdicts in cases of police brutality involving White police officers and African American civilians. Unfortunately, things often go the wrong way, and judges may not be neutral or impartial. First, they are criticized for being tolerant and lenient regarding some aggressive practices by police officers. This attitude, which is comparable to a laissez-faire, encourages the use of unlawful

methods by law enforcement and denies protection against unwarranted or excessive use of force. Second, judges are likely to uphold qualified immunity during legal proceedings, which protects police officers from personal liability and accountability. However, they are not prompt to testify that the victims' constitutional rights were violated, always referring to the probable cause. Finally, the phenomenon of institutional bias is prevalent in the U.S. judicial system. Courts are taunted with institutional favoritism, forcing them to resort to dismissals or even leniency, even if evidence of misconduct is shown. In the face of these breaches in the judicial system, it is essential to question the quality of the judges in the United States. According to R. Leflar (1959, p. 305), "The quality of our judges is the quality of our justice." If police brutality may be hidden, protected, or even favored by judges, it means that they are corrupt and unprofessional. Like police officers, they must adhere to their primary duty and be able to transcend their own biases and racial preconceptions.

Conversely, White lawyers can directly or indirectly contribute to reinforcing police brutality in the U.S. This is part of their role, advocating for clients regardless of their own beliefs. Some lawyers do specialize in Civil Rights and police brutality cases, but not all dedicate their careers to defending victims. Given the complexity of their profession, R. Gordon (2019, p. 177) states, "In no profession is the gulf greater between ideals and practices than it is for lawyers." The issue Gordon raises is that lawyers must zealously serve their clients. First, police unions have their own lawyers who represent accused officers in lawsuits. Their duty, as lawyers, is to use all available means to defend their clients, including blocking investigations, appealing disciplinary decisions, and exploiting procedural loopholes to dismiss cases. Second, police unions have influential legal teams that shape and maintain protective laws. They use their bargaining power to lobby legislators, draft strong collective bargaining agreements to secure ongoing protective measures, and limit civilian oversight. Finally, lawyers may resort to unfair tactics to attack complainants. Through prolonged settlements or victim-blaming techniques, they can exhaust victims emotionally and financially. Lawyers' intervention in these processes can

block legal procedures, shield officers, and undermine the rule of law. If lawyers focused more on upholding the rule of law rather than defending their clients at any cost, the outcomes might improve, offering more protection for African Americans. Even though some recognize the need to protect African Americans in lawsuits against white officers, poverty within Black communities complicates matters. At times, paying attorney and court fees falls on dedicated lawyers willing to help African Americans without charge.

3. Complicit Silence of Public Opinion

Borrowing from P. Butler (2022, p. 28), “What white Americans have never fully understood, but what the Negro can never forget, is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it.” Butler points out the role of white institutions in creating challenging conditions for African Americans; it ultimately underlines the crucial role of society in condoning injustice against Black people, including police brutality. It exists because society tolerates its existence, allows it to be, and normalizes it. By normalizing violence against minorities, White people gave moral caution and legitimacy to police officers to operate in various illegal and illegitimate ways.

3.1. Political Pressure and Community Acceptance

Historically, politicians in the United States tend to follow the prevailing mood of their public. Republicans are well-reputed for their law-and-order policies, which often compel them to always adopt or promise to adopt strong policing policies to appease their constituencies. Democrats, on the opposite side, are historically tolerant of repressive policies and tend to be favorable to police reforms for better accountability. All these tendencies, although evident, may vary depending on the wave of the moment.

On one side, radical politicians are the first proponents and advocates of police brutality in the United States. Following political interests and electoral advantages,

politicians push laws and policies that enforce policing and empower police officers. This may not come out of common interest, but the reality is that politicians do not have fixed convictions. Firstly, enforcing laws that protect police officers and police unions is a sure way to cherish these powerful people and their union. The recent case in history was the public support of Donald J. Trump's candidacy by police unions, both in 2016 and 2024. This support was motivated by the radical discourse held by Donald Trump and his opposition to police reforms. Secondly, by resisting reforms that weaken police officers' authority, political leaders and parties seek support from trade unions and individual police officers who view these reforms as a threat. Meanwhile, they encourage reforms, like Qualified Immunity, to be made to the benefit of the police institution. As suggested by D. Sklansky (2022, p. 23), "successful reform requires broad public support." Politicians understood that and used political pressure to initiate reforms that aligned with their personal beliefs. By increasing the protection of police officers against accountability and liability, politicians confirm their acceptance of violence and any form of abuse. Finally, another sure way for political leaders to support and promote police brutality is to increase law enforcement budgets to the detriment of other social sectors like healthcare and education. At this level, nothing matters but the political interests of the candidates or the parties. Most of them know the reality about police brutality and the importance of implementing clear and strong legislation, but this cannot be done in a divided political context, where all the means are good and acceptable.

On the other side, there is the population. They do not have the power to make reforms or pass laws, but they may oppose resistance or give discharge to new laws or reforms. Like trade unions, communities have the power and authority to influence laws and reforms implemented in their areas. First of all, in communities where the police are perceived as a symbol of order, safety, and security, they tend to encourage and accept reforms that reinforce law-and-order philosophy. This typically occurs in white communities because they are not victims of police brutality like minority racial and ethnic groups. C. Muldoon (2022) suggests that the purpose of policing is

to avoid chaos, and also added that without police, gangs would be running the neighborhoods. Secondly, in these same communities, there is a sort of resistance to reforms that tend to be soft and do not empower law enforcement. Unlike black communities, which advocate for soft policing policies and the elimination of measures that protect police officers, white communities are reluctant when African American voices are heard. Thirdly, in addition to accepting harsh policies and condemning soft measures, white communities end up normalizing violence. They do not see any problem with violence and think that police officers are just doing their job. Police brutality against African Americans is cloaked in legitimacy; white communities find nothing abnormal in the way Black people are ill-treated by the police. This perception may result from bias and racism, but, for sure, it is harming millions of people who suffer from the prejudice of their race and color. It is not because police brutality does not target or affect White people that it should be tolerated. It is a form of injustice, and injustice must be combated in all its forms, no matter who is responsible for it and who is affected.

3.2. Media Portrayal and Community Approval

According to P. Fourie (2007, p. 187), who cites C. Wright (1975), "the main functions of media are to inform and entertain people." Wright discusses media as a neutral and professional tool that journalists and reporters must use to cover incidents in social life, such as police brutality. However, things are not always the way they should be, or the way people wish they should be. One of the biggest issues with police brutality is the way people understand the phenomenon, and also how people identify with the problem. Reporting a situation in a specific way or under a given angle gives a different apprehension of the same situation than when it is done in a merely professional way. This appeals to the role of media in social life, how media can shape social discourse, and how media can shape the minds and influence reactance.

From one stand, mass media play a key role in covering and protecting police brutality in the United States of America. The way they cover police brutality

incidents contributes to misinforming or disinforming the population on such a sensitive subject as police brutality. First of all, mass media in America, most of them, are likely to underreport incidents of police violence incriminating police officers. Before the 2010s, mass media were the most important sources of information for people. This led them to hide the truth about police brutality from public opinion deliberately. This made the situation latent, because nobody can pretend to fight a problem or a phenomenon that they are not aware of. Secondly, the mass media's portrayal of the underreported incidents is sometimes biased. Normally, the media's role is to depict the situation as it is presented, so that an adequate solution must be found. Unfortunately, they show the situations in a way that police officers are always right to use violence because, maybe, the victims might have been aggressive. Presented under the angle of blaming the victim, few people, except their close relatives, can be compassionate and demand justice for them. As for Hermann & Chomsky (1988) quoted by A. Fog (2004, p. 9), "The dissemination of news may occasionally be so selective and biased that you may accuse the media of manipulation and propaganda." Herman & Chomsky miss the point here; people do not accuse them of propaganda; this is what they really do. Finally, the lack of precision and concision in reporting violent incidents influences policies and decisions at higher levels. If measures are to be taken, the authorities must consider the current situation's ups and downs. That is why manipulating information about police brutality can lead to outdated policies with devastating effects. Mass media never play fair, and African Americans have to continue spreading counter-narratives to inform public opinion and reshape the national discourse as well.

From another stand, the rise of social media can be seen as a double-edged sword, whose use should be questioned. It can be used as a powerful tool for citizen journalism, where people can use platforms like X, formerly Twitter, and Facebook to record and share incidents from their smartphones. These recordings serve as evidence in several cases, like the murder of George Floyd and many others. However, social media works like a platform that shapes all types of narratives

regarding police brutality. First, civil rights activists and the victims' families can face online threats and intimidation from anonymous accounts. They can also be smeared through defamation campaigns organized by pro-law enforcement groups or extremist groups. This phenomenon, known as cyberbullying, is qualified by J. Amedie (2015, p. 12) as a major issue because it "allows its victims to post things in front of their peers and humiliate them." Secondly, police departments, pro-law enforcement groups, extremists, or racist people can also use social media to shape and push their own narratives about police brutality. Recognizing the rapid pace at which social media disseminates news, these narratives can quickly escalate, contributing to misinformation and the spread of fake news. In a context of advanced digitalization, they can even edit clips to distort the truth about incidents and fuel discord and confusion. Finally, at the community level, high exposure to social media campaigns can lead to emotional burnout and a lack of interest in the content being shared. By dint of looking at news on police brutality on social media every day, people get bored with it, which may lead to them attempting to overlook further similar information. When the pieces of news on police brutality are banalized, it weakens the mobilization efforts of African American activist groups, like Black Lives Matter. The biggest issue with the advent of social media is that it weakens the efforts of African Americans to face systemic police brutality. African Americans are more likely to resort to social media and tend to forget direct actions and advocacy. That is why, in *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander points out that using social media is good, but structural changes must follow. She calls for deep and structural reforms that can dismantle the whole system that fuels racism and police brutality in America.

Conclusion

The objective of this paper has been to portray police brutality as a social scourge that goes beyond the prerogatives of police officers. A variety of actors and factors contribute to brood, produce, protect, and maintain police violence. This study mainly analyzed police brutality as a structural, institutional, and systemic-born

social concern that shapes the destiny of millions of minority ethnic and racial groups. Understanding police brutality requires more than analyzing individual and isolated factors. Critical Race Theory has been central in understanding how the whole system produces police brutality. Its application has gone around the social construction of racism, the normalization of racism, and how racism intersects with other domains of life, like policing. From the federal government to the state governments, police brutality is used by the State as a means to control the citizens. The study has found that there are three main groups of actors involved in police brutality. Firstly, lawyers and judges, as part of the criminal justice system, play an active or passive role in perpetuating police brutality. Their responsibility lies in interpreting the law or advocating for stricter police brutality laws. Secondly, the State also participates in the manifestation of police brutality through violence. It can take the form of political repression or pure capitalism, where the State intends to control everything. Finally, the mainstream community and media also allow police violence to flourish. As for the mainstream community, by remaining silent in the face of racial injustice, by normalizing police violence as a means to combat criminality, or by refusing to exert control on the excessive use of force, permits police violence to dwell. For the mainstream media, it underreports cases of police brutality or decides to give special narratives that do not favor victims of police brutality. The whole system, in the United States of America, is immune to the plights of Black people and other minorities, caused by police brutality. There is a collective moral failure that tends to normalize state violence and police brutality in the U.S. Fighting against police brutality must not be a matter of minority racial and ethnic groups only, but a collective commitment.

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