

# FIGHTING IN A SEA OF BLUE

Police Brutality technologies and African American /Latinx Communities in the 21st century

## How should the efforts of “defunding the police” impact the law enforcement within African American and Latinx communities in the 21st century?

Throughout the development of the 21st century, issues of Police Brutality have become a topic of questioning. In 2020 during the height of covid 19, there was a huge rally of black lives matter protests around the globe, with a major focus in the city of Detroit. The main reasoning for these protests was the issue of police. After the killing of George Floyd, the action was taken in protesting “defund DPD”.

The policing system has always been a racist system since the beginning of time through the technologies they use and the rules that they abide by. It is a system of power that is heavily controlled over Latinx and African American people and communities and is ridiculed by white people because of the history with police “keeping communities safe”. If they have the ability to kill, abuse, and charge innocent POC lives, are they really keeping black and brown lives safe?

The police and justice system within the society we live in fails to provide freedom to African American and Latinx communities globally. Varieties of platforms relentlessly provide information of these statics that happen on a daily basis. *The Hate You Give*, *When They See us*, and *Talento de Barrio* are films based on true realities of police brutality. Each film has its own narrative, though they all share the same truths: Black and Brown lives are not protected by the policing and justice system.

Kahlil, 16 years old, the policing and justice system has no age requirement of abusing and or murdering the lives of Black and Brown lives. Another film (short series) *When They See Us*, attributes police brutality against 5 African American and Latinx young boys between the ages 14-16, are falsely accused of raping a white woman jogging in Central Park, NYC. The five boys were abused physically and mentally by the officers involved in the case. The abuse began as soon as they were put in handcuffs; this was because the policing system had no lead on the case. The officers illegally forced the men to accept the actions of this case, recording the false confessions (due to coercion) on tape and using it as evidence to convict them as guilty. At random, officers decide to interrogate a man by the name Corey Wise, who was going to support his friends at the station. They took Corey as another person to blame for this case; he had no interaction with the Central Park situation. The jailtime for the young innocent boys was 5-10 years in a youth facility and once they were 21 could move to prison for the rest of their life. Corey got 5-15 years in prison. These young boys spent their lives growing up in jail for a crime they did not commit. Kevin Richardson, 14, Raymond Santana, 14, Anton McCray, 13, Yusef Salaam, 15, and 16-year-old Corey Wise.



### MUSIC ABOUT POLICE BRUTALITY

A well known group from the 90s NWA was impactful in spreading social justice awareness of the treatment of minority groups. Specifically, their album *Straight Outta Compton* reflects on the abuse and murder policemen bring Black and Brown communities. They explain the corrupt justice system and how it does not keep them safe through illustrative words that provide the truth to the harsh reality. Their words of social justice still flow through the realms of music through other artists like Ana Tijoux and Vic Mensa.

Vic Mensa, from the South side of Chicago, is an American hip hop artist and activist who has as well written songs in regards to police brutality. One song that hits hard with this social justice issue is his song *16 Shots*. The song is about the death of Laquan McDonald. A seventeen year old child from Chicago had his life taken from 16 bullets with the assumption of breaking into vehicles and stealing radios. Mensa explains the extent of police officers get away with murder, with no financial deductions or punishment.



### PROTESTING AND CONVERSATION

When the Covid pandemic hit, so did the rise of Black Lives Matter protests. I joined these marches regularly to learn and have conversations. I did not understand why police had the privilege of having physical and mental weapons to kill and abuse minorities, why minority neighborhoods had heavy policing, and why there was such a stigma against Black and Brown lives. I never heard much about the details of this social justice issue, because growing up the color of my skin never affected me and my community protected me with the privilege of classism.

One of the most memorable marches for me was attending the protest in Southwest Detroit. This protest included 29 different groups, but it was lead by Detroit Will Breathe and the Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation. The theme of this march was “your fight is my fight” or “tu lucha es mi lucha”. Leaders spoke about how together we can organize a coalition of organizations because it is important to dive into what the movement is really about. People from each of the 29 different organizations spoke about the history of their oppression, police brutality, and other social justice issues.

After many inspiring songs and historical learning, we gathered to the streets chanting in english and in Spanish showing solidarity and that we will stand with one another and will fight for one another against Police Brutality. In the evening as the protest was continually peaceful, a police man in an SUV ran through a crowd of protesters and specifically injured Jae Bass. Bass was trying to help the march safely return to Patton Park where the protest began by standing in front of the SUV so that the officer would stop and let everyone through.

In that moment of witnessing that with my own eyes, I stopped breathing for a second and screamed. My body froze and time had seemed to stop; I was angry, sad, bewildered at what has been told to me for so long. “the men in blue are here to protect and serve”. In that moment the people whom I was fighting for became the only important thing in my life.

From A Latinx perspective, we have Daddy Yankees movie *Talento De Barrio*. A film about the artists rise up to stardom through music. This movie takes place in a low income community in Puerto Rico where violence, drug deals, and high policing is common. Two specific officers of authority in this film (González and Matías) represent the failure of government agencies. These officers assume the neighborhood they unnecessarily watch over, is full of delinquent drug dealers and failures. Throughout the film, they stalk Yankees neighborhood looking for illegal action so they can abuse their power in position. Yankees view of police brutality is explained with the classist and racist assumption of the lives of the Latinx community rather than just violence.



Ana Tijoux, is a Chilean/French musician that is widely listened to by the Latinx community. She wrote a song called La Bala which was released in 2011, about a 16 year old Manuel Reinoso. He was shot during a protest in Chile, he was fighting for his education. The police responsible for his death denied killing the young boy and the case was dismissed. La Bala is a commemorative song of the emotions of the incident in a poetic voice;

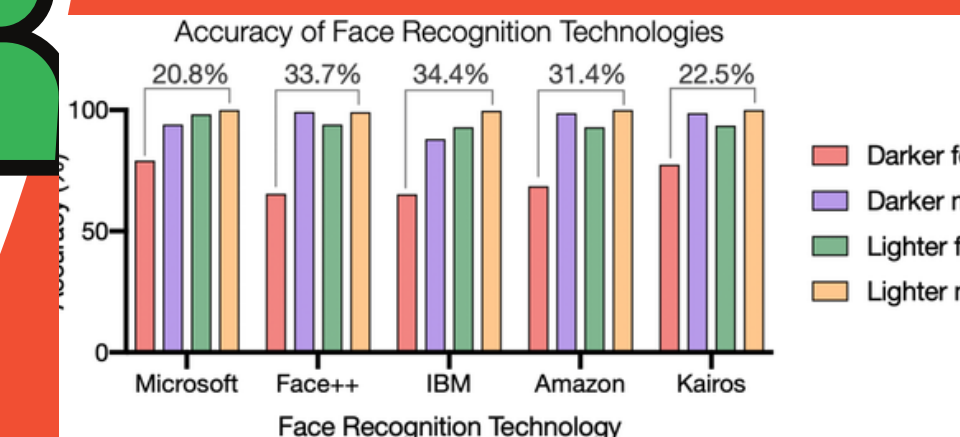


“An assassin spinning around itself. It lost its sight of life with its track. While a young man suffers from the desire to conquest the ground.”

RESEARCH: FACIAL RECOGNITION/PROJECT GREEN LIGHT

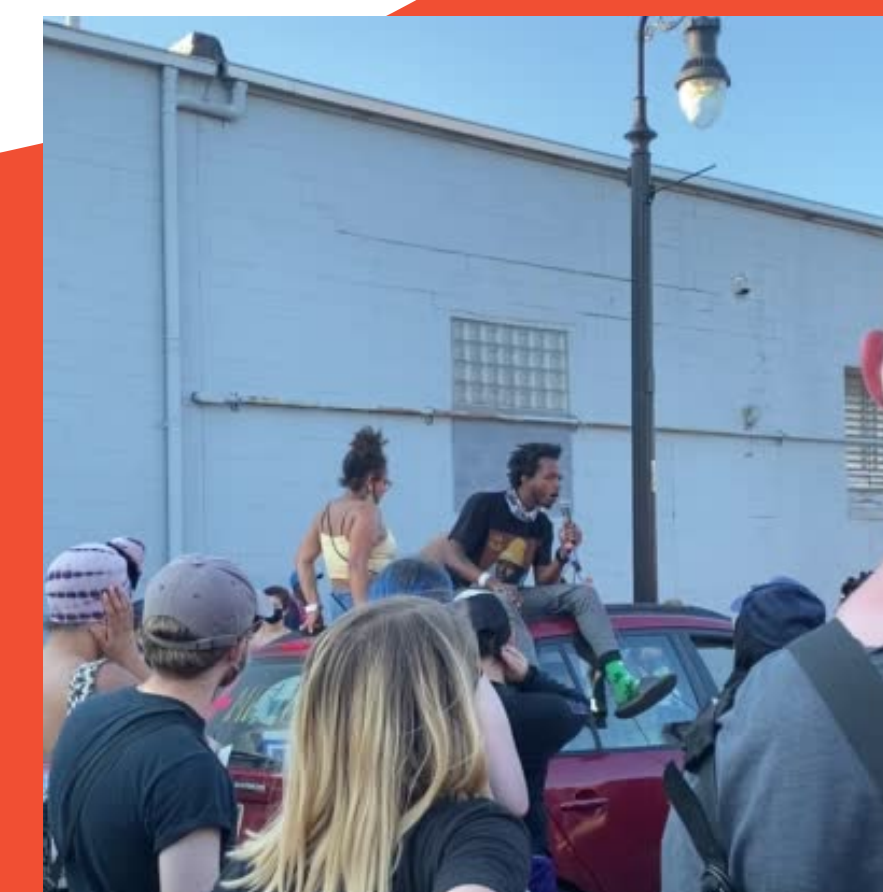
Facial recognition is becoming a popular new technology to solve crime cases quicker and to help prevent it as well. Many police force use these tactics to catch criminals and stores implement a green light on the outside of their shop to display that they use the facial recognition security in their stores. Although it is wildly popular and is claimed to be over 90% accurate, the results show huge racial bias standards.

A gender shades project did an experiment of using facial recognition with different skin tones and different sexes. What was found to be common was the accuracy for lighter skinned males and females compared to darker skinned. These stats were confirmed not only once but twice by Amazons Recognition and Gender Shades Re-audit. Amazons response claimed that it was the auditors methodology fault instead of agreeing with the fact that there was racial bias.



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STATISTICS OF THE US GOVERNMENT SHOW THAT THESE SYSTEMS MISIDENTIFY DARKER SKINNED INDIVIDUALS AT A 5 TO 10 TIMES THE RATE OF WHITE PEOPLE. 1 MILLION DOLLARS HAS BEEN INVESTED IN THIS TECHNOLOGY BY DETROIT POLICE WITH BARELY ANY PUBLIC VOICE



“In response to that, he just floored it.” Bass said. “He went super fast. Me and a couple of other organizers that were with me, just went flying off. We went flying off. He ran over a couple people’s arms, feet. He ran over her phone. I think I was the last person on the car. I was just holding onto the car. I could feel him speeding up and then he did one of these and he flinged me off the car.” (Jae Bass, 24, Detroit)



## conclusion

With all of this evidence of police brutality comes the solution: defunding the police system. Instead of spending 317 million dollars each year on this department specifically in Detroit, better spending could be done instead. According to the Detroit Justice Centers fact sheet it lists that we could build 18 restorative justice centers, provide child care income credits for those living in poverty, developing mental health and rehabilitation centers, create living wage jobs, give homeless people homes and a tax credit, and finally renovate Detroit Public Schools. The whole idea of defunding the police is to stop funding a racist and unequal justice system and use the funds for actual community benefits. Now with the evidence I provided generically, I believe that this issue reaches further than Detroit; it is universal. It is our job as human beings in this world to fight for one another and this is one miniscule way of coming together: ending the police systems.

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