

Reilly, R.J. & Rivas, R. (2017, Sept. 12). In St. Louis, the politics of police reform are tougher than ever. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/ferguson-st-louis-police-reform_us_59a722b8e4b07e81d354e8ca.

Summary

The article opens up remembering Michael Brown, 18-year-old Ferguson resident, who was shot and killed by police three years ago under questionable circumstances. Authorities of the city of Ferguson started erecting barriers around the city courthouse and police headquarters in downtown St. Louis as individuals from both sides are awaiting the final verdict in the trial of the officer who killed Michael Brown. Activists have pledged to shut the city down if the officer is seen as "not guilty." Even clergy members told the judge in the case that there would be blood on his hands if he did not find the officer guilty. The purpose of this article ultimately was to point out that after three years of activism and protests that the police reform in the region is not what individuals had in mind. The St. Louis police department is trying to increase diversity and in Ferguson, a number of the city officials who were in office at the time of the shooting are gone and the city is being watched by a federal monitor. However, elsewhere in Missouri, the progress of police reform has been "virtually nonexistent" according to the article.

Personal Reflection

The article, while well-written, leaves nothing to the imagination as to the authors' positions on the issue. Regardless, this article was very striking to me. One of the things that stuck out to me was the fact that officials in St. Louis have already begun erecting barriers in the city in anticipation of the verdict. I am assuming they are anticipating violent riots. The article never mentioned riots, however, it did mention protests and people standing peacefully on the sidewalk. But why would a city need to erect barriers in anticipation of peaceful protests? Maybe it is because many of St. Louis activists have a history of being destructive after something has happened that they do not like. I seem to remember there being riots and protests just because it was the anniversary of Michael Brown's untimely death. This is just one way that both sides of this national issue differ. It saddens me that many people believe that the only way to get things done is to break their neighbors' property, start fires, and destroy their city. On the other hand, is the uproar in Missouri the only reason why this issue has gotten national attention at all? Maybe St. Louis and Ferguson residents have a reason to believe that the only way to get things changed is through violence and lashing out.

I am thankful for this class, because it teaches students that there are many ways to advocate for policy change- only one of which includes protesting. Soon we will be in Washington D.C. acting as policy advocates. However, it will look a lot different than the storm that is about to hit the St. Louis area. Reform and education are needed in this nation. We need police reform and a greater representation of ethnicities and genders in offices. The nation is holding its breath as we listen for a long-awaited verdict in the case of Michael Brown. I am of

the belief that no matter what verdict the judge sentences, an uproar will be soon heard in Ferguson and St. Louis. The current events policy seen in this article is rather a lack of policy and, unfortunately, innocent people are probably about to die because of it.

Two Questions

- What protective measures have been put in place to protect the officer on trial and his family and the judge who is about to sentence him?
- Have the communities responsible for the violent protests following Micheal Brown's death tried any other (non-aggressive) methods to advocate for police reform?