

A NIGHT OF HORROR

7/8/16 – Dallas

As many across the nations have now heard, a peaceful protest in downtown Dallas last night quickly turned into a time of panic, fear, and death as five police officers were gunned down and killed by a sniper; seven others are left with serious injuries.

A Quick Note

This particular post will not spend too much time on the event itself, nor the events in Baton Rouge or Minneapolis that possibly led to the violence of the night. The reason for this decision is simply because facts for all three events are still being sorted out. For us to make assumptions would be irresponsible. Even with last night's shooting, there are still many conflicting reports such as multiple shooters versus a lone gunman. As time passes and more information becomes available, we can better determine motives and report factual information. Soon, we will take a closer look at the shootings from earlier in the week as well.



Above 1: Tony Gutierrez / Associated Press

For now, we seek to pass on what we know for sure.

A Week of Death

Earlier this week, Philando Castile (32) of Falcon Heights, Minnesota and Alton Sterling (37) of Baton Rouge, Louisiana were shot and killed by police officers. It is reported that Castile was pulled over for a broken taillight and informed the officer that he was carrying a weapon; likewise, it was reported (via Castile's girlfriend on Facebook Live) that the officer asked for the young man to reach for his identification, at which time he was then shot four times. Again, the information currently provided is from a video posted on Facebook after the traffic stop and shooting occurred.

Sterling was shot and killed outside a convenience store after "some type of altercation" with two police officers. Sterling was selling CDs outside the store and also possessed a weapon. Video shows the police wrestling with Sterling, bringing him to the ground; his left arm is being held behind his back while his right arm is not visible. One of the officer's yells, "He's got a gun!" After another few tense seconds, one of the officer's guns fires multiple times, leaving Sterling dead.

Sniper Fire

These events led to multiple Black Lives Matters protests across the United States, including the one in downtown Dallas. Witnesses report that the protest was peaceful as men, women, and children marched down the street.

Around 8:30 p.m., when the gunfire began, many believed it to be fireworks, until the sound grew louder. The crowds started to run for cover as the realization of the situation became clear. Dallas police officers who were present to watch over the protest quickly responded, trying to move the protesters to safety. Shots were coming from an elevated position, “ambush-style”. It was first reported that two officers were killed, but as the night wore on, the number rose to five.



Above 2: Laura Buckman/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

The authorities located the shooter in or near a parking garage at El Centro College. It is reported that the police attempted to negotiate with the shooter who stated that he was upset “with white people” and the above mentioned shootings. Dallas Police Chief David Brown states, “The suspect said we will eventually find the IEDs. He wanted to kill officers. And he expressed killing white people, killing white officers, he expressed anger for Black Lives Matter.” At this time, no IEDs have been located.

Failed Negotiations

After hours of negotiating failed, it is reported that some gunfire was exchanged. Instead of risking the chance of losing further lives of police officers, it was decided that a bomb robot (generally used for investigating and detonating possible bombs) would be used to take down the shooter. A bomb was placed on the robot’s extension, sent near the shooter, and was then detonated thus killing the sniper. “Other options would have exposed our officers to grave

danger,” says Brown. No information has been released about the shooter at this time. Earlier this morning, it was reported that three other suspects were in custody, though this is in conflict with other reports.



Above 3: Smiley N. Pool/The Dallas Morning News

The end result is the deadliest incident for law enforcement since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

Brown has declared that they will not rest until they bring anyone and everyone involved to justice. President Obama called it a, "Vicious, calculated, despicable attack on law enforcement." House Speaker Paul Ryan says, "A few perpetrators of evil do not represent us; they do not control us."

Is there Hope?

This is the (presumably) confirmed information that has been provided to us. So where does that leave us as individuals? As a Nation? Obviously the top two issues deal with race and gun control. One can't help but think of Martin Luther King Jr's famous line, "I look to a day when people will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." ...but what are we to do when the character of so many across the country seems to be filled with hate, confusion, fear, anger, and division? King said of hate and violence:

***The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral,
begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy.
Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it.
Through violence you may murder the liar,
but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth.
Through violence you may murder the hater,
but you do not murder hate.
In fact, violence merely increases hate.
So it goes.
Returning violence for violence multiplies violence,
adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars.
Darkness cannot drive out darkness:
only light can do that.
Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.***

Your Voice

King believed that only love can drive out hatred. What do you believe?

Do these words still hold truth today? If so, how can we the people take steps to show such love? Or perhaps you believe it is too late, that the Nation has fallen too far down this slope to recover.

It is our hope that regardless of which side you fall on the above stories that you will still show love and kindness to your neighbors regardless of their race, political views, or anything else. Let's be a country that lends a helping hand to those in need. It only takes a spark to start a fire; it could be your one small act of love that helps bring this Nation out of this darkness.

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