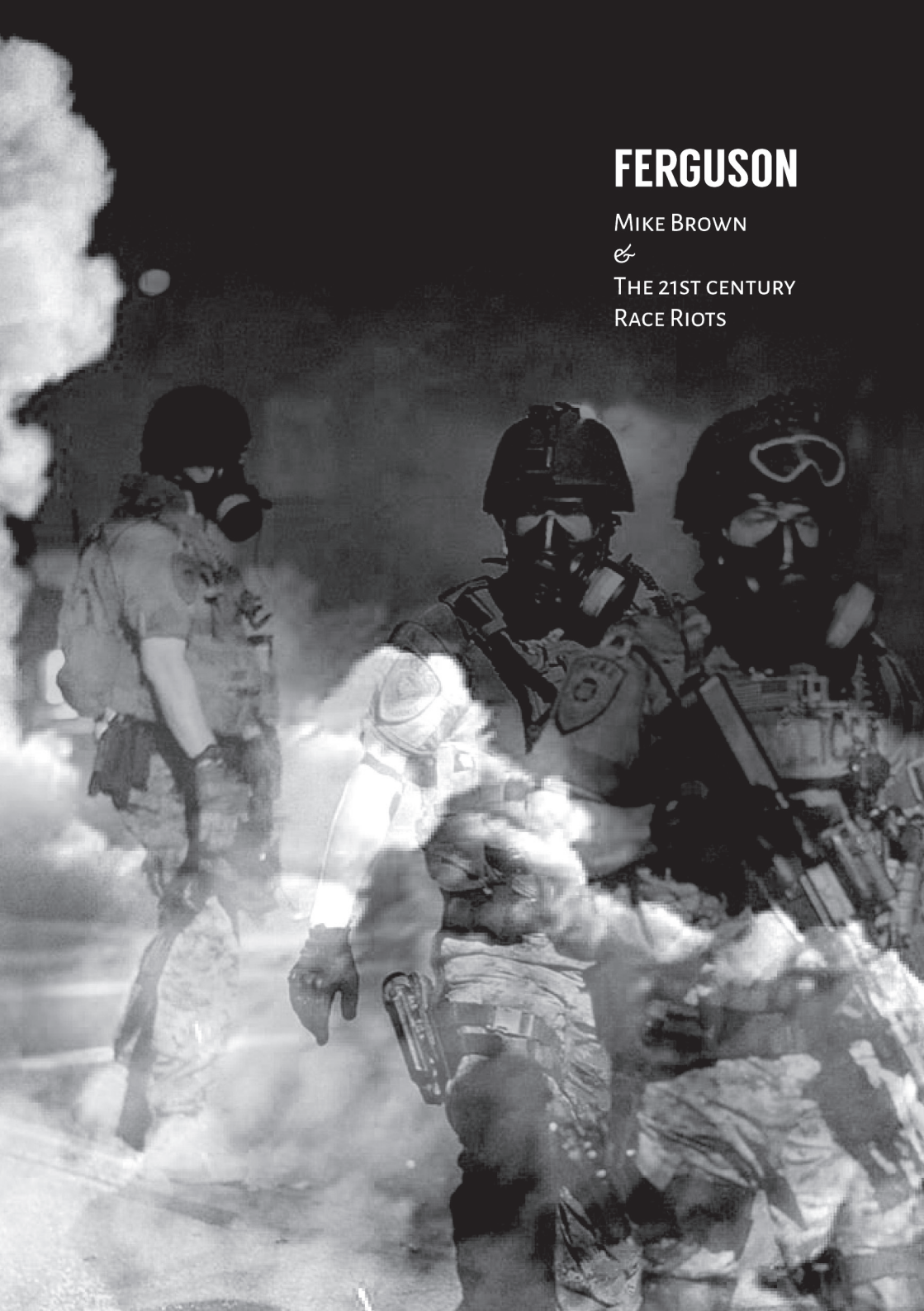


FERGUSON

MIKE BROWN

&

THE 21ST CENTURY
RACE RIOTS



RACIAL TENSION OF MISSOURI

The racial tensions and segregation in Missouri have been constant throughout its history. In 1820 the Missouri Compromise passed admitting Missouri as a slave state to maintain the “balance of power” between slave and free states in Congress. St. Louis was a major slave auctioning center in which businesses and individuals could buy and rent slaves.

In the early 20th century African American immigration to St. Louis increased due to its industrial center and lure of factory jobs. This, however, led to resentments and tensions by whites against the black migrations. Ultimately these tensions boiled over in the summer of 1917 when white mobs began to set fire to the homes of black resi-



WHITE MOB BURNS BLACK MAN DURING RIOTS

dents. The choice remained between burning alive in their homes, or run out only to be shot at by white gunmen. In other parts of the city, white mobs began to lynch African Americans against the backdrop of burning buildings. As darkness came and the National Guard returned for the second time that year, the

violence began to wane, but did not come to a complete stop.

Similar resentments towards African Americans remained throughout the century by real estate agents and city leaders conspiring to keep blacks out of the suburbs. This was achieved through the use of zoning ordinances and restrictive covenants. Those who did manage to buy into a white neighborhood were greeted with hostility as recalled by Alyce Herndon, a black woman, who in the 1970s moved with her family to, what was then the mostly white town, of Jennings, in St. Louis County. She said some of their white neighbors stuck an Afro pick (hair comb) in their front lawn and set it

on fire. Later in the decade however these barriers began to fall and whites moved out even further creating what is known as “white flight.” In addition to this these areas are known as the rust belt in which the decline of industry has left impoverished neighborhoods, underfunded schools and an overall diminishing livelihood.

In Ferguson white flight can be seen when in the '90's the town was 73.8% white and 25.1% African American. By 2010, those numbers flipped and the town was 29.3% white, 67.4% African American. The only racial aspect of Ferguson that did not change was those who hold positions of power, who remained largely white. Majority-black Ferguson has a virtually all-white power structure: a white mayor; a school board with six white members and one Hispanic, which recently suspended a highly regarded young black superintendent who then resigned; a City Council with just one black member; and a 6 percent black police force. This is echoed in the amount of harassment and unfair treatment residents of Ferguson receive. In Ferguson last year, 86% of stops, 92% of searches and 93% of arrests were of black people — despite the fact that police officers were far less likely to find contraband on black drivers (22 percent versus 34 percent of whites). The end result in Ferguson is an example of white power gone wild.

Michael Brown graduated from an unaccredited school district that expired not long before he was killed. He and his peers – specifically, those strivers willing to transfer to a better school district – were told they were not wanted by certain districts in the region, once those they were no longer required to accept them perpetrating the racial segregation experienced in Missouri.

It is then no surprise that the murder of Mike Brown is the outlet for the injustices and abuse suffered from acts of police brutality. Many recount their experiences of police violence they have suffered for some time now. James Williams experienced the death of his mother as a 10 year old when she was shot by police during a drug raid for wielding “a shiny object.” The St. Louis county prosecutor Robert P. McCulloch declined to charge the cop who shot his mother and is the same prosecutor appointed for the ruling of the shooting of Mike Brown. Brian Curtis also recalls one time, in the winter, about two years ago when returning home with some friends from a convenience store when police stopped and slammed them into the snow. One of their friends had a broken arm, they said, but the officer still made him put it behind his back. Other examples of brute force can be seen in the beating of the innocent Henry Davis who was mistaken for someone else then arrested, brutally beaten and then charged with property destruction for “bleeding on officer's uniforms.” Former Ferguson, Missouri police officer Kim Tihen who took part in these beatings is now part of the city council in which she is the fifth white person out of 6 (one is Latino).

THE SHOOTING OF MICHAEL BROWN

The narrative around the actual shooting is a battleground, in which the winner can define history and legitimize or delegitimize the event, its consequences and the deeper roots of it. Since the killing was witnessed by various from the neighbourhood, the following description is based on their reports as well as the results of the autopsy.

On Saturday noon, August 9th 2014, 18-year old Black Michael Brown and his friend Dorian Johnson were walking down the street of their neighbourhood, coming home from the grocery store. Behind them the white police officer Darren Wilson drives up in his car, telling the two young men to get off the street and use the sidewalk. He first continues driving but as he notices the two are not obeying his order and continue to walk on the street, he turns around. He stops his car just directly next to them and when he wants to jump out, the door bumps back from hitting against Michael Brown, due to the small distance between the car and Brown. Wilson grabs Brown through the window and starts choking him and when Brown tries to free himself from the grip, the cop fires a shot. In the seconds of confusion, the two young men start running, when Wilson gets out of his car and aims at Michael Brown. He turns around, puts his hands up and says „Don't shoot“ - but the cop does. At least 6 bullets hit Michael Brown, the first four in the right arm and shoulder. Witnesses say, that Brown got down on his knees at this point, bowed down and surrendered, still alive. Wilson shoots him two more times in the head.

The later autopsy confirms statements by the witnesses and reveals that all shots were from a long range distance, disproving the statement released by police saying there was a struggle for the cop's gun emphasizing that it was an execution-like killing. Some of the observers state the cop seemed angry about the disrupted authority by disobedience of the young Black men.

The body of Michael Brown stays uncovered for four hours in the middle of the street, what is considered as an additional disrespect. People gather quickly at the scene of the killing and news of a young man being killed by a cop in the neighbourhood spread fast.

CHRONICAL OF EVENTS

Sunday, August 10th

People from the neighbourhood lay down roses at the place where Michael Brown died and walk together towards the local police station, to demand an official statement on the incident and the name of the murderer. This is denied and police lines try to push people back. In the evening there is a candlelit vigil at the apartment block where Michael Brown lived. Cops shut down the streets for cars so people have to walk towards the rally. Getting closer to the apartment block, a crowd of approximately 1500 people grows, chanting slogans and walking through the neighbourhood. The local cops are stressed, it is obvious they never had to deal with a demonstration before. During the first hour of the protest most people try to avoid confrontations with police, out of fear of getting shot too. But when police lines try to stop the march, people get outraged and start throwing bottles at them. The cops call for back-up, which then gets stopped and attacked, too, several of the cop cars windows are broken, applause and cheering is heard. At this moment most people have lost fear of being shot. Young men are not the only ones who attack police, gender and age varies.

At this point it becomes obvious that the neighbourhood belongs to the protesters now. Although there are disagreements among them, considering strategies and the level of violence towards police, people treat each other in respect and see themselves as comrades in a struggle against racist police violence.

With the approaching night, people start looting and burn down the QuickTrip-gas station, which is rumoured to have called the cops on Michael Brown. From that on, the ruins become the protesters spot for meetings, communication and discussions. Several other stores get looted, too.

During this first night, the neighbourhood belonged completely to the people, reclaimed by a full scale riot. The cops try to re-establish authority by randomly attacking people. A witness talks about three cops, one black and two white, attacking people who are standing at an intersection. The black cop starts regulating the traffic away from the scene, while the two, white cops shoot teargas at a small group of people and then release the dogs on them. Of course, this leads to further outrage against the police.

It is said that the first lootings were permitted because the crowd might have charged at them, and they didn't have the capacities to contain it. It is also supposed that the loot

ings would be reason enough to call in heavy riot police and SWAT teams. It wasn't until the protestors reached the Wal-Mart that they began to worry because they knew it had an arms and artillery department.

Monday, August 11th

The parents of Michael Brown hold the first press conference. Demonstrations continue throughout the day, streets blocked either by protesters or by police. Until then people were confronted with local police without riot gear, during this time it was that the newly equipped local riot police gets sent in, to disperse demonstrations and crowds. At night clashes intensify, police intensifies the teargas, rubber bullets and wooden bullets are shot at everyone on the streets. The neighbourhood begins to look like an occupied war zone.



Tuesday, August 12th

Similar scenes as the day prior, the situation intensifies as clashes erupt during the day.

Wednesday, August 13th

Demonstrations continue, solidarity actions and declarations are spread via social media, Palestinians declare solidarity with Ferguson, both are shot at with the same teargas canisters.

They also give advice on how to handle the teargas. Meanwhile, police begin arrests and attacks on journalists wanting, them out of the area. The Al Jazeera-camera team gets tear

gassed as they try to set up a live stream.

Thursday, August 14th

The hacking activist group Anonymous threatened to publish identity and information about the cop they presume to be the murderer of Michael Brown. The local police denies the information, and the Anonymous twitter account is suspended.

Changing police strategies the governor puts highway patrol Capt. Ron Johnson in charge of the police operation. All things considered it is a cheap attempt to reduce the image of a highly militarized and aggressive police. More people are outraged, solidarity continues to spread and people continuing resisting, a growing number of people adapt militant strategies against the heightening state occupation. The state needs a deescalation and a pacification of the situation.

Ron Johnson is a Black cop and himself grew up in Ferguson. Under his command, police is told to stop using tear gas and rubber bullets, the militarized police is withdrawn from demonstrations and waits out of sight, while regular police in small numbers observes the scenery. As image campaign, Johnson lets himself be photographed joining in a peaceful demonstration, hugging one of the community activists. The deescalation concept seems to work for that day and night.

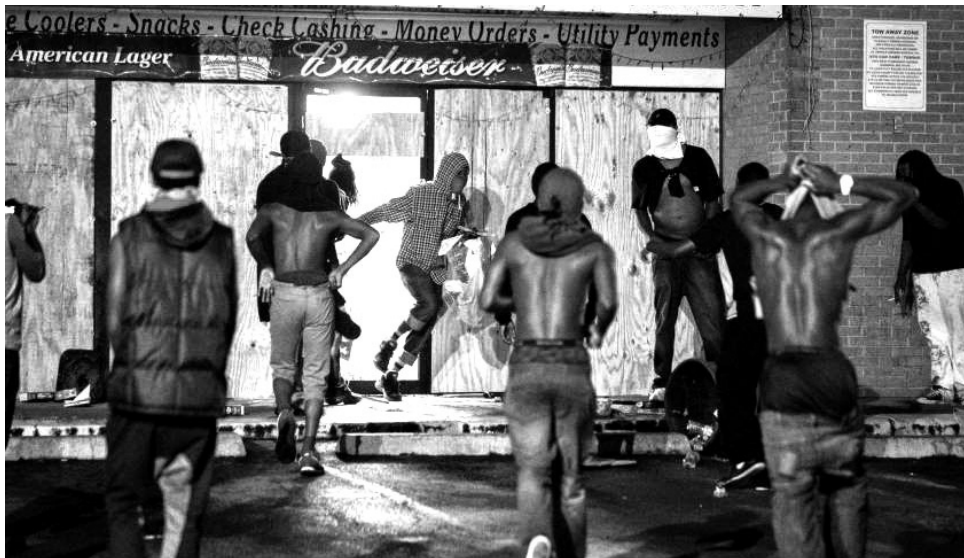
Friday, August 15th

Fergusons police chief releases the name of Michael Brown's murderer: Darren Wilson.

This is most likely due to the rising pressure by the Anonymous-action and the rage of the streets, which has been heightened by the protection of the killer cop. But also president Obama had previously demanded „more transparency“. Definitely, Wilson is the sacrificial lamb in the ongoing pacification strategy. Not with big risks though, because he already left the state with his family and without any legal accusations.

At the same press conference, the police kicks off a smear campaign against Michael Brown, accusing him of having robbed a store shortly before his death. Some people, seemingly relieved, pick up this story to delegitimize the ongoing protests and riots and portrait Brown not as a martyr but a criminal. Others are angry about that disrespectful smear campaign, Browns parents accuse the police of not just destroying their son's life but also his character. Some say, Michael Brown was innocent and a shy and homely person. And some, who are confronted with repression by police and as well „peace makers“, community leaders and activists from within their own neighbourhood, actually don't say so much in public but act:

at night, riots erupt again. People are looting once more and among the collectivized stores is the one, where Michael Brown is said to have stolen from.



Saturday, August 16th

By the early morning, the calm as well as the police's deescalation concept from thursday are gone. Demonstrations grow during the weekend and again riot police are sent in, attacking protesters and shooting teargas and rubber bullets. The Governor declares a state of emergency and announces a curfew for the night. People massively resist that curfew, either actively by demonstrating or passively by simply being unable to get home because of the police lines which cut through the neighbourhoods prevent anyone from passing. A group of 150 mainly young militants is setting up barricades, being prepared for a confrontation with police, armed with bottles, stones, molotovs and guns („No justice – no curfew“, „We ready“)

Sunday, August 17th

A large crowd tries to walk towards the police command center, which is outside of the neighbourhood at a parking lot. Police fights them back with heavy force. Lootings continue. One police van gets shot at, and cops also get attacked from the top of a roof with stones and molotovs. Militants seem to get further organized and lay their plans. The understand

ing of the police forces as state occupation is widely established in the neighbourhood and people try to block police from entering their streets and fight for sending them out. Police are aggressively attacking people but are too scared to have cops standing around in the streets. Vans of SWAT-teams race through the streets and are hunting people. One protester gets shot in the leg, as a van drives up, police opens fire at a small group at an intersection and then dashes off.

It is said to be the most violent night of the Ferguson crisis.

Monday, August 18th

The Governor calls in the National Guard, a volunteer-based inner state military reserve. He also declares an end to the curfew, since it was obvious that people disobey and it heats up the atmosphere. Also, the results of the autopsy of Michael Brown are released.

Obama declares he will send Attorney General Eric Holder to Ferguson, to investigate the case and talk to community leaders. (An Attorney General is kind of a state lawyer and minister of justice. Eric Holder is the first Black Attorney General in the history of the US.)

At night, clashes continue, police shoots live rounds at protestors, who themselves shoot back.



Tuesday, August 19th

Capt. Ron Johnson, still commanding the police forces, is calling the people for protesting at daytime because of „dangerous dynamics at night“. The ruins of the QuickTrip get fenced as police try to take away this central spot of the protesters.

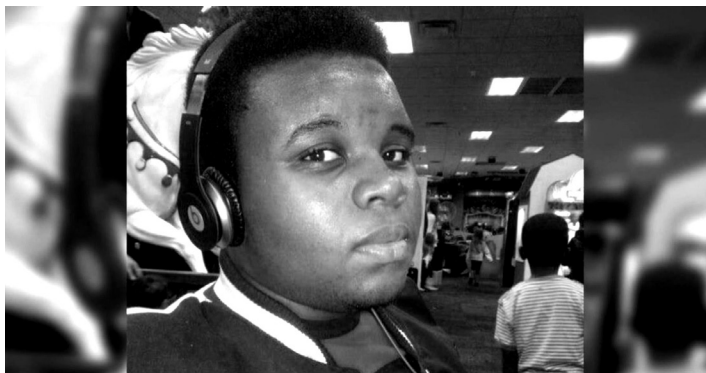
In the afternoon, news breaks that police shot another Black men on a street in St. Louis, not far from Ferguson. He walked towards the police with a knife in his hands and said „Shoot me!“. Why the police was called is not clear, it is said that he stole two drinks from a store. In Ferguson, the number of protesters and clashes decrease. The night stays relatively calm, some protesters throw bottles filled with urine and ice (lack of stones) at the police.

Wednesday, August 20th

Attorney General Holder meets with community leaders, FBI investigators and Grand Jury to establish „peace and justice“. The day and the night stays relatively calm, thanks to community activists who have a pacifying effect on the youth, as Ron Johnson puts it.

The police publishes the number of arrests so far: a total of 155, 123 of them charged with „refusal to disperse“, a few other with „unlawful use of a weapon“. The office of the Governor gets blocked by supporters, the 90-year old holocaust-survivor Hedy Epstein gets arrested.

On Monday, August 25th the public funeral of Michael Brown will take place.



CLOSER ANALYSIS

The USA is a globally active empire, built on a history of racial and class-divided genocide, with its structure fundamentally remaining as such until today. An empire of this kind, which is aiming for further influence and production outside of its state territory, in other words, is constantly fighting wars on the other side of the globe, is fighting the same war inside of itself. Though permanent crisis and conflict are present, social calm needs to be enforced for the empire's reproduction. A lid needs to be put on the boiling pot, every articulation of dissent needs to be silenced or put into the words of the ruling classes, every outburst of the coherent conflicts needs to be repressed. Doing so, war and peace, front and hinterland are terms that are not separable from each other but are each others' condition.



We have seen that the (at the moment we are writing this, still ongoing) protests and riots after the death of Michael Brown were hard to stop and silence. In the first days, police aggressively tried to disperse every gathering of people and to silence the media. When this did not succeed and even intensified the outbursts of conflict, strategies of de-escalation and pacification were starting to be used. Now, within the questionable and unstable calm

of the last days, a new debate about racism in the US has started. Where it will lead to, is yet to be seen.

We also have written here that the killing of Michael Brown is based on a deeper social structure of class and racial segregation with a long history. Because the continuity of this history will not be broken and the segregation will not be overcome by those who benefit from it but by those who are fighting against it and the writers of this text understand themselves as joining this global struggle, we find it important to take a look at the full scale of the counter-insurgency strategies we have to face. Because the enemy is not only well equipped but also closer to us than sometimes think.

COUNTER INSURGENCY STRATEGIES

The most obvious force countering the protests is the police. According to the Defense Department's 1033 program, local police stations can get military level gear for free on request. This leads to a militarisation of police and makes heavily-equipped troops within even the smallest region available and ready to mobilize.

In the early 1990s, after the downfall of the Soviet Union and the loss therefore of a strategically important exterior enemy, the US possessed an extremely inflated military. A disarmament would lead



to a decrease of production, and so the government declared its „war on drugs“. In 1990, the congress enacted the National Defense Authorisation Act, allowing the transfer of military equipment from the Department of Defense

to local agencies. In the years that followed, regular police stations collected heavy military gear and special commandos have been trained. With the increasing focus of NATO-forces

on crowd control and the Occupy-movement in the US of 2011/2012, this equipment and military tactics are starting to be used by police against demonstrations and uprisings.

The police have been using the following equipment in Ferguson:

**** Camouflage uniforms, for an intimidating and authoritarian appearance***

**** pepper spray***

**** batons***

**** handguns, automatic rifles and sniper rifles, all aimed at protestors and journalists, several times shot***

**** grenade launchers, shooting teargas and flashbang grenades***

**** rubber and wooden bullets***

**** shotguns, shooting rubber shots (dozens of small rubber balls)***

**** armored personnel carriers, transporting in- or outside, ready to jump-off or shot at when driving by***

**** Long Range Acoustic Device (LRAD), a sound cannon, usually attached to the roof of a truck. The noise it makes is not only painful loud, it also is on a frequency that causes psychological instability, strong discomfort and panic. Originally created as an anti-pirate measure at sea, it is now used to disperse crowds.***

**** drones and helicopters for surveillance***

In the first days of the Michael Brown unrest, this equipment was excessively used for intimidation and breaking down protests. When it became obvious that people are not intimidated by the show of force, but instead even more outraged, and when in reaction people started to get themselves organized as militants and when scenes of the obviously ongoing civil war got public internationally, a de-escalation concept has been used by the state officials and their helpers. It is important to mention that the excessive force of the early days is not necessarily an overreaction but rather an attempt to silence people's rage as quickly as possible and when this did not function, to control the crowd and give time until a „better“ strategy is conceptualized and executed.

This de-escalation concept was officially starting to be practiced in Ferguson, when Capt. Ron Johnson took over. Already his persona is part of the concept, being a Black Cop from the neighbourhood, who claims to „understand the protests“. The previously openly visible

racist police structure blurs its face. Under his command, protests have been allowed as long as they stay „peaceful and non-violent“, observed by a few officers in regular uniform, while the same militarized police forces from the days before were waiting outside of the neighbourhood, ready to intervene when necessary. Johnson stated, that times in Ferguson now would change and the community will be respected by the police. Naturally, the de-escalation concept is strongly limited and only works when the majority of people obeys and calms down. Just being exercised for a day, the concept had its first crisis with the outrage and new riots because of the smear campaign against Michael Brown which came alongside the release of the name of his murderer. That does not mean that the deescalation concept was forgotten, but that it needed to be intensified and linked with other military strategies.



One of them was a curfew at night, which was announced for the weekend, naturally the time a larger mass of people would join the streets. It made it legally possible to arrest everyone on the streets at night and aimed for clearing the streets through arrests and scaring people off, telling them to stay at home. Not without reason, the most arrests have been made in the time from the curfew on, the majority of the arrest being made for „refusal to disperse“. The curfew is a tool for limiting mobility in the neighbourhood. So are the police lines and checkpoints, that cut through the area, not allowing passage of any civilian cars at all and making it practically impossible to get across even by foot. It is needless to say that all public transport has been shut down already a while ago.

The police is cutting the neighbourhood from the outside world and is separating it into controllable pieces within itself. People resisted the curfew massively and it led to an intensification of the clashes, with people getting prepared for militant attacks on police and more people realizing the terror of the state occupation. It is not clear, if the curfew was cancelled because of this intensification and ongoing disobedience or simply because the weekend was over and there was no need for it anymore.

Fact is, that people got more militant these days and police got in serious danger in some situations. For the nights of the most heavy clashes, they had to change their presence in a way, which makes the set-up of the state occupation most visible.

In front of the insurgent area is the police headquarter, their command centre. On a big parking lot of a shopping mall (which is of course shut down) is a highly restricted and secured area, the main assembly point for police and National Guard. Cops are having their briefings and breaks here and get prepared for their mission. Also it is the area, where journalists are advised to go – far off from the actual happening. Arrests are getting concentrated here, until they are released or brought into a police station.

This headquarter is at a strategically important spot, with a big main road that is leading directly into the neighbourhood. Along this road are heavy checkpoints, at every corner are full police cars, along the sides of the street vans with machine guns on top, pointing at the passing by cars, which have to identify themselves and are getting checked.

At the end of this road, closer to the neighbourhood, are heavy police lines and further checkpoints, which prevent people from entering the neighbourhood without being controlled and if considered necessary denied entrance. Also they keep the people inside the area from getting out.

Within the conflict zone are further police lines, limiting mobility or preventing masses from moving to a certain spot. Groups of cops are standing at street corners, observing and intervening. Sometimes, this got too dangerous and then armoured vehicles were chasing through the streets of the neighbourhood, making a quick attack on everyone in the streets, shooting teargas, rubber bullets or live ammunition and then dashing off again.

Another important weapon in counter-insurgency is information. People are not supposed to get information from any sources, the only information that they should get are from the

state. Not only that police are attacking and arresting journalists and keeps them within their controlled headquarter, where the only one you can speak to is the police spokesperson, but also cable-TV has been cut-off in Ferguson. But not all, because otherwise people might get out of the house and on the street. Witnesses say they had the Disney channel, but none of the news broadcasts.

A monopoly on information is used to take away knowledge and instead give orders, to lead discourses in a certain direction and delegitimize or discourage protestors, like when Michael Brown was accused of being a criminal.

At last we want to write on the pacifying effect that the so-called social dialogue has. It is probably one of the most essential and important aspects in counter insurgency and reproducing a „functionable“ society along the needs of capitalism and racial inequality. The relation between people and the state is not a simple face-off, counter insurgency is not just shooting tear gas at a crowd of people and telling them to calm the fuck down. The state has its foot in our door and is not controlling us with brutal force but also with dialogue and compromise.

Police officers, conservatives and president Obama have been calling for community lead-



ers, activists and spokesperson to get in dialogue with their neighbourhoods, calm them down and talk with the state officials themselves. One of the first things Ron Johnson, commander of the police mission in Ferguson, did was to get photographed hugging one

of the well known community activists at the beginning of the de-escalation concept and marching for „social justice“ alongside pro-state oriented protestors. Obama sent Attorney General Holder to Ferguson, to talk to community activists and spokespersons and establish a dialogue.

In general, these „community leaders“ are people from within a certain group, who have a certain social capital and value and function as a bridge between state and population. On a local level these are members of the church, education institutions, local politicians, activists who are committing themselves for the neighbourhood and „social justice“ or just charming neighbours. On a bigger scale it can be famous people with a certain recognition – for example the rapper Nelly was visiting Ferguson and giving a speech on the street, calling for peace with the argument, one should not give the racists their arguments by acting violent. Fortunately, he got booed down and called out for disrespecting „the brothers in the system“. In the very early days of the uprising, Reverend Al Sharpton was visiting Ferguson and giving a press conference together with the parents of Michael Brown, giving his words legitimation. Al Sharpton is a very rich Black man, with lots of social capital and recognition. He is a self-proclaimed spokesperson of „the Black community of the US“ and is considered as a „radical critic of social and racial injustice“ while at the same time he calls-out for peace and a dialogue with the oppressor and reportedly has snitched on militants. „Fuck Al Sharpton, Fuck Obama“ the masked youth of Ferguson shouts.

In everyday-life in the community there are people who take away the peoples voices by functioning as a spokesperson, who end a riot before it even started by preaching a culture of social dialogue, who want to create peace where there is constant war. They work together with state authorities, not as some kind of conspiracy but simply because it is where they gain their power and their capital from: being the bridge between oppressor and oppressed, keeping the lid on the pot and the flow of rage in channels.

Then there are the political activists, too, whose job it is to do politics. It is not about sharing knowledge, sharing strategies, liberating desires and creating new collectivities, for them it is about finding recruits for their political programme. For them, a crowd of people is a herd of sheep and themselves are preaching truth. In Ferguson, there were the leftists who tried to organize and institutionalize the movements, to put them in another dialogue with power and let the organisation be the only voice heard. There was the New Black Panther Party, who blamed complicity between black and white militants, for enforcing their own identity-based and pacified politics.



These groups need to be considered as part of the counter insurgency program. „Police can handle a dozen or so leaders, they can't control a street of 1000+ people. [...] Working with the police and with the government to get justice for Mike Mike is a cul-de-sac – a dead-end intentionally created to destroy our energy and take power away from us again.“, anarchists from St. Louis write.

The insurgents of Ferguson create perspective, when they attack big media instead of talking in front of the camera, when they use their voice to boo down spokespersons, when they get together with their friends and make plans instead of joining political groups, when they mask up to show their real face, when they attack police occupiers instead of respecting them and when they negate politicians instead of putting hope in them.

It is important to support the insurgents of Ferguson and create international solidarity. Not only because we as well are faced with counter insurgency strategies, but because we are also struggling against racism, class-division and the colonisation of our lives.

You can donate to a legal fund set up by anarchists from St. Louis, the money goes to the arrested at Ferguson.

<http://antistatetl.noblogs.org/post/2014/08/11/bail-and-legal-fund-for-those-arrested-during-ferguson-anti-police-demonstrations/>

<https://secure.piryx.com/donate/mS25KFCe/MORE/mikebrown>

Nevertheless, let yourself be inspired by the courage of the uprising and the militants of Ferguson. Join the struggle and the debates wherever you are, send words and actions of solidarity to those fighting in the US.



