The History of Policing in African American Communities

Washington State
Task Force & Advisory Group
The 13th Amendment

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for a crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Passed January 31, 1865
Ratified December 6, 1865
BLACK CODES

“A code of laws especially as adopted by some southern states of the U.S. shortly after the Civil War limiting the rights of black people”
The Criminalization of Freed people

Certain behaviors that people had not been arrested for, or that were never before prosecuted as crimes, were turned into offenses punishable by incarceration
Vagrancy Laws

“the crime of wandering about without employment or identifiable means of support”
Mississippi Law (1865)

• ...freedmen, free Negroes, and mulattoes in this state over the age of 18 years found on the second Monday in January 1866...[without] lawful employment...shall be deemed vagrants; and, on conviction thereof, shall be fined...

• In case any freedman, free Negro, or mulatto...fails [to pay the fine, it is], the duty of the sheriff of the proper county to hire out said freedman, free Negro, or mulatto...”
Black Codes

Slavery by Another Name

(Time 15:03-19:50)
African American prison population increases and black Americans would come to make up 70% of the southern prison population in states like Mississippi and Georgia.
Freed people needed to be *managed and controlled*, because as a group they were *unfit and unprepared* for freedom.
THE CONVICT LEASE SYSTEM

Police officers arrest, confine in jails, and oversee the process of leasing freed people to plantation owners and to southern industrialists.
Images
Images

“New Alabama Riot Police Dogs and Fire Hoses Holt March”

LA Times

Unwittingly, he and his city brought millions of people to the Negro’s side.
“Eric Garner: no charges against white police officer over chokehold death”
“No charges filed against Brooklyn Center police officers involved in fatal shooting”
“Prosecutor will not charge the police officer who shot and killed Michael Brown in Ferguson”
• In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson called for a “War on Crime”

Law Enforcement Assistance Act-empowers the national government to take a direct role in militarizing local police
By the 1970s, President Richard Nixon establishes his War on Drugs/War on Crime, which also target movements, including the Black Power Movement, Women’s Liberation Movement and the LGBT Movement.

Some in these communities deemed his policies as a “war to imprison black people and hippies”
October 27, 1986, President Ronald Reagan signs into law the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986
– Mandatory Minimum Sentences
Tough on Crime & Mandatory Sentences

- September 13, 1994
  - President Bill Clinton passes the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994
  - Three Strikes Law
The History of Policing in African American Communities & The Impact on Independent Investigation?

79%

Favor Outside, Independent Investigations of Alleged Police Misconduct