

Our opposition to law enforcement is rooted in an opposition to unjust hierarchies and imbalanced power structures. The problem of police brutality will not end until we are able to dismantle the structures that allows injustice and abuse to thrive.

Holding murderous and abusive officers accountable after the fact is an important step, but we have to pair it with the challenging the system that creates the factors and conditions that enable the brutality in the first place.

If we don't address the root of the problem we will never end the injustices. We must bring systemic change to prevent more deaths in the future.

To highlight how widespread police injustice is, we have compiled a list of recent abuses of power by the GRPD. Police terror is not a rare occurrence, it is something that occurs in our communities every day.

May 2013

The ACLU filed a federal lawsuit challenging the Grand Rapids Police Department's long-standing practice of arresting innocent people for criminal trespass on commercial property without warning and without the business owner's knowledge. Even where those arrested are patronizing the business in question, police justify these illegal arrests by pointing to form letters signed by business owners months or years prior to the arrest agreeing to prosecute "trespassers."

Nov. 19, 2016

Kent County assistant prosecutor's Joshua Kuiper crashed into a parked car while driving the wrong way down a one-way street in Grand Rapids. The arriving officer reached out to his commander (Janiskee) who told him to call line 3407 at GRPD headquarters, a line that was marked "non-recorded" (though luckily, it turned out to be recorded). The arriving officer told Janiskee that Kupier was "hammered". Commander Janiskee told the officer not to do a breathalyzer test.

Kuiper was instead charged with reckless driving and a moving violation causing serious injury. Janiskee is now suing the department for recording calls on a line that was marked as "non-recorded".

THE MONSTERS WE KNOW

a brief overview of the racism & abuse of power of the GRPD



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July 2014

OFFENSE: Mistaken Identity

James King was a 21 year old college student living in Grand Rapids. One night he was approached by two men who shoved him against their car and began beating him. Thinking he was being mugged, James tried to run away and was screaming for onlookers to call the police. But he was quickly tackled, put in a chokehold, and beaten into submission. James briefly lost consciousness. Several bystanders were convinced that James could have died that day. Only when police backup arrived did James learn that the two men who had stopped and assaulted him were actually law enforcement officers: Grand Rapids Police Detective Todd Allen and FBI Special Agent Douglas Brownback. Members of a joint task force, Allen and Brownback were in plainclothes searching for a different suspect who was accused of felony home invasion and had a warrant out for his arrest. The officers had a photo of the suspect, who James looked nothing like. The officers were granted total legal immunity in the following lawsuit.

June, 2014

OFFENSE: Walking While Black

Grand Rapids police was searching for a single suspect who they believed to have a gun when they came across a group of teenage boys, who they believed to be their suspect (despite being in a group). The boys attempted to leave and were met with a violent beating from GRPD officers wielding flashlights and fists. The attack resulted in

one 15 year old boy being hospitalized. The group was found to be unarmed and not connected to the initial suspect.

March 17th, 2019

OFFENSE: Driving while black

A GRPD officer pulled a black man over for speeding, after approaching the car the officer states, "you better get the fuck out or you're getting hurt. Got that?!" Before the driver can respond the officer smashes the window, pepper sprays the driver, pulls him out of the car, and begins tasing him. Another officer then arrives to the scene and jumps on top of the recently pepper sprayed and tased driver. The officers then punch, knee, and kick him over 30 times. The driver was arrested on charges of resisting arrest and driving on a suspended license. Upon review, the GRPD found that they did not engage in any wrong doing.

December 6th, 2018

OFFENSE: Being 11 Year Old Black Girl

Police respond to a suspected stabbing call where the suspect is a 41 year old white woman, upon arriving they found an 11 year old black girl and her aunt in the area. Officers ignored the suspects description and instead put their targets on the child. Forcing her to walk backwards at gunpoint before she was handcuffed and forcibly searched. The officer was given paid leave (vacation) while an internal investigation was conducted. The investigation found that

the officer acted justly in his actions and protective measures were put in place to redact the officers name from all documents relating to the case.

November 21st, 2019

OFFENSE: Being a Latino Veteran

Jilmar Ramos-Gomez was a US born military veteran living with severe PTSD. His photo appeared on the news one night due to an incident brought on by his PTSD. GRPD Captain Kurt Vanderkooi saw the photo and upon noticing Gomez's ethnicity he texted other officers to mock Gomez's condition and race. Unsatisfied with his racism, Vanderkooi decided to call ICE on Gomez, despite never interacting with him and being fully aware that Gomez was a US born veteran. Vanderkooi defended his actions stating that he was simply trying to "fight suspected terrorism", and upon investigating themselves, GRPD determined that they were innocent of any wrongdoing. It was later discovered that this may have stemmed from ICE asking GRPD to forward any "good leads".

March 11th, 2019

OFFENSE: Walking While Latino

GRPD stops two Latino teens ages 16 and 15 for walking down the street rather than using the snow & ice covered sidewalks. The officer draws his gun and holds the teens at gunpoint, making them lay in the road while he handcuffs them. GRPD maintains that they acted according to policy.