

BREAKING THE COVER ON POLICE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Time and time again across the U.S., the horrors of police violence against women go unanswered: Violence in the form of rape, sexual assault, sexual coercion and murder; violence committed with NO police accountability for their actions; violence committed against the most oppressed in our society – poor women, women of color, immigrant women, sex workers, LGBTQ persons, the homeless, and those living with mental health issues and disabilities.

We know those most exploited by the capitalist system are also the most likely to be preyed upon by cops perpetrating sexual violence.

In the recent, horrific case of Daniel Holtzclaw, a now former police officer in Oklahoma City, it took thirteen courageous survivors to offer testimony in order for him to be found guilty of sexual misconduct charges, including four counts of first-degree rape. The thirteen survivors were all

Black women who had been victimized while Holtzclaw was patrolling low-income neighborhoods. Abusing his access to his victims, he knowingly took advantage of their vulnerability as poor, Black women under arrest.

The death of Sandra Bland was yet another murder resulting from a racist, sexist system. Bland was actually one of a multitude of Black women who, because of the multiple oppressions they face, are among the fiercest fighters against the brutality of the police and the system they represent.

In New York City, according to an Al Jazeera America investigation in January 2016, sexual violence by on duty police officers is a serious and widespread problem in which police chiefs turn a blind eye, letting cops off the hook for their exploitation of and heinous crimes against women.

In many cases, arrests are knowingly made on trumped up, false charges, creating greater opportunities for cops to abuse their power while their victims are rendered voiceless in a system that looks the other way.

Most survivors of police sexual assault do not come forward to report or pursue formal charges for a variety of understandable reasons. Structural racism and sexism inherent in police departments make it impossible for women and especially women of color to even report a police officer as their rapist. Immigrant women may fear being deported if they make a report against a cop.

Adding insult to injury, multiple complaints have been documented regarding sexual harassment within the NYC Civilian Complaint Review Board itself.

Police misconduct and brutality will always exist in a capitalist society where it is the function of cops to protect private property and big business. Police justify their use of force to fulfill this role. Historically, the first cops played a major role in capturing runaway slaves. So it is no accident that African Americans have always assumed major leadership roles in the fightback against police brutality.

Eliminating the root of police violence will mean getting rid of capitalism. In the meantime, we urgently need a vehicle for holding the police accountable. There is a growing consciousness and movement against police abuse all across this country. Currently in New York City, a campaign calling for an Elected Civilian Review Board is mobilizing.

The Elected Civilian Review Board will function very differently from the present ineffective Civilian Complaint Review Board because it will be elected at the grassroots level by the community, not appointed by City officials. The newly conceived Elected Civilian Review Board will have the teeth to investigate and subpoena witnesses and paired with a Special Prosecutor will have the real power to discipline and prosecute abusive cops.

The Campaign for An Elected Civilian Review Board is an opportunity for women, people of color, LGBTQ people, immigrants and all those most affected by cop violence to organize together for a mechanism that can exercise real community control over the police.

Get active! Volunteer!

Visit:

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StopPoliceViolenceNYC@gmail.com to get involved.

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