

Why the Calls for 'Justice' in Ferguson Ring Hollow



A few months ago, one of this website's frequent visitors posted a comment under a column about Michael Brown and the nightly protests that were taking place in Ferguson, Missouri. The commenter, whose name is Steve, was convinced that Brown was murdered by police officer Darren Wilson, and he was adamant in his assertion that the incident was racially motivated.

How did Steve know this? To him, it was all quite obvious: A white cop shot a black, unarmed, young man. End of story.

Of course, Steve received a lot of push-back from this website's other regulars. They called his statements irresponsible and pointed out that they were based on pure speculation – speculation that stood at stark odds with the few facts, surrounding the incident, that had already been released to the public. No one was able to persuade Steve that he might be wrong. No one was able to plant a seed of doubt in his mind. He showed up to this website just about every day, restating his claim and providing hyperlinks to odd sources that he said proved his assertions to be correct.

One day, Steve linked to a YouTube video entitled, "Michael Brown, Ferguson Victim Paid For His Rellos." He cited it as concrete proof that Michael Brown, in fact, had *paid* for those cigars that security cameras captured him taking from *Ferguson Market and Liquor*, approximately 15 minutes before he was killed.

This was Steve's *aha moment*. You see, if Brown had paid for (and not stolen) those cigars, the series of events that followed couldn't have possibly gone down the way police were saying it did. A call to the police would have never been made or even warranted, thus Officer Darren Wilson would have had no reason to confront someone fitting Michael Brown's description in the first place – unless, of course, he was a racist cop looking to shoot a black kid.

Out of curiosity, I went ahead and watched the video. It was taken from a security camera inside the store that day – a different one than the one that recorded Brown famously strong-arming the small shop owner who tried to keep him from leaving his store with a package of cigars. This video was trained on the cash-register counter and *showed exactly the opposite* of what Steve claimed it showed. There was no visible transaction of cash for merchandise. The recording clearly showed Brown reaching over the counter in an aggressive manner, grabbing a handful of merchandise, and leaving the store with the store owner in cautious pursuit of him.

Somehow, Steve was able to watch that video and actually see something that just wasn't there. It was then that I realized once and for all that Steve simply didn't care about justice when it came to the Michael Brown shooting. It was the furthest thing from his mind. He didn't care at all about what *really* happened that day between the two individuals involved. All he wanted was a sacrificial lamb to quench his thirst for retribution against what he perceives as a fundamentally racist society.

Being a black man in his fifties who grew up in a different part of the country than I did, Steve undeniably has vastly different life experiences than I do. I'm sure he's encountered various forms of racism throughout his life. Whatever bitterness those experiences have left him with was probably behind his need for the narrative of an unarmed black man being shot for "no reason" by white officer to be true. It

was probably what was behind his need for a glaring example of institutional racism – one that he could hold up high in the air and point to in order to plead his case of what he believes is a much broader issue.

The problem, however, is that the facts surrounding the Ferguson case just didn't match up with the narrative. They didn't early on, and they *certainly* didn't after the details of the grand jury's decision were released on Monday. If you erase skin color from the equation, I don't believe *any* fair-minded person would view the actions of Officer Wilson as *criminal*, or even inappropriate. According to the eye-witnesses and the physical evidence, Michael Brown assaulted Wilson and grabbed for his gun. After a short pursuit, the vastly larger Brown then charged at Wilson like a football player. Under those circumstances, what difference would Brown's skin color have made? The notion that Wilson wouldn't have fired his gun at a white man engaged in the same actions is ludicrous.

Will these facts and this logic make any difference to Steve? I doubt it. They didn't make a difference to the hostile, unprofessional reporters who peppered St. Louis County Prosecutor Robert McCulloch with breathtakingly stupid questions on Monday night. They didn't make a difference to the rioters who took to the street and looted small businesses before burning them to the ground. They didn't make a difference to cable news personalities like MSNBC's Ronan Farrow who evoked a Martin Luther King Jr. quote to romanticize the street violence that he was watching on television. They didn't make a difference to the *New York Daily News* who nearly ran with the Tuesday morning headline "Killer Cop Goes Free". They didn't make a difference to the race hustlers like Al Sharpton who continue to fuel the flames. They didn't make a difference to the Congressional Black Caucus who wrote that the grand jury decision meant that people may now "kill Black men in this country without

consequences or repercussions.” Perhaps most disturbingly, they didn’t make a difference to scores of low-information Americans who’ve spent the last 24 hours on social media continuing to ask why it’s now “okay” to shoot an unarmed black man for “no reason.”

The fact of the matter is that these people don’t want justice. What *actually* happened between Michael Brown and Darren Wilson is of no interest to them. What they want is restitution for a society they view as unfair, and they are perfectly willing to capitalize on tragedy and convict an innocent man of murder in order to get it.

I find that sad beyond belief.