

# The Press & Dakotan

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**OPINION**

## Police Killings: Another Side ...

As some Americans vent their anger again over another police killing of a black suspect under circumstances that, at the very minimum, beg some questions, it's important to consider the following item as at least some food for thought.

It must also be remembered that law enforcement officers lose their lives in the line of duty every year. It's part of their job; it's what they potentially face every single day. Every call to respond to an incident is a potential invitation to a life-or-death situation and the need for extraordinary decisions.

According to the Officer Down Memorial webpage, there have been 107 police officers who have died in the line of duty in 2014 as of the end of November. Granted, while 15 of these deaths were by heart attack and two more were by accidental gunfire, 43 were killed by gunfire, three were struck by vehicles and two more were killed by assault.

Last year, 105 police officers died in the line of duty, and 126 died in 2012.

These statistics are in no way intended to diminish or neutralize the outrage that has occurred in regards to incidents in Ferguson, Missouri; New York or Ohio. There are matters in these cases that go beyond a law enforcement officer (or officers) killing an individual who was unarmed.

Also, the racial aspects of these cases cannot and should not be dismissed. If this was a factor that had some bearing in these cases, there is a real problem.

The decisions of the grand juries (one hesitates to call these decisions "failures" because it implies that we have thorough knowledge of the inner workings of these proceedings) have been called into question by the public and the media. Courts have ruled that police are allowed to use deadly force if they have a "reasonable belief" that they face danger from a suspect or if a suspect poses danger to others.

Certainly, there has to be boundaries.

But we also need to understand the thoughts that may be at work inside the heads of law enforcement when they confront these situations.

We must also consider that the number of people killed by police each year is also significant, and it's almost assuredly a much higher number than the law enforcement casualties. The website FiveThirtyEight.com noted in August that the federal government doesn't keep track of how many people are killed by police annually. The FBI reports about 400 "justifiable homicides" by police each year — although FiveThirtyEight.com suggested that figure is likely an undercount based on news reports and other sources. One Facebook site, called "Killed by Police," which draws information from news links about police-related killings, concludes there more likely about 1,000 killings by law enforcement per year.

It's a sad, nasty business on either side of these arguments, to be sure. But one fact that must be considered is, the police are open to assault. It's the nature of their line of work. And while people may criticize how these officers perform those jobs sometimes, it must be acknowledged that they face dangers that many of us never do.

So, that line of thinking — which arises instinctively in often-heated and tense situations — must come into play as we weigh these situations.

It doesn't provide us with answers, nor does it acquit every act. But it does provide another view of this disturbing and heated issue.

kml

**ONLINE OPINION**

The results of the most recent Internet poll on the Press & Dakotan's Web site are as follows:

**LATEST RESULTS:**

**Do you agree with the decision to issue no indictment in last summer's New York chokehold death involving police?**

Yes.....42%  
No.....39%  
Not sure.....14%  
Never heard of it.....5%  
**TOTAL VOTES CAST.....303**

The Press & Dakotan Internet poll is not a scientific survey and reflects the opinions only of those who choose to participate. The results should not be construed as an accurate representation or scientific measurement of public opinion.

**CURRENT QUESTION:**

**Should police be required to wear body cameras?**  
To cast your vote in the PRESS & DAKOTAN'S Internet poll, log on to our website at www.yankton.net.

**IN HISTORY**

**By The Associated Press**  
Today is Tuesday, Dec. 9, the 343rd day of 2014. There are 22 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On Dec. 9, 1854, Alfred, Lord Tennyson's famous poem, "The Charge of the Light Brigade," was published in England.

**On this date:** In 1608, English poet John Milton was born in London.

In 1911, an explosion inside the Cross Mountain coal mine near Briceville, Tennessee, killed 84 workers. (Five were rescued.)

In 1940, British troops opened their first major offensive in North Africa during World War II.

In 1942, the Aram Khachaturian ballet "Gayane," featuring the surging "Sabre Dance," was first performed by Russia's Kirov Ballet.

In 1958, the anti-communist John Birch Society was formed in Indianapolis.

In 1962, the Petrified Forest in Arizona was designated a national park.

In 1965, "A Charlie Brown Christmas," the first animated special featuring characters from the "Peanuts" comic strip by Charles M. Schulz, was first broadcast by CBS-TV.

In 1971, Nobel Peace laureate Ralph Bunche died in New York.

In 1982, special Watergate prosecutor Leon Jaworski died at his Wimberley, Texas, ranch at age 77.

In 1984, the five-day-old hijacking of a Kuwaiti jetliner that claimed the lives of two Americans ended as Iranian security men seized control of the plane, which was parked at Tehran airport.

In 1987, the first Palestinian intefadeh, or uprising, began as riots broke out in Gaza and spread to the West Bank, triggering a strong Israeli response.

In 1992, Britain's Prince Charles and Princess Diana announced their separation. (The couple's divorce became final Aug. 28, 1996.)

**Ten years ago:** President George W. Bush ruled out raising taxes to finance a Social Security overhaul. President Bush announced he was keeping the heads of the Transportation, Interior, Housing and Labor departments. Canada's Supreme Court ruled that gay marriage was constitutional.

**Five years ago:** Five young American Muslims were arrested in Pakistan over possible links to terrorism. Iran claimed that a newly-built U.N. station to detect nuclear explosions was built near its border to give the West a post to spy on the country. Former Costa Rican President Rodrigo Carazo Odio, 82, died in San Juan.

Actor Gene Barry, 90, died in Woodland Hills, California.

One year ago: North Korea announced it had sacked leader Kim Jong Un's uncle, Jang Song Thaek, long considered the country's No. 2 power, for leading a "dissolute and depraved life" (Jang was reportedly executed three days later). Scientists revealed that NASA's Curiosity rover had uncovered signs of an ancient freshwater lake on Mars. Retired managers Joe Torre, Tony La Russa and Bobby Cox were unanimously elected to the baseball Hall of Fame by the expansion era committee. Actress Eleanor Parker, 91, who played a scheming baroness in "The Sound of Music," died in Palm Springs, California.

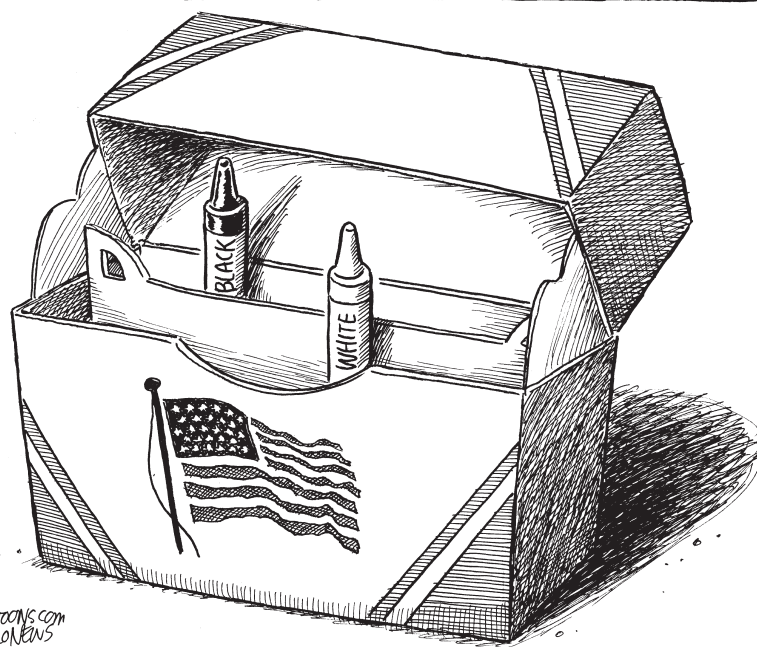
**Today's Birthdays:** Actor Kirk Douglas is 98. Actor Dick Van Patten is 86. Actor-writer Buck Henry is 84. Actress Dame Judi Dench is 80. Actor Beau Bridges is 73. Jazz singer-musician Dan Hicks is 73. Football Hall-of-Famer Dick Butkus is 72. Actor Michael Nouri is 69. Former Sen. Thomas Daschle, D-S.D., is 67. World Golf Hall of Famer Tom Kite is 65. Singer Joan Armatrading is 64. Actor Michael Dorn is 62. Actor John Malkovich is 61. Country singer Sylvia is 58. Singer Donny Osmond is 57. Rock musician Nick Seymour (Crowded House) is 56. Comedian Mario Cantone is 55. Actor David Anthony Higgins is 53. Actor Joe Lando is 53. Actress Felicity Huffman is 52. Crown Princess Masako of Japan is 51. Country musician Jerry Hughes (Yankee Grey) is 49. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., is 48. Rock singer-musician Thomas Flowers (Oleander) is 47. Rock musician Brian Bell (Weezer) is 46. Rock singer-musician Jakob Dylan (Wallflowers) is 45. Country musician Brian Hayes (Cole Deggs and the Lonesome) is 45. Actress Allison Smith is 45. Songwriter and former "American Idol" judge Kara DioGuardi is 44. Country singer David Kersh is 44. Actress Reiko Aylesworth is 42. Rapper Caribus is 40. Actor Kevin Daniels (TV: "Sirens") is 38. Rock musician Eric Zamora (Save Ferris) is 38. Rock singer Imogen Heap is 37. Actor Jesse Metcalfe is 36. Actor Simon Helberg is 34. Actress Jolene Purdy is 31. Actor Joshua Sasse (TV: "Galavanti"; "Rogue") is 27. Olympic gold and silver medal gymnast McKayla Maroney is 19.

**Thought for Today:** "In individuals, insanity is rare; but in groups, parties, nations and epochs, it is the rule." — Friedrich Nietzsche, German philosopher (1844-1900).

**FROM THE BIBLE**

So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" John 12:13. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.

HOW WE COLOR OUR CONVERSATION ON RACE...



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**The Rez Of The Story**

## Violence Not The Answer

BY VINCE TWO EAGLES

Hau Mitakuepi (Greetings My Relatives), "Though force can protect in emergency, only justice, fairness, consideration and cooperation can finally lead to the dawn of eternal peace." — Dwight D. Eisenhower.

According to *The New York Times*, at 11:45 a.m. on Aug. 9, 2014, two men by the names Michael Brown and Dorian Johnson leave a local market and liquor store in a suburb of St. Louis. Walking down the street, the two men are confronted by police officer Darren Wilson. An altercation between Officer Wilson and Mr. Brown takes place. Officer Wilson fires several shots at Mr. Brown who is fatally wounded.

From the *Times*: "The shooting prompted protests that roiled the area for weeks. On Nov. 24, the St. Louis County prosecutor announced that a grand jury decided not to indict Mr. Wilson. The announcement set off another wave of protests. ... Resulting in buildings being set on fire and several businesses being looted. As news of the decision spread, protesters surged forward, throwing objects at officers in riot gear. The sound of gun fire could be heard. Police officers used tear gas and smoke to disperse people who were hurling rocks and breaking the windows of parked police cruisers. A vehicle was set on fire. At least a dozen buildings were set on fire around the city, many in the vicinity of Ferguson Market and Liquor, the store Michael Brown was in before he was killed by Officer Wilson.

"The protests against the police have pitted the predominantly black community against a nearly all-white police force. Of the 53 commissioned officers in the Ferguson Police Department, four are black."



Vince TWO EAGLES

There is trouble there in Ferguson with a capital T. I know many folks here in Indian Country can identify with the outrage and miscarriage of justice and the frustration that comes from years of ill treatment by white

society. However, I don't believe that taking out our anger and frustrations out on innocent bystanders will help further the cause of justice. Violence is never the answer.

I know that we humans are drawn to violence in times of trouble like the events in Ferguson because we don't know how or where to channel our feelings but merely understanding this can in no way be considered as an appropriate response to adversity.

Martin Luther King, Jr., once said: "The limitation of riots, moral questions aside, is that they cannot win and their participants know it. Hence, rioting is not revolutionary but reactionary because it invites defeat. It involves an emotional catharsis, but it must be followed by a sense of futility. The old law about 'an eye for an eye' leaves everybody blind. The time is always right to do the right thing."

So what is the right thing to do? I believe that getting plugged in and staying plugged in to civic action is priceless. The organized vote is one of the most powerful tools we have at our disposal. Every vote counts and should never, ever be taken for granted. We live in a democracy that allows for the citizens to choose its leadership at the polls. Not participating only perpetuates the wrong doing of our elected officials. Injustice will flourish if good men do nothing. Make sure those representing you represent you. If they don't do right by their constituents (that's you), then vote them out and let them know where and when they do wrong.

And now you know the rez of the story. Doksha (later) ...

## What's 'Cruel And Unusual'?

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.

Tribune Content Agency

So what does "cruel and unusual" mean? I once asked that of a law professor. The Eighth Amendment prohibits "cruel and unusual" punishment, but I figured there had to be some technical definition I, as a layperson, was missing. I mean, from where I sit, it's pretty "cruel and unusual" to execute someone, but to judge from the 1,392 executions of the last 38 years, that isn't the case.

Scott Panetti almost became number 1,393 last week, but within hours of his scheduled lethal injection, he was reprieved by a federal judge. The court said it needs more time to consider the issues his case raises.

In a rational place, it would not be news that Panetti was not killed. In a rational place, they would understand that state-sanctioned execution is a relic of frontier barbarism that leaves us all wet with the blood of the damned. In a rational place, they would say there's something especially repugnant about applying that grisly sanction to the mentally ill, like Panetti.

But Panetti doesn't live in a rational place. He lives in America. Worse, he lives in Texas.

They love their executions in Rick Perry's kingdom. Since 1976, according to the Death Penalty Information Center, an advocacy group, that state has killed almost 520 people. That's nearly five times more than the next bloodiest state, Oklahoma, with 111.

There is no question Panetti deserves punishment. In 1992, he shot his estranged wife's parents to death as she and the couple's daughter looked on. He held them both hostage before releasing them unharmed.

But there is also no question that Panetti, 56, suffers from severe mental illness. At his trial, in which he was somehow, bizarrely, allowed to represent himself, he wore a purple cowboy suit with a 10-gallon hat and summoned a personality he called "Sarge" to explain what happened on the fateful day. His witness list included 200 people. Among them: John F. Kennedy, the pope, Anne Bancroft and Jesus Christ.

The state contends that Panetti, who was off



Leonard PITTS

his meds at the time of the killing, is faking it. During a 2004 hearing, the county sheriff called him "the best actor there is." In its most recent filings, Texas accuses him of "grossly exaggerating" his symptoms.

If it's an act, it's been going on a long time. His attorneys say Panetti was diagnosed with schizophrenia 14 years before the shootings and was hospitalized 13 times between 1978 and 1991. Now a court decides on his life or death.

It's a pregnant decision in a country where, apparently, it isn't "cruel and unusual" to preside, as Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton did, over the execution of a man so profoundly impaired that he saved the pie from his last meal to eat later. Or to let a man gasp and snort for almost two hours as a lethal injection very slowly killed him, as happened in Arizona. Or to set a man on fire, as has happened at least twice in Florida's electric chair. Or to execute people for crimes committed when they were children. Or to send innocent people to death row. Or to choose whom to execute based on color of killer, color of victim, gender, geography and class.

So what, exactly, might be too cruel and unusual for us to allow? The professor could not answer. Which, of course, is an answer.

As flawed and broken as our system of death is, we continue to embrace the puritanical morality of eye for eye and blood for blood. Most of the western world has left this savagery behind, but we insist on it, leaving us isolated from our national peers, those nations whose values are most like ours, but looming large among the outlaw likes of Somalia and Iran.

Now we are debating whether to kill a man so addled he tried to subpoena Jesus. And that leads to a conclusion as painful as it is unavoidable:

What's "cruel and unusual," is us.

Leonard Pitts is a columnist for *The Miami Herald*, 1 Herald Plaza, Miami, Fla., 33132. Readers may contact him via e-mail at lpitts@miamiherald.com.

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**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

**Great Decisions!**

Stephanie Hauger, Leah Waid, Laurel Friedenbach, Cami Friedenbach  
Yankton County 4-H Consumer Decision Making Team

The Yankton County 4-H Consumer Decision Making team would thank all of those who have donated toward the team's trip to the Western National Roundup for 4-H Consumer Decision Making Judging. Those who have donated include: Missouri Valley Master Gardeners, Hubbs Agency, Yankton Chapter K PEO, Yankton County 4-H Leaders Association, Cathryn and Lyle Becker, First Dakota National

Bank and an anonymous donor. The trip is in Denver from Jan. 8-11, 2015.

Over the past couple of months, our team for Nationals has been getting together practicing judging classes. We have been practicing judging things like: headphones, clothing, horticulture, T.V.'s, tablets, horticulture, etc.

Practices have been a blast. We have grown in our friendships. In less than two months we will be on our way to Nationals. We have already learned so much more about making decisions in our lives than we ever expected to. We would like to greatly thank everyone for their donations and giving us the opportunity to continue learning in 4-H!