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Words Can Hurt:  
An Investigation into How Racially Coded Language Was Advanced in Ferguson to Promote a  
Conservative Agenda

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**Abstract**

**Words Can Hurt**

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This thesis examines the intersection between public statements and private thought surrounding a recent political event as a way to understand the discourse of race relations in America today. Ferguson. The very utterance of the word holds vastly differing meanings to differing segments of the American populace; without saying another word, images are evoked in the minds of perhaps every cultural literate in our society. This project is a survey that investigates how the art of coded language has evolved during the presidency of Barack Obama. Building upon the work of other scholars, such as Ian Haney-Lopez in *Dog Whistle Politics*, which lends a historicity to the field, I bring a sociological perspective to political science study by doing targeted research into the national ramifications of a recent event. The event examined is the the killing of Michael Brown, an 18-year-old unarmed black adolescent, by Darren Wilson, a white police officer in the town of Ferguson, Missouri, and the analysis concerns the rising racial unrest that followed. As part of the analysis, the thesis provides evidence that racially

coded language was used to promote a conservative ideology by key figures in the Ferguson incident, including the city's chief political officers. The thesis next examines public officials and pundits beyond Ferguson, including national-level political figures, who have also used the incident in Ferguson to promote conservative politics through racially coded language. Chief among the textual evidence is the testimony of the police officer at the center of the affair, Darren Wilson. This case study represents the methodology by which the project explores the discourse on race in the alleged post-racial era that Barack Obama's election was said by some to inaugurate. The project thus shows how coded language continues to remain important in appealing to particular political audiences, in turn showing how race and racism remain fundamental to critical political developments in present-day America. It goes on to conclude that an examination of this event, and reactions to it, may offer an opportunity to engage further the United States' race question that was often studiously avoided during the presidencies of Obama's predecessors, and, even more pointedly, during his own.

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## **DEDICATION**

To my dear family, natural and extended, living and not, without whose help this would not have been possible. This thesis is dedicated to my loving sister, Deborah Noelle and to the memory of our loving mother, Alma Lee Lowe Burns.

## Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

The project is a survey that investigates how the art of coded language has evolved during the presidency of Barack Obama. Building upon the work of other scholars, such as Ian Haney-Lopez in his *Dog Whistle Politics*, which lends a historicity to the field, the author brings a sociological approach to political science study by doing targeted research into a recent event. The event upon which this study is focused is the rising racial unrest in Ferguson, Missouri following the killing of Michael Brown, an 18-year-old unarmed black adolescent, by Darren Wilson, a white police officer. The examination of this incident, which includes multi-media presentations as part of the analysis (see appendices), focuses on the various audiences that are affected by it, including those local, racial and national. These case studies represent the methodology by which the project explores the discourse on race in the alleged post-racial era that Barack Obama's election was thought to have served. The project discusses how coded language was advanced in the Ferguson event to appeal to particular political audiences, thereby showing how race and racism remain fundamental to critical political developments in present-day America. It concludes that an examination of this event, and reactions to it, offers an opportunity to engage further the United States' race question; a question often studiously avoided during the presidencies of Obama's predecessors.

Racially coded language is examined perhaps most thoroughly in Haney-Lopez's "Dog Whistle Politics". In that book, the author creates a chapter structure that alternately details dog whistle politics from the 1960s to the present and then interweaves a more in-depth conversation about race. The framework establishes a foundation for racially coded language that begins in the middle of the last century and continues through until today. Among its more prominent practitioners are Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan. Although many of the examples are

conservative in ideology, the phenomenon is not exclusively conservative; racially coded language has been known to cross the figurative political aisle as one of the truly bipartisan movements of our time.

Two recently published books continue the scholarship. In *The Wrongs of the Right: Language, Race, and the Republican Party in the Age of Obama*, authors Matthew Hughey and Gregory Park “provide an analysis of the political Right and their opposition to Obama from the vantage point of their rhetoric, a history of the evolution of the two-party system in relation to race, social scientific research on race and political ideology, and how racial fears, coded language, and implicit racism are drawn upon and manipulated by the political Right. Racial meanings are reservoirs rich in political currency, and the Right’s replaying of the race card remains a useful resource for othering the first black president in a context rife with Nativism, xenophobia, white racial fatigue—[the burden that some feel results from the duty to address racial matters]—and serious racial inequality.”<sup>1</sup> My investigation draws from these author’s work to mine a supporting scientific theory that sees political sociolinguistics as a powerful force influencing the tenor of race relations today. Finally, in *Anger and Racial Politics: The Emotional Foundation of Racial Attitudes in America*, Antoine J. Banks argues that while “some have suspected that race sometimes enters into politics even when political elites avoid using racial cues or racially coded language,” although he attempts to provide “a theoretical framework for understanding the emotional conditions under which this effect might happen.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [http://alliance-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primolibrary/libweb/action/display.do?tabs=detailsTab&gathStatTab=true&ct=display&fn=search&doc=CP71207986240001451&indx=2&recIds=CP71207986240001451&recIdxs=1&elementId=1&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&fibrVersion=2&dscnt=0&onCampus=true&query=any%2Ccontains%2Cthe+wrongs+of+the+right%3A+language%2C+race&scp.scps=scope%3A%28E-UW%29%2Cscope%3A%28P%29%2Cscope%3A%28%22P-UW%22+%29%2Cprimo\\_central\\_multiple\\_fe&tab=default\\_tab&dstmp=1448657318757&vl\(1032993212UI0\)=any&highlight=true&mode=Basic&search\\_scope=all&displayField=all&bulkSize=50&pcAvailabilityMode=true&vl\(freeText0\)=the%20wrongs%20of%20the%20right%3A%20language%2C%20race&group=GUEST&vid=UW&institution=UW](http://alliance-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primolibrary/libweb/action/display.do?tabs=detailsTab&gathStatTab=true&ct=display&fn=search&doc=CP71207986240001451&indx=2&recIds=CP71207986240001451&recIdxs=1&elementId=1&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&fibrVersion=2&dscnt=0&onCampus=true&query=any%2Ccontains%2Cthe+wrongs+of+the+right%3A+language%2C+race&scp.scps=scope%3A%28E-UW%29%2Cscope%3A%28P%29%2Cscope%3A%28%22P-UW%22+%29%2Cprimo_central_multiple_fe&tab=default_tab&dstmp=1448657318757&vl(1032993212UI0)=any&highlight=true&mode=Basic&search_scope=all&displayField=all&bulkSize=50&pcAvailabilityMode=true&vl(freeText0)=the%20wrongs%20of%20the%20right%3A%20language%2C%20race&group=GUEST&vid=UW&institution=UW)

<sup>2</sup> <http://alliance-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primolibrary/libweb/action/display.do?tabs=detailsTab&gathStatTab=true&ct=display&fn=search>



The remaining chapters then examine the events in Ferguson as a case study to understand the ongoing significance of racially coded language to American politics. Chapter 4 provides some historical and political context in regards to our investigation of Ferguson. Chapter 5 develops a close analysis of the killing of Michael Brown and the discourse that was used to describe that event, particularly by Officer Darren Wilson. Chapter 6 complements this discussion by looking at other local figures who mobilized racially coded language, including the mayor of Ferguson, the city's police chief, and ordinary members of the public involved in the political conflict that followed the killing. Chapter 7 then widens the analysis by looking at how national political figures, many of whom combine roles as politicians and media pundits, used racially coded language to situate Ferguson within a conservative political agenda. Finally, Chapter 8 briefly explores the ongoing presence of racially coded language in the context of political developments subsequent to Ferguson, particularly noting the significance of Black Lives Matter as we move into the early stages of the 2016 presidential race. The thesis concludes by considering how Ferguson might have an alternative significance as an opportunity to advance an open dialogue on race and social justice in America.

## Chapter 2. STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This thesis is a sociolinguistic study that uses language as the means through which it examines the actions and reactions of certain actors and their audiences to certain words when applied to the singular event in Ferguson, Missouri on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2014: the killing of Michael Brown by police officer Darren Wilson. It is designed around a database of compiled utterances of epithets, and the project is designed with a structure that uses semantics and pragmatics to advance a concept promoted by Basil Bernstein in his Language Code Theory. It does so under a rubric utilizing a Constructionist paradigm and suggests that Bernstein's theories have a correlation with recent examinations of language reclamations by formerly marginalized communities. The particular methodology is qualitative and quantitative content analysis on a micro level of phraseological instances. The study tracks evidence by coding these utterances and inputting them to the mixed methods data analysis application, Dedoose, tabulating the results, so as to take measure. The study then uses content analysis to mine the deeper meaning of such use.

### 2.1 SEMANTICS AND PRAGMATICS

The study of language has, as its foundation, research into the very meaning of words. The Oxford English Dictionary describes semantics as “[t]he branch of linguistics or philosophy concerned with meaning in language; the study or analysis of meaning in words, sentences, etc.” The well-respected dictionary associates the term with the more general semiotics, or “[t]he meaning of signs; the interpretation or description of such meaning; (chiefly *Semiotics*) the study

of the meaning of signs, and of the relationship of sign vehicles to referents.”<sup>3</sup> As such, it lays the foundation for this study; for my concern is how certain words have influenced particular audiences when applied to describing attitudes evoked by the event of August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri. So too, does the study of pragmatics enter into the discourse of this study, because when associated with sociolinguistics, pragmatics provides the context under which certain words can be understood. Of the association between semantics and pragmatics, the Linguistic Society of America notes, “Meaning seems at once the most obvious feature of language and the most obscure aspect to study. It is obvious because it is what we use language for—to communicate with each other, to convey 'what we mean' effectively. *But the steps in understanding something said to us in a language in which we are fluent are so rapid, so transparent, that we have little conscious feel for the principles and knowledge which underlie this communicative ability,*”<sup>4</sup> (emphasis added). So, considering semantics and pragmatics, in this study the semantics concerned are those words that project different meanings to different audiences, and the pragmatics are the ways that those distinct audiences are constructed, thereby providing the context under which their meaning is understood.

## 2.2 BASEL BERNSTEIN

The term “code” in respect to the sociolinguistic study of language is defined as a set of organizing principles employed by members of a particular social group in their communications. The theory applied to the use of such code was advanced significantly by the work of London sociologist Basil Bernstein. His introduction of a more descriptive code approach that could be applied to the discipline was constructed in 1971.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/345083?redirectedFrom=semantics#eid>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/meaning-semantics-and-pragmatics>

In his treatise, *Class, Codes, and Control*, Bernstein posits that “Forms of spoken language in the process of their learning initiate, generalize and reinforce special types of relationship with the environment and thus create for the individual particular forms of significance,” (Bernstein, p. 71). In this theory, using these codes helps individuals establish and certify their positions within society. In my study, this method can be applied to a neutral term that gathered meanings of a significant difference when used in distinct contextual environments. In events surrounding Michael Brown’s death in Ferguson, the innocuous term “hands up” was initially taken up by the hordes of protestors on that city’s streets to telegraph the innocence of black men who were assumed to be suspect simply by their very being. As such, it was often emblazoned on the tee-shirts that the crowds demonstrating perceived injustice wore in street marches. It was used as a caption for articles that often included photographs of demonstrators assuming the position.

It was later usurped and alternately repurposed. Conservative thinkers, led by pundits on radio and TV, who were unsatisfied with the meanings that emanated from the teeming crowds, chose to reinterpret that simple term to describe falsity. To them, what was projected formed the embodiment of a part or society that misunderstood the basic facts of the case. To them, Michael Brown’s history, which included an alleged act of robbery immediately preceding the event that led to his demise, superseded whatever actualities that directly caused it. In this interpretation, the actor’s positions were inversely upended; the police officer Wilson was indeed the victim and the deceased was the perpetrator.

This repositioning of an innocuous term epitomizes Bernstein’s theory of restricted and elaborated code. These codes are described by Bernstein adherent and social educator James Atherton. “The essence of the distinction is in what the language is suited for. The restricted code

works better than the elaborated code for situations in which there is a great deal of shared and taken-for-granted knowledge in the group of speakers. It is economical and rich, conveying a vast amount of meaning with a few words, each of which has a complex set of connotations and acts like an index, pointing the hearer to a lot more information which remains unsaid.”<sup>5</sup>

### 2.3 CONSTRUCTIVISM AND FERGUSON

Constructivist thought is said to have been pioneered by Swiss philosopher Jean Piaget. His constructivist paradigm holds that the interaction between experience and ideas established the foundation through which human beings generate knowledge and meaning. When this theory is applied, generally it is used to describe the interactions experienced by teacher and student in an academic setting. The construct can undoubtedly be quickly transferred to the experiences of the different parties involved in the Ferguson incident. The incident demonstrates how due to the learned experiences of various parts of society, individuals and groups experience and apprehend interpretations of the same situation in vastly different ways.

In Ferguson, the living environment of different actors may vary widely and so, therefore, the conclusions that individuals may have come to, likewise vary, even as the events witnessed remain the same. As with the reversal described above involving the question of who was the victim and who was the perpetrator in the context of Brown’s death, different communities are primed to receive certain terms and interpretations of events in ways that build on and reinforce existing political and social perspectives. The incident demonstrates how the sectors of various parts of society experience and apprehend interpretations of the same situation in vastly different ways.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.doceo.co.uk/background/language\\_codes.htm](http://www.doceo.co.uk/background/language_codes.htm)

## 2.4 DEDOOSE AND FERGUSON

Dedoose is a software program that describes itself as “a cross-platform app for analyzing qualitative and mixed methods research with text, photos, audio, videos, spreadsheet data and so much more . . .” By employing its dynamic, I have been able to compile several instances of the type of sociolinguistic occurrences I am using to describe how the events of Ferguson have influenced the racial climate of Obama-era America. These cases are composed of files that use both text and videography. The program has allowed me to code these utterances so that I can analyze them both quantitatively and qualitatively. With such analysis, I then go on to further analyze the content for comparative themes.

Often, to combat the prevailing meme, marginalized populations have elected to reclaim terms that were traditionally pejorative in transformative ways. This reclamation has been found in the LGBT community with the term “Queer,” in the African American community with “Nigger” and the Feminist community with “Bitch.” An initial analysis of the content thus far tabulated has revealed a similar evolution in reference to the marginalized in Ferguson.

My study blends these theories into an examination of how racially coded language, formerly used most exclusively to promote political outcomes has been transformed when applied to the incident in Ferguson to code elaborated meanings in the conversation about race in America during the administration of its first president of color.

## Chapter 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The election of Barack Obama to the office of President of the United States in 2008 as the first person with African heritage was heralded as the dawn of a new era in race relations in the country. However, since then, conversations concerning race have, for many, devolved into a mostly unproductive discourse. In the interim, evidence of intellectual thought on the matter of race relations during his presidency has been substantial and discordant. To add to the conversation, this review, and the thesis it underlies will endeavor to investigate the phenomenon that has come to be known in the years directly preceding and during Obama's presidency as racially coded language, and the effect it has not only on the political climate but upon public policy as well. As such, this conversation has a great deal to offer to the race relations discourse community on the subject of the administration of an equitably fair social justice system, in post-racial Obama-era America.

### 3.1 A DEFINITION OF THE TERM

To be clear, when the review uses the term “racially coded language”, a description employed in a seminal work on the subject – Ian Haney-Lopez's *Dog Whistle Politics* – is useful. It describes the term as, “subliminal racial grievances and appeals to color-coded solidarity” for the purpose of “elicit[ing] racial loyalty”; ones that are “inaudible and easily denied in one range, yet stimulating strong reactions in another” (Haney-Lopez, p.3). Tali Mendelberg, in her pioneering book on the subject, *The Race Card*, dissects the topic when she says that such messaging divides into two types: one explicit and the other implicit. She says the former exists

in public appeals to racial signals, coupling images with words so that their reference to a certain group is undeniable. Implicit appeals, she says, are more subtle and “allows them [the political candidates] to prime racial stereotypes, fears and resentments while appearing not to do so,” (Mendelberg, p. 4).

### 3.2 POST-RACIAL CONCEPTS IN CONTEXT

In 2008, a narrative popular to many of his supporters was that President Obama’s period in office would be largely “post-racial”. The term, which the Oxford Dictionary of the English Language defines as “[d]esignating a time period, society, etc., in which racism is no longer institutionalized or no longer exists,”<sup>6</sup>— cited in a New York Times article from 1971—was believed to be perfectly captured by Obama’s very person. Here, a highly educated man of mixed racial heritage, whose very upbringing by a single parent in an international landscape made explicit the very idea that the United States was joining a “one world” era. Moreover, it was hoped that this unique person would finally address the issue of racial tension that had haunted the country since its inception. This belief held fast, even as *his* approach towards the conversation was often somewhat indirect. In this manner, language would come to play an influential role in the way people’s perceptions form about how to best address the nation’s problems, whether about race, in particular, or about its politics, generally. Even Obama himself used the art of language to signal to his constituents subtle provocations to aspire to their better selves when he referred to his meteoric rise from Illinois State Senator to President of the United States. Better put, many considered his example as the perhaps inevitable result, or more precisely, as an *exemplar* of a life filled with “The Audacity of Hope,” evoked in the very title of

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american\\_english/post-racial](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/post-racial)

the book he wrote on the eve of his election, whose subtitle, “. . . thoughts on reclaiming the American dream” fairly exudes the concept of inclusivity.

The discourse on the possibilities of a “post-racial” era in America is variously promoted and dismissed. In *Colorblind<sup>7</sup>: The Rise of Post-Racial Politics and the Retreat from Racial Equity*, noted sociologist Tim Wise argues against the inadequacies of what he terms post-racial liberalism. He describes this philosophy as a combination of race-neutral rhetoric and colorblind public policy. He goes to say that it is a form of “left-of-center-politics, which had its adherents dating back at least 40 years, and which emerged after the civil right rights revolution had largely accomplished its immediate goals with the passage of legal protections against discrimination in employment and public accommodations (1964), voting (1965) and housing (1968),”(Wise, 2010, p16). In his argument, Wise claims that:

. . . post-racial liberalism is inadequate for remedying persistent racial inequities. Because those inequities are themselves too often the result of racial discrimination and race-specific injuries perpetrated by whites against people of color—and not, as post-racialism insists, the result of race-neutral economic or cultural factors—applying ‘universal’ solutions to said problems will likely fail to ameliorate them. Even the pragmatic case made for colorblind universalism—namely that it is the only approach that can garner white support for progressive social policy—is of dubious validity. Because of a steady drumbeat of *racially coded conservative propaganda* concerning government programs for those in need, even universal public policy approaches (with regard to education, health care or job creation) will likely be seen as disproportionately benefiting people of color. This, in turn, will trigger white racial resentment, which is regularly manipulated by

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<sup>7</sup> A term often used interchangeably with post-racial.

reactionary commentators and politicians seeking to derail the Obama presidency (emphasis added) (Wise, 2010, p17).

Wise argues for political activism that allows participants to “re-commit themselves in their public and professional lives to a more color-conscious direction, so as to foster greater equity of opportunity throughout the institutional spaces where we all operate,” (Wise, 2010, p. 24)

This argument for a more active citizenry is one that is taken up using the vantage point of African-Americans in particular in Michael C. Dawson’s *Not in Our Lifetimes: The Future of Black Politics*, a title that reflects this demographics’ thought-to-be vain hopes being realized when Obama took office in 2008. Dawson uses the same time frame that Wise examines to construct the beginning of an era of racial, political life in the United States in the years following the Civil Rights Movement of the late 1960’s as his framework. In his look at the black American population, he bemoans its lack of political activism, despite the devolution of life prospects that was signaled by such earth changing events as the poor human management in the effort to recover from the natural disaster that was Hurricane Katrina. That event displaced and adversely affected African Americans to a disproportionate degree. The images that flooded TV screen reports on the calamity were overwhelmingly of black people stranded in desperate situations, often on rooftops, waving pieces of clothing as flags for help, or in rickety boats, directionless in streets that became rivers, or stranded, on isolated bridges. These images formed visually coded language that silently and implicitly telegraphed to the nation proof of a divide that made being black the equivalent of being poor, disenfranchised, and, as a distinct class of people, a significant overburden on the precious resources of the country as a whole. Similarly to Wise’s national appeal, Dawson argues for a more active black constituency to combat political complacency.

### 3.3 RACIALLY CODED LANGUAGE

Racially coded language is investigated in several papers and books that span the years that precede the Obama administration as well as during its tenure. Among the papers: “Race in the American Mind: From the Moynihan Report to The Obama Candidacy,” by Lawrence D. Bobo and Camille Z. Charles examines the tenor of racial attitudes in white and black America

Across the ensuing decades since the report was first published in 1964. In “The Obama Effect”, author Jill Gill notes that “Republicans in 2012 have quietly employed racially coded language to help move economically strained whites, partial to certain Democratic policy positions, into the GOP camp.” More directly focusing on coded language, authors Nicolas A. Valentino, Vincent Hutchings, and Ismail White use their paper, “Cues that Matter: How Political Ads Prime Racial Attitudes During Campaigns” to test “whether subtle racial cues embedded in political advertisements prime racial attitudes as predictors of candidate preference by making them more accessible in memory.” Investigating racially coded language even more specifically still is “Playing the Race Card in the Post-Willie Horton Era: The Impact of Racialized Code Words on Support for Punitive Crime Policy,” by Jon Hurwitz and Mark Peffley. The authors use the case of the rapist furloughed by 1988 Democratic presidential candidate Michael Dukakis when he was Massachusetts’s governor. They recount how his opponent, Republican George H. W. Bush, used coded language to exploit racial tensions. The authors examine how seemingly innocuous words, such as “inner city” can color the tenor of questions posed to participants in a study gauging support for punitive versus preventative social policy.

Authors Matthew Hughey and Gregory Park use their work, *The Wrongs of the Right: Language, Race, and the Republican Party in the Age of Obama*, to examine the role that the

party's conservative rhetoric plays in framing the political landscape of a dystopian post-racial era with Obama as its leader. They document how coded language is used to reinforce the fears of a constituency that feels overwhelmed by a destiny that puts their demographics on the losing end of a zero sum gain battle. They show how the conservative Right often depends on the race card to create perceived imbalances between the races by using xenophobia and Nativism to "otherize" the man and delegitimize his presidency.

In *Anger and Racial Politics: The Emotional Foundation of Racial Attitudes in America*, author Antoine J. Banks' central argument links emotion, specifically anger to political action, particularly as it applies to many American whites' attitudes towards blacks. He makes this association so that he can query how racial concepts can be entered into the political dialog *without* the use of racially coded language. In the end, he concludes that "anger and racial schemas form such a strong bond that emotion may bring the racial attitude to the top of the head even when triggered by an event unrelated to race or politics," (Banks, p. 159). My contention is that the opposing argument can be made; that emotions can be triggered by language so directly that volatile reactions, political and otherwise can be seen as an inevitable result.

The use of coded language is being documented in popular media as well as in scholarly research. Four years ago, right before the general election, Touré, a chronicler of current American culture and politics, composed a blog posting entitled "How to Read Political Racial Code" and published by Time magazine online, that described how "[u]sing certain words to invoke racialized fear and scare white working class voters is a long-established part of the Republican playbook." He goes one to call such use of language as "ancient racial stereotypes in slick, modern gear." Giving the supposedly neutral "criminal" as an example of such use, he quotes Michelle Alexander from her book *The New Jim Crow*: "What it means to be criminal in

our collective consciousness has become conflated with what it means to be black, so the term white criminal is confounding, while the term black criminal is nearly redundant.”<sup>8</sup>

On the website Sociological Images in a report entitled “Newt Racism: The Racially Coded Language of Presidential Candidates”, guest blogger Jason Eastman wrote: “Since outright hatred and discrimination of people because of their race is no longer socially acceptable in our post-Civil-Rights era, many argue [that] racism no longer exists. But sociologists suggest that racism simply changed, becoming more implicit and indirect.”<sup>9</sup> He goes on to give an example where Daily Show comedian Larry Wilmore unpacks an entire paragraph that then-candidate Newt Gingrich used in his campaign as a not-so-subtle use of coded language: Wilmore “notes Gingrich’s statement about ‘neighborhoods where they may not have that experience [of working]’ is ‘code for inner-city, which is code for urban, which is code for Black.’” Other racially-coded words in widespread use are noted in an article from the website *The Root* entitled “8 Sneaky Racial Code Words and Why Politicians Love Them” written by Jenée Desmond-Harris. Among these noir mots are “inner-city” to describe a black neighborhood, “state’s rights” for legal restrictions on initiatives that support minorities, “forced busing” standing in for anti-integration, and more recently, “sharia law” a euphemism masking opposition to immigration generally, and people of Arabian descent specifically. Even well-known columnist Juan Williams, considered somewhat of a turncoat by many on the left, denounced the television network Fox as an echo chamber for the use of racially coded language, perhaps most famously in the repeated use of the term “Food Stamp President” for Obama. This derogatory term, despite well-documented statistics on the racial demographics of food

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<sup>8</sup> <http://ideas.time.com/2012/09/06/how-to-read-political-racial-code/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2012/01/23/newt-racism-the-racially-coded-language-of-presidential-candidates/>

assistance recipients to the contrary, does not need further elucidation to reveal its implicit racial code.<sup>10</sup>

Racially coded language is examined perhaps most thoroughly in Haney-Lopez's *Dog Whistle Politics*, in which the author creates a chapter structure that alternately details dog whistle politics from the 1960s to the present and develops a more in-depth conversation about race. The framework establishes a foundation for racially coded language that begins in the middle of the last century and continues through until today. Its more prominent actors include Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan. Although many of the examples are conservative in ideology, the phenomenon is not exclusively Republican; racially coded language has been known to cross the figurative political aisle as a significant bipartisan expression of our time.

Underlying all of this scholarship is the notion that the post-racial period that Obama's election was supposed to herald has been a rather significant disappointment in the annals of race relations in the United States. Rather than being an active force for the improvement of life outcomes for the betterment of all of its citizens, the colorblindness that has escorted the era has put the conversation about race on the back burner of current public discourse. In fact, ironically, the very mention of race – even subtle acknowledgments of its presence as a factor in social outcomes – can find the speaker accused of the very thing being examined—racist ideology. To join in the discussion is first and foremost an effort to promote a thoughtful debate on a matter that desperately needs exploration. Recent events on the political and cultural landscape vividly illustrate the dire need for this talk.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://mediamatters.org/research/2012/01/31/fox-regularly-uses-the-racial-code-words-denoun/184184>

## Chapter 4. PUTTING FERGUSON IN CONTEXT

Racially coded language is familiar to members of American society who are savvy to the tactics of individual politicians who deploy certain, considered keywords and phrases to capture the unarticulated desires of their supporters. The Southern Strategy adopted by the Nixon administration epitomized the effort, as it chose to align itself with politicians in the area who disparaged Civil Rights activists as lawbreakers, because of the protestors' decision to use active civil disobedience in public places as a key tenet of their movement. The strategy was quickly transferred northward to Boston, where the mere utterance of the neutral word "busing" triggered resentment by many whites to the perceived teeming hordes of blacks, eager to encroach upon their natural rights. Then, as is becoming evident now, the relative position of each side in this entomological skirmish is upended as perpetrator becomes a victim. As a result, as each camp becomes more entrenched, any opportunity to advance the national conversation on race is eviscerated, despite the considered efforts of both more level-headed public and private figures. The language that is often employed to describe the tragic event in Ferguson, Missouri on August 8<sup>th</sup> and its aftermath demonstrates how racially coded language has evolved to reflect not only the political desires of a few but also the emotional dispositions of many. To set the stage for this analysis of Michael Brown's death and the subsequent events in Ferguson, the following chapter provides some brief historical context by primarily focusing on Ferguson's origins and recent evolution.

#### 4.1 THE TEMPORAL GEOGRAPHY

When Michael Brown was shot and killed by Darren Wilson, the nation was still in the process of overcoming the trauma of a poor resolution to a racially divisive event some 1025 miles southeast and one year and 26 days prior. On that day, George Zimmerman was acquitted of both second-degree murder and manslaughter charges for actions that resulted in the death of another black teenager, Trayvon Martin. In that instance, the key tropes that would signal to particular demographics, specifically those black or white, included the fact that Martin was “hooded”—on the night he was killed, he was dressed in a sweatshirt that partially obscured his face. While this may have signaled to some, specifically black audiences, the innocent manifestation of someone who was, as a matter of practicality, protecting himself from the outdoor elements—as it was raining that night—to others, generally whites, it signified the representations of an outlaw who purposely donned a disguise in order to mask his nefarious intent.

In the case of Ferguson, the phrase “hands-up” has similarly divergent meaning to different camps. To blacks, it can mean surrender. However, in a vivid example of how meaning can be transformed and repurposed, to whites it is often used to signify, at the very least, deception. When in that manner interpreted, the veracity of the description blacks would submit cannot be verified—as witness accounts of the event maintaining Brown’s assumption of this submissive position are questionable—or, at the most, amount to mendacity, which sets such statements as purposeful misrepresentations that were advanced to promote a particular outlook. So in the “post-racial” era of Obama, simple phrases trope worldviews that outline the tenor of the racial dialog in America today. To better understand the way that similar dynamics played out in the case of

Ferguson, we also need to have some historical context regarding the city, and its relationship to the nearby metropolis of St. Louis as well as the wider history of Missouri.

## 4.2 FERGUSON, MISSOURI

On the city's website, Ferguson, Missouri touts its inception as one deeply ingrained in the expansionist history of the nation as a whole; its founding serves as an example in closer relief of the country's inexorable desire to fulfill its manifest destiny. As is true of many small cities founded during the industrial revolution that defined 19<sup>th</sup> Century America, Ferguson's origin as a small municipality was as a way station from a larger more established one: the major mid-western city of St. Louis. That city stood at the virtual frontier of the country at the time, as the nation inevitably marched westward. Local entrepreneur William B. Ferguson is called the new city's founder because in 1855 he cleverly deeded a ten-mile parcel of land from his "gentleman's farm" to the North Missouri Railroad Company. It was later renamed the Wabash Railroad Company in a consolidation of Missouri and neighboring state Illinois' burgeoning local track extensions to the nation's established trunk lines to the east. His condition was that the trains that stopped at the depot the company would build there—to be called the "Ferguson Station"—make daily stops. In that manner, in the tradition of many communities that are "bedroom" to the nation's larger metropolitan hubs, a symbiotic relationship between commerce and public policy, in this instance, transportation, was secured.

It is likely that the primary beneficiaries of this relationship were farmer Ferguson's fellow gentleman landowners; their profits were no doubt boosted by the gained ability to better transport their goods in a more timely and direct manner. It must also be granted that these landowner's ability to grow profit probably gave them a good incentive to expand. As they did so, other businesses that would support their enterprise—the wheelwrights, the smiths, the

haberdashers, and general storekeepers—grew in tandem. William Ferguson, in true “founder” fashion, subdivided the land he held surrounding the station into lots and sold them to homeowners and small businessmen. Soon, in 1894, with a population of 1000, the new city was eventually incorporated. Thomas January was a wholesale grocer who became the city’s first treasurer; he contracted, with the railroad, to enlarge a spring-fed lake on his property. The water the lake supplied to the depot, in a tank, allowed for the establishment of what would become the Wabash Club, a center of municipal activity for the new town. Hindsight from today’s perspectives would call all of this industrious enterprise a good seeding of the very atmosphere that is the basis of good Republican governance, and it likely that the resulting sound public order established a very healthy living for those who were fortunate to live on the right side of it for many years.

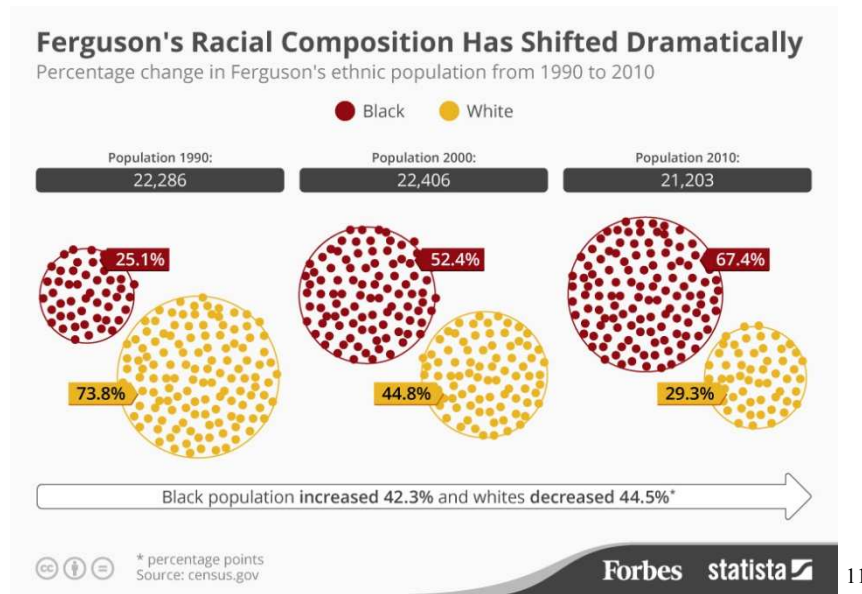
Thirty-five years before Ferguson’s founding, the State of Missouri was invited to join the union of the United States. In one of the country’s perhaps most notorious political actions, the Compromise that makes the state’s name familiar to any American History student in the world was made law. It was constructed to regulate the ongoing enterprise of slavery, an industry upon which the nation was initially built. At the time of this particular bit of legislation considering the admittance of new states to the Union, there were incipient threats to tear the country asunder. The Missouri Compromise prohibited slavery in the former Louisiana Territory north of the parallel 36°30’ north *except* within the boundaries of the proposed state of Missouri. For a while, the threat of war was stayed.

The Missouri Compromise was effectively repealed by the succeeding Kansas-Nebraska Act, which allowed white male settlers in those territories to determine through popular sovereignty whether they would allow slavery. Historians have argued the latter act to be a

virtual line in the sand that could be seen as the point over which the looming Civil War between the States would be fought. Incidentally, the succeeding Act is also viewed by many as the trigger that spurred the creation of the Republican Party, formed to combat the spread of slavery to the western territories of the growing United States. The succeeding years have seen the two major political parties swap; Republicans are now the standard bearers of conservative thought, and these days, at least in regard to racial matters, the Democrats are considered more generally liberal. That being said, this historical perspective is certainly germane to the conversations that have recently emerged surrounding the event that occurred in the theretofore unremarkable town of Ferguson, Missouri on August 9, 2014. Ferguson's history as part of the periphery of St. Louis set the stage for the racial transformation in Ferguson over the past twenty-five years.

The Ferguson of 2014 is a demographically challenged locale. Niall McCarthy, a Statista data journalist, who covers technological, societal and media topics through visual representation, reported through Forbes magazine that foremost among the reasons for the chaos that erupted in the city after the Michael Brown incident was the city's demographics:

Between 1990 and 2010, Ferguson's racial composition shifted dramatically with the black population rising from 25 percent to 67 percent. Meanwhile, the white population plummeted from 74 percent to just 29 percent. The reasons for the shift go all the way back to the late 19th century when the city of St. Louis separated from the county. The city itself experienced a major population decline (like many places across America's Rust Belt) which involved blacks leaving the poverty-ravaged central areas of St. Louis and settling in suburbs like Ferguson. The black population increased while the white power structure remained intact.



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On September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014, Newsweek magazine weighed in with geographical logistics.

More than a million people live in St. Louis County, the suburbs that encircle the city of St. Louis. The county, which does not include the city, is unofficially divided into North County, South County, West County and Mid-County.

Ferguson is in North County, an area transformed in the past 30 years from a middle-class white suburb to a largely black and poorer region of the county, as a steady stream of black residents abandoned the inner city for its northern suburbs. In 1990, for example, 75 percent of Ferguson residents were white. In 2000, the town was evenly split between white and black. By 2010, it was two-thirds black.

On the opposite side of the county, South County is like a white mirror image of North County. It's almost entirely white population is working class and middle class. There's a significant number of Democrats there, too, but of a different breed: economically liberal with strong union ties but socially conservative. South County is largely Catholic, pro-life and pro-gun-rights. Rather than resembling today's national Democratic Party, socially liberal and increasingly dependent on minorities, many of the white Democrats in South County resemble an older species of Democrat.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> [http://blogs-images.forbes.com/niallmccarthy/files/2014/08/20140819\\_Ferguson\\_Fo.jpg](http://blogs-images.forbes.com/niallmccarthy/files/2014/08/20140819_Ferguson_Fo.jpg)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.newsweek.com/political-backstory-ferguson-2683308>

So, the demographics of Ferguson are an essential element of the tenor of the ensuing conversation surrounding the killing of Michael Brown by Darren Wilson. Of the city itself, according to the website citydata.com in 2013 Ferguson's population consisted of 13,753 blacks and 6,494 white or 64.9% versus 30.6%, respectively for a combined total of 96.5%. The remaining 3.5% was made up of all others, including, in descending order, mixed race, Asian, Hispanics, and American Indian, down to the 24 Pacific Islanders whose percentage amounted to a barely registering 0.1%. So in Ferguson Missouri, issues surrounding race are very much performe black and white ones. Aggravating the atmosphere, the demographics of the law enforcers policing the town are reflected in the absolute inverse: it has been highly publicized that the force of 63 has only three black members. Likewise, the city council has only one black compared to 5 white members, including the Mayor.

#### 4.3 FERGUSON'S PHYSICAL FOOTPRINT AS DESIGNED BY GOVERNMENTAL ECONOMIC POLICY

Ferguson's physical footprint as a black suburban community that has been constructed to surround what had been in the middle of the last century a declining inner-city core was, contrary to the widely held popular belief, not the singular result of the phenomenon known as "white flight." Rather, the phenomenon Merriam-Webster's online dictionary defines as "the departure of whites from places (as urban neighborhoods or schools) increasingly or predominantly populated by minorities," should more properly be attributed to explicit governmental policy. It is a policy that has a nationwide reach and which has been documented in communities that range from the mid-west to far Washington State. That Washington State study, by Leah Montange, researches the effect such public policy has on the private lives of the persons

uprooted by such planning in a mid-size city's urban ghetto,<sup>13</sup> but the policy has effects that are just as devastating to the suburban and exurban communities concentric to major metropolises. Specifically, in regards to this study, Richard Rothstein's paper, *The Making of Ferguson: Public Policy at the Root of its Troubles*, published by The Economic Policy Institute in 2014, directly addresses the issue. It reports that a "more powerful cause of metropolitan segregation nationwide was the explicit intents of federal, state, and local governments to create racially segregated metropolises."<sup>14</sup> The paper goes on to note – in an investigation that uses Ferguson, Missouri, as ground zero – a range of policies that shaped residential and neighborhood segregation:

- Racially explicit zoning decisions that designated specific ghetto boundaries within the city of St. Louis, turning black neighborhoods into slums;
- Segregated public housing projects that separated blacks and whites who had previously lived in more integrated urban areas;
- Restrictive covenants, excluding African Americans from white areas, that began as private agreements but then were adopted as explicit public policy;
- Government subsidies for white suburban developments that excluded blacks, depriving African Americans of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century home-equity driven wealth gains reaped by whites;
- Denial of adequate municipal services in ghettos, leading to slum conditions in black neighborhoods that reinforced whites' conviction that "blacks" and "slums" were synonymous;
- Urban renewal and redevelopment programs to shift ghetto locations, in the guise of cleaning up those slums;
- A government-sponsored dual labor market that made suburban housing less affordable for African Americans by preventing them from accumulating wealth needed to participate in homeownership.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/handle/1773/33514>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.epi.org/publication/making-ferguson/>

Taking this history and ongoing social and economic stratification into account, Ferguson, Missouri in the mid-second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century was physically, temporally, historically, and economically situated on the brink of literally life-threatening divides when the two principles met that summer day. Such were the dynamics of this mid-west city when Police Officer Darren Wilson encountered black adolescent Michael Brown in the middle of Canfield Drive on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

## Chapter 5. FRAMING THE SHOOTING: THE GRAND JURY OUTCOME AND THE TESTIMONY OF DARREN WILSON

### 5.1 THE EVENT

This chapter shows how the authorities most closely involved in the shooting and the grand jury process put forward interpretations of events that offered a message to white conservative audiences in support of the social and political status quo. From this perspective, the sources of violence and dangerous repression in Ferguson were Michael Brown and other young black men, as well as outside threats such as the media (presumably liberal) who could be blamed for fanning the flames of discontent and disrupting the possibilities of local harmony. To set the stage for this analysis, it is worth recalling the basic events of the killing of Michael Brown.

On August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014, Michael Brown was returning to the home to he was sharing with his grandmother, Desuirea Harris, when he was confronted by Ferguson police officer of six years, Darren Wilson, reportedly for walking in the middle of the street. The facts of the events that followed are in dispute, but ultimately whatever happened resulted in Brown's death, after six bullets from Officer Wilson's gun entered his body three minutes later. The killing has profoundly affected the tenor of race relations in America today. Perhaps even more injurious to the collective black American psyche was the insult of having Brown's body lie in the street four hours after the shooting without recovery. This action alone telegraphed that certain lives in

America are worth considerably less than others and was perhaps the impetus that most directly sparked the discordant conversation on race in America today.

The uncertain events that surrounded the shooting led to a grand jury being convened to determine if Officer Wilson should be criminally indicted for his actions. In the early weeks of its deliberations, a leak to the press revealed that directly before the shooting Brown had strong-armed his way out of convenience store with products for which he had not paid, according to the shop owners. The report was accompanied by a video that showed the more than six foot, 200 plus pound youngster pushing the shopkeeper into a display rack at the store's entrance before rushing out. Reaction to the news revealed a clear divergence of perception between the black and white communities of Ferguson. To many whites, the episode justified the claim that Brown's prior actions warranted the shooting because he was criminal, not because he was black, and re-enforced the concept that Wilson's arrest was a demonstration of reverse racism. The discordant conversation was only amplified in the ensuing weeks. Key to the analysis I develop here is the testimony that emerged in relation to the grand jury process that began on August 20 to investigate Wilson's actions in the shooting of Michael Brown. However, before presenting the influence of that proceeding, a brief examination of the somewhat parallel lives of the two principals is warranted.

## 5.2 BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES OF MICHAEL BROWN AND DARREN WILSON

The biographies of the principals involved in the event of August 9, 2014, in Ferguson, the deceased, Michael Brown, and the shooter, Darren Wilson, share similarities. Both were reared primarily in single parent households by their mothers. Darren Wilson's, Tonya Dean, was a habitual law-breaker, repeatedly stealing money by writing "hot checks," usually from someone close to her, like a husband, of which she had three. As a result, her lifestyle, and as a

consequence that of her children, Darren, his sister Kara, and later their brother Jared, by the second husband, could be considered itinerant, at best. That second husband, Tyler Harris, told *The New Yorker* magazine's Jake Halpern that she "had me in debt—almost twenty thousand dollars—that first year," probably because she "often repaid debts to one person by stealing money from someone else."<sup>15</sup> The tension that less than careful household management lends to the environmental nurture of a young man may lead him to devise alternate strategies to help him move more productively into adulthood. Halpern describes one such ruse: "When Wilson was thirteen, he stopped trusting his mother altogether because she stole funds that she had helped raise for his Boy Scout troop. He worried that she would steal what little money he made working summer jobs, so he opened two bank accounts. The first, which had almost no money in it, was a decoy. He put his real earnings in the second, secret account." From this illustration, we can see that Wilson's coping mechanism may have been to become wary in situations where he felt that others would take advantage of him.

Like Darren Wilson, Michael Brown's upbringing was the principle responsibility of his mother, Lesley McFadden, but although his childhood could be considered nearly as transient as Wilson's, it could also be argued to be somewhat more stable. To Lesley, Michael always came first, even if putting him in that position meant that he was not always living with her. He started life living with her in an extended family household composed of his father, Michael Brown Sr., a younger sister, and his father's parents. When his parents' marriage dissolved, Lesley raised him alone, but only for a short while. When she moved out of the area, he remained in the household of his paternal grandparents so that he would not have to transfer to another high school. He would later go on to spend time in the home his father shared with his new wife and

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/08/10/the-cop>

in his maternal grandmother Desiree Harris's residence, to whose home he was returning to when fatally shot.

In comparison to Wilson's self-driven, somewhat independent upbringing, Brown's "village" supported childhood could be considered relatively stable. However, it should be noted that what is germane to our examination is that the environment that each was raised in probably contributed considerably to the outlook they each brought to their fatal encounter. Where Wilson's insecure upbringing may have brought forth in his personality an independence that a more nurturing environment may not have supported, Brown's comforting family womb may have left him less inoculated against the realities of life circumstances that may not have accepted him, no matter what he did.

### 5.3 ST. LOUIS PROSECUTOR ROBERT MCCULLOCH'S GRAND JURY

The grand jury that was convened to determine if Darren Wilson should be officially charged with a crime was ordered by Saint Louis County Prosecutor Robert McCulloch. A grand jury is comprised of community members to decide whether the state has enough evidence to bring a case to trial by indictment. They do so by determining whether the evidence revealed to them through exhibits and testimony present probable cause to do so. The Ferguson grand jury is said to have been picked randomly, but in most states that random draw is usually from a pool of property owners, culled from tax assessments, license holders, through state bureaus and voter registration logs. McCulloch had been in office as the county prosecutor since 1991 and had what some in the immediate community considered a checkered past concerning race relations relative to his position as that district's highest law official. This impression was based largely on the fact that some 50 years before Michael Brown was shot to death by Darren Wilson, the prosecutor's father died in the line of duty.

On the evening of July 2, 1964, during a gun battle in St. Louis's infamous Pruitt-Igoe housing projects, Canine Officer Paul McCulloch was killed. His alleged killer, Eddie Steve Glenn, was a black man who had reportedly abducted a white woman. Robert McCulloch was 12 years old at the time of his father's death. As chronicled in the *Gendarme*<sup>16</sup>, the monthly newsletter of the St. Louis Fraternal Order of Police, in an article entitled *Remembering Those Who Have Made the Ultimate Sacrifice*, the accused was pulled over by another police officer, Robert Steele, in a car he had commandeered from passenger kidnap victim Marilyn Morris. She escaped, and after a struggle with Steele, Glenn, with a shoulder injury and Steele's gun, fled into the labyrinth of the housing project. Several other officers were called to the scene, and there were reports of several volleys of gunfire. However, even though he admitted "shooting at" officers, as well as the kidnapping, there remains doubt about his ultimate conviction on intentional first-degree murder. The courtroom testimony of an Officer Keady, who interviewed Glenn at his hospital bedside as he recovered is revealing:

I then asked [Glenn], "Can you recall just what happened night before last in regard to Marilyn Morris and the shooting of police officers?" And he said, "I remember seeing the white girl parked in the car in the 800 block of North Leffingwell." He said, "I got in on the right side and showed her my knife and told her to drive on." He continued, he said, "I took four dollars from her purse, a dollar of which we bought gas with, and I took — she gave me the ring from her finger." I said, "Eddie, do you remember shooting the police officers?" And he said, "Yes, I remember the first police officer that pulled the car over to the curb, ... I remember shooting him." I said, "Well, you didn't shoot that police officer, you shot at him, ... you didn't hit him; that was Robert Steele." I said, "Do you remember the other two police officers?" He said, "yes." I said, "Do you remember shooting them?" He said "Yes. ... I remember shooting the policeman who shot me in the side." I said, "That would be Ronald Pott. Do you remember shooting Paul McCulloch, the other police officer?" He said, "I remember shooting a police officer and seeing him fall to the ground." I

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<sup>16</sup> [http://www.slpoa.org/docs/The\\_Gendarme\\_July\\_2014\\_binder.pdf](http://www.slpoa.org/docs/The_Gendarme_July_2014_binder.pdf)

said, “Who did you shoot first, the police officer who shot you, who would be Pott or McCulloch?” He said, “I don’t remember because I had been drinking a lot of liquor, and I had taken those two goofballs.”<sup>17</sup>

The childhood experience of losing a father so violently no doubt influenced McCulloch’s decision to enter into law enforcement in a more proactive role. He lost a leg to cancer as a child and so to him, since he could not become a policeman, being county prosecutor would need to suffice “as the next best thing.”<sup>18</sup> As more definitive evidence of possible prior racial prejudice on the later County Prosecutor’s part, I offer the fact that years before he convened the Darren Wilson grand jury he would prosecute several racially charged criminal cases. One of them, conducted in 2001, involved the killing of two unarmed black men—whom he referred to as “bums”—by a couple of white undercover officers.

Robert McCulloch’s childhood past and early prosecutorial career no doubt influenced the manner with which he chose to conduct the grand jury, a strategy many legal scholars, including *The New Yorker* magazine’s Jeffery Toobin, question. Toobin’s article in that magazine entitled *How Not to Use a Grand Jury*, outlines McCulloch’s overall approach as a “document dump.” The former lawyer characterized the proceeding as such because the prosecutor, contrary to cases “in which the jurors are explicitly steered to the prosecutor’s preferred conclusion” to indict, here “present[ed] every scrap of evidence produced in the investigation to the jurors for their consideration.”<sup>19</sup> Rather than representing the proceeding as a transparent process, to Toobin, McCulloch’s strategy betrayed a prejudice that favored Wilson.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://lareviewofbooks.org/essay/killed-robert-mccullochs-father/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://lareviewofbooks.org/essay/killed-robert-mccullochs-father/>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/use-grand-jury>

Toobin's article was published on November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014, a day after the grand jury's findings were publically made known.

As the lead prosecutor for the County of St. Louis, Robert McCulloch appointed two deputies to conduct the proceedings of the grand jury, Kathy Alizadeh, and Sheila Whirley. The jury that was eventually seated was comprised of six white men, three white women, two black women and one black man—its power dynamics clearly echoed the city's own. The grand jury's finding that there was no cause to charge Darren Wilson did not evoke many surprises when it was revealed shortly before 8 pm, on the night of November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014. Nor did the ensuing violence that erupted amongst the crowds waiting in the street surrounding the very place where the incident had occurred more than three months prior; they had been assembled there since before noon. Rather, what should be alarming to anyone concerned about keeping the peace in such a charged environment is the ease with which many have used this unfortunate set of circumstances, very often on national platforms, to express themselves without regard to their words' possible incendiary effect.

#### 5.4 DARREN WILSON'S TESTIMONY - FROM THE MOUTH OF A BABE

Darren Wilson's grand jury testimony contains a description of the impression Michael Brown's very presence had upon him as the encounter escalated into a fight. From the Huffington Post<sup>20</sup>: "And when I grabbed him, the only way I can describe it is I felt like a five-year-old holding onto Hulk Hogan," Wilson said of his struggle with Brown. "That's just how big

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<sup>20</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/11/25/darren-wilson-testimony\\_n\\_6216620.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/11/25/darren-wilson-testimony_n_6216620.html)

he felt and how small I felt just from grasping his arm," Wilson told grand jurors that when he and Brown struggled over the officer's gun, Brown "had the most intense aggressive face. The only way I can describe it, it looks like a demon, that's how angry he looked."

The testimony does several things. At the same time as he diminishes his ability to effect positive change in the encounter—as helpless perhaps, in his words, as “a five-year-old”—in this circumstance, even that “small” being nonetheless holds onto his humanity: he remains a child. That the child carried a weapon, the gun, is in this instance of near little consequence. It is a rational tool for reasonable circumstances encountered by law-abiding, rational beings. In this retelling, he is countered in what would become an epic struggle, by something *superhuman*, something from another realm, something beyond ration, from a fantastical universe, a cartoon-caricatured, otherworldly villain, whom he describes as a demon. Here the lines are drawn: his testimony is meant to evoke a classic battle of good versus evil, and there can be absolutely no mistake about which is which. Who is more good than a natural child. Who is more devilish than an otherworldly demon. The message is clear. There is no other desired outcome than that this ultimate evil be vanquished. Wilson is hoping to telegraph to those who want to believe him that justice could in no other way be served.

Slate magazine's Katy Waldman's editorial on Wilson's testimony, published November 25, 2014, makes note of many of the same tropes and pays particular attention the appellation “demon”, which should be here distinguished as a special kind of racially coded language: *one that brings morality into the mix.*

When religiously charged language enters a courtroom, it is almost always meant literally. A handful of defendants in the past 50 years or so have blamed **demons** for inciting them to kill: Most famously, the “**demon murder trial**” of Arne Cheyenne Johnson involved a man who

**stabbed his landlord after claiming that the evil spirits expelled** when his son underwent an exorcism took up residence in his own body. (He was convicted.) In one recent case, from South Florida, the defendant argued that the victim “gurgled and **it sounded like demons**”—sufficient grounds, in his mind, to stab her.

Of course, Wilson’s characterization of Brown doesn’t really fall into this tradition of literal, deranged belief. Instead, **it emerges, if unwittingly, from a long history of equating blackness with devilry.** Literature is rife with examples: **In Othello, the Moorish antihero is relentlessly compared to a demon.** (When he swears that Desdemona has “gone to burning hell” for her unfaithfulness, another character rages: “O, more the angel she/ And you the blacker devil!”) Rudyard Kipling’s odious poem “La Nuit Blanche” has the narrator recount a ghastly dream in which “a huge black Devil City”—possibly representing Africa—“poured its peoples on my path.” Nor is contemporary culture immune from the association: **In 2013, the History Channel infuriated liberal viewers for airing a miniseries, The Bible, that cast Satan as a Barack Obama lookalike,** (Waldman, 2014).

In fact, Waldman points to new research being conducted by Adam Waytz of Northwestern University and Kelly Marie Hoffman and Sophie Trawalter of the University of Virginia that reveals “a novel and potentially detrimental process” through which whites perceive Blacks as “Superhuman.” They note that:

Historically, Black Americans have been dehumanized, from constitutional denial of full legal personhood to enslavement as chattel. Today, a subtler form of dehumanization of Blacks persists, with powerful consequences; it increases endorsement of police brutality against Blacks (Goff, Eberhardt, Williams, & Jackson, 2008) and reduces altruism toward Blacks, (Mathur, Harada, Lipke, & Chiao, 2010).<sup>21</sup>

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[http://www.slate.com/blogs/lexicon\\_valley/2014/11/25/the\\_language\\_of\\_darren\\_wilson\\_s\\_testimony\\_close\\_reading\\_the\\_demons\\_and\\_supervillains.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/lexicon_valley/2014/11/25/the_language_of_darren_wilson_s_testimony_close_reading_the_demons_and_supervillains.html)

And so for this study we can extend the verbal descriptions offered by Police Officer Darren Wilson through a Social Constructivist paradigm, which holds that cultural immersion develops learned meanings, and use Bernstein’s sociolinguistic theory of restricted code—speech that is “refracted through a common cultural identity [that] reduces the need to verbalize intent so that it becomes explicit”—as our focusing lens. By doing so, we find that, *in this instance*, purposeful words are meant to hurt the person they are being used to describe.

In addition, further testimony that Darren Wilson offered to the grand jury that day created a framework through which the world that the police officer occupied could be viewed. In several excerpts taken directly from the proceedings transcripts (as will be further discussed below), Wilson, reveals his presence on Canfield Street that day as a member of a virtual occupying force in a foreign territory, an ill-trained and poorly equipped soldier on a battlefield where he felt no personal stake, even as a supposed peace officer to the community. As he put it, “it’s an anti-police area for sure,” while from the police point of view “it is just not a very well-liked community.”<sup>22</sup>

Darren Wilson’s training as a police officer had been mostly in the St. Louis area communities where blacks predominated. One of his training communities included the town of Jennings on Ferguson’s southeastern border, where Jake Halpern reported for *The New Yorker* that “ninety percent of the residents are black and a quarter of the population lives below the poverty line,” and where Wilson said he felt, “intimidated and unprepared.”<sup>23</sup> The small city had a reputation for anti-black racism. Black residents of neighboring towns avoided driving through it. However, even as he was less than

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.goreperry.com/>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/08/10/the-cop>

comfortable working there, when he left, it was not to go to a more relaxed work environment. His decision to work in Ferguson, another town with a majority black population, was made because, “he liked the fact that there was more work for the police . . . more calls to answer, more people to meet. “I didn’t want to just sit around all day.”” Wilson brought his training with him in his encounter with Michael Brown on Canfield Street. To him, as his testimony will show, Michael Brown represented the enemy.

The context of police culture in Ferguson also fed into the framework Wilson brought to the encounter with Brown. On Wednesday, March 4, 2014, the United States Justice Department issued a report entitled “Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department.”<sup>24</sup> The report concludes that Ferguson’s officers disproportionately charged black citizens with petty violations. As Halpern reports, “Wilson insists that he did not perceive this bias. However, the inequity was extreme: between 2011 and 2013, the Justice Department reported, ninety-four percent of the people arrested in Ferguson for ‘failure to comply’ were black. The Justice Department also reported that the Ferguson police routinely performed ‘pedestrian checks,’ in which residents were stopped on the street, often without proper legal justification.”<sup>25</sup>

The Justice Department report gave rise to several other national reports on how city revenue in Ferguson was financed to a large extent on the backs of its black residents through the issuance of tickets mostly for petty crimes. The New York Times published an article on March 4<sup>th</sup> of this year, 2015, by reporter Campbell Robertson, entitled *A City Where Policing, Discrimination and Raising Revenue Went Hand in Hand*.

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<sup>24</sup> [http://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/press-releases/attachments/2015/03/04/ferguson\\_police\\_department\\_report.pdf](http://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/press-releases/attachments/2015/03/04/ferguson_police_department_report.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/08/10/the-cop>

Robertson also relies on the Justice Department report to justify his declaration that “Ferguson, which is a majority black city but where nearly all city officials are white, acts less like a municipality and more like a self-perpetuating business enterprise, extracting money from poor blacks that it uses as revenue to sustain the city’s budget.”<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the Justice Department’s report found that police officers were encouraged to enforce the policy of issuing more tickets for petty offenses, such as loitering and petty larceny. In fact, in March 2010, the city’s finance director informed its police chief, in writing that, “Unless ticket writing ramps up significantly before the end of the year, it will be hard to significantly raise collections.”<sup>27</sup> Three years later the finance director informed the manager telling him of his correspondence with the police chief, where he had asked “the Chief if he thought the PD could deliver 10% increase. He indicated they could try.”<sup>28</sup>

That Officer Darren Wilson should have had knowledge of the racial aspect of his employer city’s “revenue-generating enterprise” was accounted for in Halpern’s *New Yorker* article. Halpern notes that the Justice Department’s report found “that police officers were punished when they did not write enough tickets, and often issued multiple citations for a single stop.” When questioned about this, Wilson admitted that he “knew of an officer who had once issued 16 [multiple tickets for a single stop]”, but denied giving anyone more than three himself. He said that to him “[w]hat the hell is the point?” and in this conversation appears keenly aware of the consequences such arbitrary actions may yield. To Halpern, he says that he believes that “such fines could create a ’vicious

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<sup>26</sup><http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/05/us/us-details-a-persistent-pattern-of-police-discrimination-in-a-small-missouri-city.html>

<sup>27</sup><http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/05/us/us-details-a-persistent-pattern-of-police-discrimination-in-a-small-missouri-city.html>

<sup>28</sup><http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/05/us/us-details-a-persistent-pattern-of-police-discrimination-in-a-small-missouri-city.html>

cycle,' in which people could not pay what they owed, then were fined further for missing payments. 'That's almost abusive of power,' he told me." Halpern's more in-depth investigation found Wilson's claim to have issued, at most, three multiple tickets, to be untrue; he unearthed four arrests deemed "questionable" by Fourth Amendment expert Erin Roberts, a law professor at New York University. These were incidents involving African Americans who were subjected to "pedestrian checks" by Wilson. When confronted with this evidence Wilson backpedaled, somewhat saying that "the failure-to-comply ordinance was exploited as an 'easy way to arrest someone.' True violations, he said, involved more resistance than 'you telling someone to come here, and them saying, "No, screw you.'" However, when I asked him to explain the ordinance further, he said, 'I'd have to read it again.'"<sup>29</sup>

The fact that these encounters were entered into along primarily racial lines was again documented by the Justice Department, which found that "From 2012 to 2014, the Ferguson police issued four or more tickets to blacks on seventy-three occasions, and to whites only twice. Black drivers were more than twice as likely as others to be searched during vehicle stops, even though they were found to possess contraband twenty-six percent less often. Some charges, like 'manner of walking in roadway,' were brought against blacks almost exclusively." That last infraction is one that could, without a doubt, be brought against Michael Brown when he encountered Darren Wilson on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014. However, Darren Wilson's armory included more than a keen knowledge of the inequitable and separate legal worlds inhabited by blacks and whites in Ferguson, Missouri on that day.

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/08/10/the-cop>

In addition to his belief that he was alone to defend himself on that day, Wilson also carried with him a perception of young black men like Michael Brown that saw them as being inherently criminal and so thereby, worthy of being arrested—literally stopped—for *any* reason, merely justified by their very existence. In a paper entitled, *The Essence of Innocence: Consequences of Dehumanizing Black Children*, by authors from three universities and the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress, three hypotheses are tested and found to be supported by their evidence. 1) Black boys are seen as less “childlike” than their white peers, 2) Characteristics that are associated with childhood will be applied less when thinking specifically about Black boys, relative to white boys, and that 3) These trends will be exacerbated in a context where Black males are dehumanized by associating them (implicitly) with apes.<sup>30</sup>

All of this comes through in elements of Wilson’s testimony regarding the shooting of Darren Brown. On page 248 of the transcript published by Gore Perry Reporting and Video<sup>31</sup>, Assistant Prosecutor Sheila Whirley questions Wilson:

Q. Okay. We’re going to go with you to the station in just a minute, but I wanted to ask you about your relationship with the residents in the Canfield Green Apartments.

A. Un-huh.

Q. Did you guys have a volatile, well, how can put this. Did you not get along well with the folks that lived in that apartment, not you personally, I mean the police in general?

A. *It is an anti-police area for sure.*

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<sup>30</sup> <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=62e70f38-77f6-4e82-bdc1-72fd3b5cbe27%40sessionmgr4002&vid=3&hid=4102>

Goff, Phillip Atiba ; Jackson, Matthew Christian ; Di Leone, Brooke Allison Lewis ; Culotta, Carmen Marie ; Ditomasso, Natalie Ann Simpson, Jeffrey A. (editor)

Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 2014, Vol.106(4), pp.526-545

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.goreperry.com/>

Q. And when you say anti-police, tell me more?

A. *There's a lot of gangs that reside or associate with that area. There's a lot of gun activity, drug activity, it is just not a very well-liked community,* (emphasis added).

On page 228 of the transcript Wilson is allowed to give an extended narrative of the encounter after Michael Brown had been admittedly shot at least once by the officer, retreated and was now returning:

A. . . . Well, after that last shot my tunnel vision [on Brown's right hand, which was inside his waistband] kind of opened up. I remember seeing the smoke from the gun, and I kind of looked at him and *he's still coming at me, he hadn't slowed down.*

At this point, I started backpedaling, and again, I tell him *get on the ground, he doesn't. I shoot another round of shots. Again I don't recall how many it was or if I hit him every time. I know at least once because he flinched again.*

At this point, *it looked like he was almost bulking up to run through the shots, like it was making him mad that I was shooting at him.*

*And the face that he had been looking straight through me, like I wasn't even there, I wasn't even anything in his way.*

. . . And he began to *lean forward as he got that close like he was going to just tackle me, just go right through me.*

Assistant Prosecutor Whirley:

Q. Can you demonstrate for us how he was leaning forward?

A. His [left] hand was in a fist at his side, this one [his right] is in his waistband under his shirt, like this. *Just coming straight at me, like he was going to run right through me.* And when he gets about that 8 to 10

feet away, I look down, remember looking at my sites and firing, ***all I see is his head, and that's what I shot.***

I don't know how many, I know at least once because I saw the last one go into him. And ***then when it went into him, the demeanor on his face went blank, the aggression was gone,*** it was gone, ***I mean, I knew he stopped, the threat was stopped,*** (emphasis added).

The statements here further show how a structure of state violence (by primarily white cops) against African Americans is discursively transformed into a situation where white society is threatened by super-human black violence that is only contained by self-sacrificing police officers. Wilson is forced to enter into enemy territory to control the threat. Michael Brown “bulks up” and only grows more powerful and dangerous when Wilson is forced to shoot him. Brown also becomes entirely beyond reason, looking through Wilson with unseeing eyes. So Wilson has no choice but to use further violence against Brown to prevent the deeper violence Brown represents. Just as with the demon analysis noted above, Brown is here defined as both more than human and less than human (an animal), and therefore not a victim in human terms. The message Wilson is sending to the white jurists and the wider white community of Ferguson and beyond is a racially coded one that reverses the sources of repression and violence and calls for a preservation of the status quo against a threat of social collapse if African Americans and others are allowed to turn Ferguson to their own political ends.

Darren Wilson's testimony before the grand jury on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September 2014 was the last to be heard by that body; he was its final witness. Robert McCulloch had certainly, as do other prosecutors, positioned the presentation of evidence revealed so that the procedure would have the greatest impact on the desired goals. Most prosecutors tailor the evidence to that which might be considered exculpatory because the purpose of the presentation is to demonstrate that there is enough evidence to go to trial, at which time such evidence would indeed come in. The grand jury then deliberated. Its decision would take more than two months to be revealed.

The aftermath of the grand jury's rendered verdict was an immediate surge of racial tension the strength of which had been building in the Ferguson community since the day of the incident. The crowd that had gathered outside the police station were no doubt highly incensed by what they perceived to be a lack of communication between their community and its law enforcement agencies, a perception that was enhanced by the length of time between when the last testimony was known to be heard and the day's verdict. So when Robert McCulloch stepped out of the station's steps to deliver it the tension was palpable.

## 5.5 ROBERT MCCULLUCH'S PRESS CONFERENCE ANNOUNCING HIS DECISION NOT TO INDICT AND SUBSEQUENT REPERCUSSIONS

McCulloch's press conference announcing the grand jury's findings was nearly 45 minutes long and was perceived as odd, to some observers, (Toobin, 2014). One notable area of emphasis was his statement on the media's role in the deliberation: "The most significant challenge encountered in this investigation has been the 24-hour news cycle and its insatiable appetite for something, for anything to talk about, following closely behind with the non-stop rumors on social media."<sup>32</sup> Jeffery Toobin, who also serves as a CNN legal expert, characterized this aspect of the conference as follows: "The first part was an extended whine and complaint about the news media and social media." Other parts he described as hard to follow. However, despite the lack of coherence in McCulloch's statements, his focus on the national media and the internet seemed to be suggesting that it was such attention that was the source of the unrest in Ferguson. This strategy of misdirection in itself is a kind of coded appeal that has a long history, where white conservatives blame outsiders for provoking violence where the community was previously harmonious, (Rogin, 1988)

Robert McCulloch's actions on the steps of the Ferguson Police Department concerning Michael Brown death on November 24, 2014, were provocative. From his

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<sup>32</sup> <http://www.whatthefolly.com/2014/12/02/transcript-st-louis-county-prosecutor-robert-mccullochs-statement-on-the-grand-jurys-decision-in-the-michael-brown-case-part-1/>

pronouncement that his grand jury had found the decision to indict Darren Wilson for any crime to be without merit, to his interpretation that the local and national media were perhaps in some way responsible for inciting an incendiary climate, his performance there no doubt contributed to the unrest that was unleashed upon that city immediately afterwards. His pronouncement telegraphed a missed opportunity to connect with a community that felt little in common with those who policed it. Coupled with Darren Wilson testimony, McCulloch's lost opportunity positioned Ferguson as ground zero to advance a national conversation about race. Unfortunately, rather than a positive conversation confronting America's racial history and considering the possibility of a post-racial future, the events surrounding the aftermath of Michael Brown's death have instigated an environment that is primarily negative.

## Chapter 6. EXAMPLES OF RACIALLY CODED UTTERANCES BY PERSONS LOCAL TO FERGUSON, TRANSFORMED FROM EXPLICIT TO IMPLICIT RACIAL DIS-EASE

The racially coded language describing Michael Brown as both sub- and superhuman that characterized Darren Wilson’s testimony was absorbed, reflected upon, transformed and regurgitated by all sides of the Ferguson community. Here I explore some examples from the database compiled in the mixed-methods research application Dedoose specifically for this study. This analysis incorporates utterances from ordinary people and public persons in the Ferguson community to illustrate how in many cases explicit words that could be considered valid substitutes for near expletives, now politically incorrect—*e.g.* thug for nigger—were often replaced by innocuous, more implicit phrases—“hands up, don’t shoot”, examined in a later chapter—whose telegraphed meaning depended on who was saying it. After first showing how this coded language was used in relation to protestors in the community, who themselves clearly recognized this kind of language as a political act that aimed to discredit the protests, I then turn to the mayor of Ferguson for an example of how racially coded language made its way into the wider political process both locally and nationally in relation to Ferguson.

### 6.1 FERGUSON COMMUNITY MEMBERS

The area that surrounds the street where Michael Brown was shot dead is described in an article entitled, *Why did the Michael Brown Shooting Happen Here?*, in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, as “an isolated corner of Ferguson that was flush with sprawling apartment complexes . . . a tinderbox for crime . . .” and, “a study of the slow encroachment of poverty and social

distress into what had been suburban escapes.” By looking at the statements from some of the young men living in the area, we can see that police regularly use the kind of language consistent with the racially coded discourse used by Darren Wilson. One of the neighborhood residents, a young man whose life experiences perhaps mirrored Michael Brown’s, is allowed to describe his predicament:

The nearly all-white police force has struggled to maintain control and respect from many African-Americans who live there as officers try to clamp down on crime.

There is a common perception that police stop people without reason.

**"If you stay here, they basically think you are a thug,"** said Gerard Fuller, 19, who is headed to Arkansas Baptist College in a few days on a basketball scholarship.

The Brown shooting dug into that nerve. The response seems to have as much to do with socioeconomic factors as it does opinions about race relations and police brutality in communities across the country that have struggled to integrate.

In St. Louis County alone, African-American poor are six times as likely as white poor to live in areas of concentrated poverty.

The apartment complexes located on the fringe of Ferguson - the self-proclaimed "Community of Choice" - give a glimpse of what that looks like, (emphasis added).<sup>33</sup>

Young Gerald Fuller’s sentiment is one that would be echoed several times around Ferguson in the months following Michael Brown’s shooting.

Brown's death and the militant response to those gathered to protest has left senior Gregory Moore feeling unsafe; he said in an interview. He and other students talked with Johnson and Koster about why Brown's death was furthering distrust of police.

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<sup>33</sup> [http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/metro/why-did-the-michael-brown-shooting-happen-here/article\\_678334ce-500a-5689-8658-f548207cf253.html](http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/metro/why-did-the-michael-brown-shooting-happen-here/article_678334ce-500a-5689-8658-f548207cf253.html)

**"Especially being around the same age, I felt that if he could be a target, I could be a target,"** Moore said. He said he was treated roughly by an officer who handcuffed him and threw him into the back of a squad car once for loitering.

Moore and other high school students, some who have protested and others who live in the area of the shooting, led the discussion with Johnson and Koster.

"It has been a trying time for everyone, and our students, the youth in this community want and need to be heard," said Melanie Powell-Robinson, district spokesman.

They talked about the attention on protesters and their constitutional right to gather. **One student said an officer called them animals.** Another told them he still has a tear gas canister in his backyard, (emphasis added).<sup>34</sup>

In an effort to perhaps deflect the possible damage and destruction residents might inflict upon the community following Michael Brown's death, a town hall meeting was set up at the Wellspring Baptist Church on August 29, 2014. It was moderated by the National Public Radio network's Michele Martin and was broadcast nationwide on that network's local St. Louis station. The church's pastor, F. Willis Johnson, acknowledged an atmospheric change that could be attributed to more than just the late summer time of year: "The temperature is rising is in this room," he said "What is happening right now—it ain't because the air is not on."<sup>35</sup> The pastor joined a panel of local dignitaries—which included the city's Mayor John Knowles, newly appointed Missouri Public Safety Director (and former St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department Chief) Dan Isom, former Missouri State Representative Rita Days, and St. Louis Habitat for Humanity CEO Kimberly McKinney—whose purpose was to address and interact with the gathered crowd of about 200 neighborhood people. Very early on into the proceedings the insult

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<sup>34</sup> [http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/education/with-unrest-around-the-corner-riverview-gardens-students-went-to/article\\_d4cd021e-11fc-5111-9d69-259bb39cec4a.html](http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/education/with-unrest-around-the-corner-riverview-gardens-students-went-to/article_d4cd021e-11fc-5111-9d69-259bb39cec4a.html)

<sup>35</sup> [http://www.stlameric.com/news/local\\_news/article\\_c5034e80-2f9e-11e4-98b3-0019bb2963f4.html](http://www.stlameric.com/news/local_news/article_c5034e80-2f9e-11e4-98b3-0019bb2963f4.html)

the community felt was represented by the blatant disregard for Michael Brown's body was made painfully clear. Ms. Martin voiced what many in the audience felt, that his body was treated as virtual roadkill. Her question was directed to the Mayor:

"I think that a lot of people want to know, they feel that Michael Brown's remains were disrespected," Martin said. "He was disrespected as a person that his family members were treated poorly. Can you speak to that?" The mayor's response and the community's reaction to it are telling:

There is frustration from people who feel a disconnection with the police," Knowles said speaking of the African American community in Ferguson. "I think they feel demeaned and disrespected more than disconnected," Martin said right after Knowles had responded.

Knowles apparently didn't see it, but other white residents of Ferguson did.

Jeff Schultz, a resident, spoke of his 16-year-old son's African-American friend being stopped and accosted by police while riding his bike. The officers asked him to prove that the bike wasn't stolen and demanded a receipt.

"How can you expect a 16-year-old to keep up with a bike receipt," Schultz said. "That won't happen to my son because he's white."

Knowles promised that if Schultz could get him the identity of the officer, action would be taken against that type of behavior.

"I'm angry," said Emily Davis, another white resident. "No mother should have to fear for their son's life every time they leave the house. And I'm not just talking about Michael Brown's mother – I'm talking about the mothers of those protesters who are just out there trying to make this better."

Later on, more town hall meetings would be set up so that community members could have an outlet to vent some of the pent up feelings of frustration that were a result of too many years being ignored by the power structure in Ferguson. On September 23, 2014, a meeting

lasting three hours was attended by 50 vocal residents at Our Lady of Guadalupe church where they again addressed Ferguson's Mayor John Knowles, and its city manager, John Shaw.

According to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch:

Vickie Bradley, 59, called the meeting a "waste of my time, nothing positive going on there. (It's a) bunch of complainers about the protests," Her sister-in-law, Regina Bradley, 53, said, "It just seems like they're trying to paint a pretty picture. But it's not pretty, it's ugly." Regina Bradley said she left when **"one guy called the protesters a 'bunch of terrorists,'" (emphasis added).**

The reporter noted that not everyone in the audience observed incidents in the same way and so did not share the same sentiment;

At Wellspring, Marilyn Harrison, 52, worried that her community is being misrepresented. Harrison said that as an African-American, she had never been harassed by police and has difficulty understanding those who claim they have been targeted by police because of race.

"The Ferguson you see on TV is not the Ferguson we live in," she said.

However, such sentiments were in the distinct minority, at Wellspring Baptist town hall.

Others at Wellspring pointed to racial divisions. Rosalind Mitchell, 40, said she had a difficult time sitting through the meeting.

**"There was a lot of racist things being said," she said, adding that some white residents used the word "thug" to describe some protesters, (emphasis added).**

Months later, after St. Louis County Prosecutor Robert McCulloch had made his announcement on the Ferguson Police Station steps, acknowledgment of the same derogatory characterization was still being reported.

Myron Gillet, 24, said he and others had been demonstrating peacefully until they heard the verdict, "Then people just started going wild. Some guys started kicking

a cop car; bricks got thrown into buildings. I don't know how the fires got started; I was too busy getting tear-gassed."

As armoured police vehicles moved in, firing tear gas into the crowd, more angry protesters massed at the police line. Some obscured their faces with scarves and masks, others' features fell as they watched the unfolding spectacle, a far cry from the non-violent civil disobedience that had been promised in the days preceding the verdict. One man repeatedly yelled the now-familiar slogan, "No Justice, No Peace" at officers in riot gear. **"You aren't giving us justice," he said. "We're animals - that's what you think! But we're Americans, just like you!"**

(Emphasis added.)

Nearby, two police squad cars had been torched by demonstrators, and they popped and crackled in the dark. They were just the first of multiple fires set across the St Louis suburb in the hours that followed. A Walgreen's pharmacy was gutted, and then a Little Caesar's pizza restaurant. Before long, businesses were ablaze the length of West Florissant Avenue, a main road close to where Brown was killed, which became the centre of the protests in August.<sup>36</sup>

In these examples, what is clearly demonstrated is that the people local to the Ferguson community are abundantly aware of the way they are perceived and described by police and other white members of the community. Indeed, the evidence presented demonstrates the theory of Constructivism in practice. Here in Ferguson we see clear examples of lives "constructed on the idea that everyone's sense of knowing is more than a passive expression of the world around us but is instead a result of our constructions or our beliefs and emotions about experiences in our lives. In this context, 'construction' simply refers to the ways we build our own, personal

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<sup>36</sup><http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/michael-brown-verdict-despite-calls-for-calm-in-ferguson-fires-blaze-and-shots-are-fired-9883092.html>

understanding of the world around us and how we fit into it.” In Ferguson all participants in the tragic event of August 9, 2014, bring their life experiences with them to their daily exchanges. Police officers like Darren Wilson patrol the streets of cities like Ferguson as a figurative occupying force, with their heavily equipped sports utility vehicles reconnoitering the middle of the only safe avenues of travel for young, black men like Michael Brown. Young, black men like Michael Brown see these middle byways as their only refuge because they fear being “hemmed up,” as too many have before and since August 14, 2014, entrapped in deadly situations with no means other than sheer athleticism to escape. What is demonstrated by the evidence are distinct worldviews at extreme odds with each other that are almost destined to result in tragedy.

In our examination, language has played a primary part into how these perceptions of life experiences are communicated. Words meant to convey specific meanings to the audiences they are directed to, and about the persons they describe, play a powerfully political role in undercutting any context where a more productive racial dialog might take place. These same elements of racially coded language used by whites to dismiss black concerns and, in fact, turn black protest into a further justification for repressive law-and-order tactics were not just mobilized by local white residents. They were also used by Ferguson’s mayor and police chief. Alongside the language used by Darren Wilson, these key local authority figures provided an important manifestation of racially coded language in the immediate context of the killing. This chapter concludes by looking first at the language of Mayor Knowles before turning to a brief discussion of Thomas Jackson’s dismissal of the protestors.

## 6.2 FERGUSON MAYOR JAMES KNOWLES

Ferguson’s mayor, James Wallace Knowles, III was, when elected to that office in April 2011, at the age of 31, the youngest to be so elevated in that city’s history. He is the former

chairman of the Missouri Young Republicans, that party's state social and civic club for conservative people aged 18 to 40, *and* went on to serve four years as the communication director of the Ferguson Police Department. He thus embodied the local conservative political class despite his relatively young age.

During a television interview broadcast on the MSNBC cable news network on August 19, 2015, some ten days after the incident and another 10 days before NPR would conduct the first town hall meeting in Wellspring Baptist Church, journalist Tamron Hall would allow Mayor Knowles nearly eight minutes to offer his insights into the incident's causes and the reactions to it. His opening stuns the anchor:

**"There's not a racial divide in the city of Ferguson," Mayor James Knowles said Tuesday in an interview on MSNBC's "NewsNation" with Tamron Hall. "That is the perspective of all residents in our city. Absolutely,"** (emphasis added).

Visibly perplexed, Hall press[es] Knowles on how he could say that, given the week's events [which included] a militarized and mostly white police force . . . turning up nightly—with tear gas, armored vehicles, and rubber bullets—to counter a group of mostly peaceful black protesters furious about the lack of answers surrounding Brown's death.<sup>37</sup>

Hall went on to note that Ferguson's racial demographics, pitting a majority white police against a majority black citizenry, did not ease relations between the two.

Knowles' immediate response conceded that more needed to be done to diversify the police force. But, in a move that would become increasingly familiar in the coming months, he calculated to shift responsibility for the damaging protests to outside agitators: He tried to pin the nightly violence on the streets on a small group of people and said it isn't representative of the

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<sup>37</sup> <http://www.mediaite.com/tv/tamron-hall-challenges-ferguson-mayor-you-really-think-black-residents-are-happy/>

community of roughly 22,000, seeking to pivot the discussion into an “us versus them” mentality when describing the members of the Ferguson community. “The city of Ferguson has been a model for the region about how we transition from a community predominantly white middle class to a community predominantly African-American middle class. But again, we’re all middle-class residents who believe in the same shared values.”<sup>38</sup> Hall challenged his perception saying, “We know you're not all middle-class because the unemployment rate is double-digits,” she said. “That's not accurate.”

This conversation reveals a relationship between the mayor and his constituents that is dangerously out of balance as would be proven by the more heated exchanges present in the sanctuary of Wellspring Baptist ten days later. Moreover, while the language itself is not primarily based on words that could be considered racially coded, the sentiment that is contained within them certainly is. At this early stage of the Ferguson community’s reaction to the incident that had Michael Brown lying uncovered and uncared for in the street for four hours, the mayor’s job as a uniter was superseded by his need to distance himself from any understanding of how that community might feel about one of their own being so visibly disrespected. It is a sentiment that would be further revealed in the exchanges with that same community as recorded in the previous subchapter. Also, and in keeping with his early career association with the Ferguson Police Department, later comments from the mayor had him defending the actions of that police department, particularly its Police Chief Thomas Jackson. The mayor’s choice to so address the problem proved to be a development that would be echoed across the nation as police forces countrywide reacted to the Ferguson incidents by closing ranks behind defensive rather than proactive responses to crime.

In an interview given on November 17, 2014, one week before St. Louis Prosecutor Robert McCulloch would give his awe-inducing speech on the steps of the Ferguson Police Department, Mayor Knowles sounded somewhat defeated, saying that he was preparing for “all worst-case scenarios.” The interview was conducted by Lori Jane Gliha and Sameen Amin for the cable network Aljazeera America’s American Tonight program.

Q. Getting here, I imagined that we would see somebody that was really stressed, but you don't appear that way. How are you preparing for the announcement of the grand jury?

A. Early on though, I was burning the candle at both ends. It was really tough and you could see it. There’s some pictures out there and some early interviews where I had friends say, like, "Wow, you look like you got hit by a truck." It's like I hadn't slept in six days, literally.

Q. What’s been the hardest part of this for you?

A. **The hardest part has been seeing the community that I grew up in, the community that I love, the community I've committed to serving – I've been on the city council for almost ten years now – to see it embroiled in this kind of racial tension, to see this kind of uproar**

**I grew up in a community that was always racially diverse, a community that continuously grew more predominantly African-American. The school I went to was predominantly African-American. By the time I graduated, [I'd] never seen any kind of racial frustrations or strife. We're a community that really kind of bucked the trend when it came to white flight. If you look at the neighboring communities around Ferguson, they're all between 90 to 95 [percent], some of them are actually 100 percent African-American. Ferguson's only 67 percent and that's really because you do have a large number of white residents who stayed and really were happy with the diversity, Embraced the diversity. So for me to see this happen to our community, it took a lot of us by surprise really, (emphasis added).**

Here again, we see the purported leader of the Ferguson community using language to deflect responsibility. Much like the accused Darren Wilson (or for that matter, any of the

characters directly involved with the tragedy—perhaps including the victim himself) the mayor is signaling that *his* experience, of a bucolic, integrated childhood, should be easily translated into that of all members of the community that surrounds him. When the outcome turns out to be not exactly what he expected, he is sorely disappointed and extremely at odds with what exactly to do next.

Q. Early on you said there was no racial divide in Ferguson. Do you regret saying that?

A. **Absolutely.** I mean, I regret saying it because it's an argument that's difficult to have. Because yes, there are racial divides in this country. There are divides between men and women. And I was defensive. I took the stand that I felt somebody was attacking what I knew to be a good community who embraced diversity, who loved our neighbors ... I'm obviously very, very much regretting having said that, **but I think people, again, need to recognize that those divides, those differences [doesn't] mean this community didn't have good race relations** before this happened, (emphasis added).

Q. Do you think your comments or the way your comments have been portrayed in the media have inflamed what's going on in your community?

A. Never denying that an African-American, even living in Ferguson, has a different life experience in general than a white resident probably does. **My point was we don't see that play out in Ferguson. We do not see white residents and African-American residents looking at each other with a cautious eye or scared of each other on a daily basis,** (emphasis added).

Q. What do you hope the grand jury does?

A. I don't care one way or the other what the outcome is, as long as it's the legal and fair outcome under the law. Whatever happens, my hope is that we can move forward as soon as possible on the healing, because an enormous number of things have come to light. And we need to be having

conversations about those issues, too. **If there's more protests that can become unruly or become violent, that's going to take away from the opportunity here to make lasting change to keep things like this from happening in the future,** (emphasis added).<sup>39</sup>

Taken all together, Knowles's remarks thus repeatedly present a community where the problems are shifted onto what's presented as a non-representative dangerous minority presence. Ferguson's racial realities are transformed into a relatively successful local example of racial integration that might have continued to make progress if not for the disruptions in the wake of Brown's murder. The white community is in this version of events acting in good faith against an untrustworthy opposition. It is true that the mayor is not confrontational in his language, and we should note the difference between his language and some of the other examples mentioned above (and reiterated by many national figures as is discussed in the next chapter). However, Knowles is nonetheless framing the crisis in a way that says to white locals and perhaps also a national audience that "we" know where the real problems lie, and we will not give in to this kind of violence and disruption. The violence of the local authorities and the legal system is in this way transformed into a positive safeguard against the black violence that is the fundamental problem.

### 6.3 FERGUSON POLICE CHIEF THOMAS JACKSON

Ferguson Police Chief Thomas Jackson suffered much the same myopia as did the city's mayor. In response to a question posed by Sean Hannity on his Fox TV program on August 13, 2014, the chief suggests the protestors are outside agitators.

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<sup>39</sup> <http://america.aljazeera.com/watch/shows/america-tonight/articles/2015/7/28/ferguson-mayor-on-protests-i-wasnt-there.html>

HANNITY: What about the unrest that has taken place now in your city? Do you believe a lot of the looting and a lot of what has happened is a result of outside agitators, as some have suggested, or do you think this is just a community angry at what happened?

JACKSON: **No, it's a lot of outside agitators that are causing the violence.** We've had some—several very peaceful protests. I mean, they're angry. They want—they have questions they want answers to. And I understand that. I get that, (emphasis added).

But we've had -- the community has now stepped up. Once this violence happened, our community leaders, the clergy, some of the activists have stepped forward and said enough is enough, and they're taking the lead on the protest. They're going to continue to protest, but they want it to be peaceful.

It should be here noted that at the outset of that same interview the Fox Network host, Sean Hannity unloaded a barrage of racially coded language to the police chief, who failed to take the bait until several questions later:

HANNITY: **I understand that the police officer, there's been a lot of death threats against him, a lot of volatility. You've got the New Black Panther Party; Louis Farrakhan has spoken out, the Reverend Al Sharpton is there. You've had the chanting, have a sign up there, "The only good cop is a dead cop."** There's been rioting and looting, et cetera, going on. That has prevented you from releasing the name of the officer. Some have questioned whether the wisdom of that, the public's right to know versus the safety of the officer. You're balancing that? (Emphasis added.)

The Fox commentator's rant would echo across the cable wires to connect with like-minded audiences throughout many media platforms as we will investigate in Chapter 7. The Ferguson Police Chief's sentiments were also reflected in his police department. On September 22, 2014 the Associated Press broadcast through several media outlets that the St. Louis County Police Department would be apologizing for the "wording" of a flier on its letterhead announcing a program its academy was sponsoring where participants could enjoy "feeding the animals" and be able to "meet the 900-pound gorilla." The same such sentiment reverberated to other police departments as did more evidence of racially coded language associated with the incident in Ferguson.

## Chapter 7. THE NATION REACTS

This chapter illustrates how the same racially coded language identified in Ferguson was also mobilized across the country. What follows is not a comprehensive analysis, but it is revealing in that it shows a range of different political actors and contexts where this language was used. Rather than giving a close analysis to each example, the approach taken is to give a cumulative sense of the wide use of racially coded language by briefly summarizing a series of incidents across different locations. In particular, the chapter focuses on two arenas where the discourse was prominent: the use of such language by police and their sympathizers outside of Ferguson, expressing a kind of racialized solidarity across the police community, and the use of such language by national pundits who often walk a complicated line between being media personalities and being more like politicians in the ways they can shape the political process in Republican and conservative circles.

### 7.1 POLICE OFFICERS' COMMENTS SHOW THEM ACTING IN UNION TO SUPPORT THEIR POSITION AS AN OPPRESSED CLASS

York, Pennsylvania is a small city in the south-central region of the state with a population of just over 40,000 people. Unlike Ferguson, its racial demographics are more reflective of the nation as a whole, with about half of its numbers made up of white citizens and only a quarter of the population black. Nonetheless, language reflecting the discordant conversation concerning race that was triggered by the killing of Michael Brown by Darren Wilson made its way into that small city local newspaper, *The York Dispatch*. In the paper's January 15, 2015, edition, reporter Erin James noted the fate of a York police officer, identified

as Terry Sietz, who had earlier used his Facebook account to weigh in on the incident in Ferguson. She reported that he had been put on administrative leave because “[e]arlier this week, below a photo of two black teenagers playing basketball and a headline that reads ‘Brawl mars York High victory over Harrisburg in boys’ basketball,’ the Facebook account posted this comment: ‘Animals don’t play well with others,’” demonstrating what his department would investigate as racist behavior. The parallel with Darren Wilson’s transformation of Brown into an animal is clear. James went on to note that in November of 2014 the same Facebook account had reacted more directly to the Michael Brown killing, vulgarly responding to a woman’s accounting of her donation in support of the vigil for another black youth, Tamir Rice, who was killed by a police officer. In response the officer posted, “I donated my last ‘s—t’ to mikey brown. Might donate another one later.”<sup>40</sup>

## 7.2 UNION OFFICIAL’S FACEBOOK POST DEEMED OFFENSIVE

Waterloo, Iowa is closer to Ferguson than is York, Pennsylvania, and is somewhat whiter, with that population’s percentage coming in at 77.3 as of the 2010 census. On August 14, 2014, the town’s local newspaper, the *Waterloo / Cedar Falls Courier*, featured a story entitled, “Some Take Offense at Waterloo Union Official’s Facebook Posts.” The story recounted that Tim Niedert, a shop chairman with that community’s United Auto Workers Local 838, after watching a news report of the goings on in Ferguson that featured a march led by two prominent civil rights leaders, the Reverends Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, posted comments on his Facebook page that several of his union members found offensive. Offner quotes him as writing: “If they convict this cop in Missouri I hope every cop in America walks off the job!

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<sup>40</sup> [http://archive.yorkdispatch.com/News/ci\\_27283241/Cop-on-leave:-racial-Facebook-posts-focus-of-probe](http://archive.yorkdispatch.com/News/ci_27283241/Cop-on-leave:-racial-Facebook-posts-focus-of-probe)

Then when all these anti-cop pukers would be running for their lives, when the animals have free reign (sic) too (sic) loot, murder, rape or whatever!” He went on to say that the reverends were trying to incite “a race war.” It is thus African Americans, again turned into animals, who are making a divisive racial issue out of nothing, rather than responding to a reality of racialized police repression. In this way blacks disrupt what could otherwise be a harmonious and secure society, justifying police force to contain this danger. In the following weeks after the Facebook posts’ publication, Niedert would meet with nearly a dozen of his union members, including two black female members about his statements, and defend his “first amendment” right to voice his opinion. He later would be exonerated as a grand jury convened to determine if civil right charges should be filed against him and found no cause to do so.

### 7.3 SACRAMENTO MAYOR KEVIN JOHNSON’S PUBLIC SKIRMISH WITH UNION

In Sacramento, Mayor Kevin Johnson, the former player for the Cleveland Cavaliers and the Phoenix Suns, became involved in a public brawl with his police union, over comments he made concerning Michael Brown’s killing by Darren Wilson. The city’s well-regarded newspaper, *The Sacramento Bee*, detailed the scuffle’s origins in its opinion pages: “Johnson said the Ferguson verdict caused him to have a ‘heavy heart.’ He said he was ‘really disappointed’ with the outcome of a Missouri grand jury that sided with Wilson’s version of events. ‘This is just a sad day for America, in my opinion, when you think about injustice and all the things that have happened over the history of time,’ Johnson said Monday night at St. Paul Baptist Church in Oak Park. ‘This one just doesn’t feel right.’”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> <http://www.sacbee.com/news/local/news-columns-blogs/marcos-breton/article4203770.html>

Mayor Johnson's police union took great offense at their black municipal leader's comments. On November 25, 2014, the day that St. Louis County Prosecutor McCulloch made his fateful announcement, Sacramento's local CBS Television Network affiliate, KHTK, recorded Police Officers Association President Dustin Smith's statement about the matter: "I think it's everybody's right, and they can take it as they so choose but at the same time you need to look at the global picture and the influence you have in your community and what your comments are going to mean. We feel like we're the model for the rest of the state to follow, and to hear it from someone who's seen things done so right, was just difficult for us to deal with." Smith described Johnson's remarks as an embarrassment. When asked if he felt Johnson's remarks were an insult to Sacramento police officers, Smith went on to state that "I would say it's more of a slap in the face to law enforcement throughout the country."<sup>42</sup>

#### 7.4 THE PUNDITS

Alongside these and other local examples of racially coded appeals to different kinds of political solidarity around public order against the threat of black violence, the full spectrum of conservative pundits at the national level weighed in with a similar political message. Especially for those pundits already associated with a strongly conservative audience, we find statements that are notably more strident than some of the language used by Ferguson authorities and other public figures, such as police representatives. But this language nonetheless relies on an element of racial coding compared to an earlier era of directly racist discourse, even if the racial intent of the pundits' language is very close to the surface. Here again, my approach is to quote largely from such individuals to show how they mirror previous themes of black aggression and violence

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<sup>42</sup> <http://sacramento.cbslocal.com/2014/11/25/sacramento-mayor-kevin-johnson-under-fire-after-ferguson-grand-jury-remarks/>

as the real source of the problems in Ferguson. In this case, many of the statements extend this racial reversal to suggest that a race war is being pursued by black activists when otherwise race would not really be an issue. Also central to this racially coded language is the claim that these disruptive community problems could be dealt with if not for the failure of liberals and others to challenge the manipulations of justice by protestors and the black community more broadly. At the same time, the coded (and sometimes more explicit) language also suggests that a repressive response to Ferguson by Democrats under President Obama will provide a justification for cutting off free speech and advancing government power that will result in a range of negative outcomes for white citizens. Having highlighted a number of these examples, I will briefly draw out a few key themes from the pundits' discourse to conclude this chapter.

#### 7.4.1 *David Horowitz*

David Horowitz gives one striking example of a charged appeal to the “common sense” of white conservatives who can see through the distortions coming from protestors and figures such as President Obama. Speaking to the conservative website NewsMax, Horowitz went from criticizing immigration policy to Ferguson, as the site reported:

David Horowitz was invited to NewsMax today to discuss a new DHS information service for people with questions about the implementation of President Obama's executive actions on deportation relief, which he said showed that “we let all aggressors of color get to be victims.” “I mean, it's not just the immigration issue,” he continued. “It's the race issue, too. **We had a lynch mob out there in Ferguson for months that spread then to the rest of the country, and they were called protesters, and it's like there was some hurt inflicted on them.** What is the hurt in taking down a criminal like Michael Brown, who's assaulting a police officer?” “So the left has successfully changed the equation so that if you're here illegally, somehow

we should be sympathetic to you, and somehow you have rights, and somehow we want to heed your complaints. This is suicidal,” he said. Later in the interview, Horowitz declared that “the president of the United States is a racist” and claimed that President Obama had appointed Rev. Al Sharpton, the “chief racist” and “chief lynch-mob leader in the country,” as his “race relations advisor.” The president is “backing these lynch mobs,” he added.<sup>43</sup> (Empahsis added.)

#### 7.4.2 *Stewart Rhodes*

Stewart Rhodes, whose anti-government Oath Keepers group deploys unofficial militias to places like the Bundy Ranch (cite of a longstanding conflict between the Bureau of Land Management and a Nevada rancher) and Ferguson, Missouri , claimed in an interview on Armed America Radio in December that Obama administration officials are using the Ebola virus, immigration, and **the riots in Ferguson to “spark a race war” that will ultimately allow them to destroy the Constitution.** Discussing Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon’s decision not to send the National Guard to Ferguson to quell the violent elements of protests after a grand jury decision in the case of Michael Brown’s death, Armed America Radio host Mark Walters told Rhodes, “There is speculation that there were powers at the highest levels of our government that asked him not to do that for the optics.” “Well, absolutely,” Rhodes agreed. **“They knew there were outside communist agitators there for months training people on how to do this stuff and, as you said, they knew precisely what was going to happen that night.”** “You have to wonder why,” he added, “I think you’re on the same track I’m at, where I believe this was intentional to maximize the pain, maximize the chaos, and then be able to say, **‘Hey, here’s the solution,**

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<sup>43</sup> <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/david-horowitz-racist-obama-lets-all-aggressors-color-get-be-victims#sthash.ybf4t1ZW.dpuf>

**we've got to cut down on the First Amendment, we need more monitoring of groups, we need a police-state mindset.”<sup>44</sup> (Emphasis added.)**

#### 7.4.3 *Jesse Lee Peterson*

On an edition of station VCY America's<sup>45</sup> “Crosstalk” radio program, right-wing activist Jesse Lee Peterson spoke with host Jim Schneider about the “racial agitators” who are supposedly keeping black Americans in “bondage” by protesting the shooting of “thug” Michael Brown, and blamed Brown's death on the way he was raised by his parents. Depicting Obama as a great national divider who encourages disunity among racial groups, Peterson questioned why support of the president was still strong within the black community. Peterson then blamed Brown's death on the teen and his parents, dismissing the idea that racism was at all a factor. **“When Michael Brown decided that he was going to rob a store and attack a police officer, he decided that he was ready to die,” he continued. “That was his decision, and so I blame Michael Brown and I blame his parents who did not raise him right. They did not raise a good citizen, they raised a thug, and they failed him, and it is their fault along with Michael Brown. It had nothing to do with race at all.”** After Schneider brought up several black members of Congress who took part in a demonstration protesting police brutality, Peterson accused civil rights advocates of fanning the flames of racial animosity in order to preserve their power: **“We are eventually, short of a miracle from God, we are going to have a race war on**

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<sup>44</sup> <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/stewart-rhodes-government-using-ferguson-riots-ebola-immigration-spark-race-war#sthash.5zSfklX.dpuf>

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.vcyamerica.org/>

**our hands.** And that's what Obama and others want, so they can come in and just put us in bondage even more so."<sup>46</sup> (Emphasis added.)

#### 7.4.4 *Alan Keyes*

Noted black conservative activist Alan Keyes accused President Obama of using the protests over Michael Brown's death to intimidate Republicans in Congress into yielding to his political agenda. Keyes, who faced off against Obama in the 2004 U.S. Senate race in Illinois, told NewsMax TV host Ed Berliner that the president is "exploiting this situation by way of threatening the Republicans, saying that **there will be massive unrest if they don't knuckle under to his will and trying to prove that he's got the power to turn our cities into powder kegs that will explode in the face of anybody who opposes him.**" "It's a Hitlerian tactic, and I think we ought not to as Americans respond to it with anything but contempt."<sup>47</sup> (Emphasis added.)

#### 7.4.5 *Alex Jones*

"InfoWars" host Alex Jones insisted today **that the demonstrations in Ferguson, Missouri, and elsewhere are all part of a grand plot to bring about racial violence and another civil war in America. Jones warned that the Ferguson protests will lead to a government attack**

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/jesse-lee-peterson-obama-launching-race-war-keeping-black-americans-bondage#sthash.9cj8L9zj.dpuf>

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/alan-keyes-hitlerian-obama-using-ferguson-turn-our-cities-powder-kegs-will-explode#sthash.1KYMavXd.dpuf>

**on the Tea Party and “the attempted takedown of the Republic,”** adding that there will be an “attempt to start a civil war, playing the people off against the police and people off against each other racially.” “Minorities, who are really the majority now in most areas, will see the Democratic Party as their Kapo in the prison,” Jones continued. “The UN’s the warden, and they’ve got us all in racial gangs and we’re all in a prison together like a bunch of chumps.”<sup>48</sup> (Emphasis added.)

#### 7.4.6 *Pat Buchanan*

Pat Buchanan, former presidential candidate and senior advisor to Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Reagan, focused his discussion of Ferguson on the actions of President Obama, whom he described in an article as the agitator in chief. Among his arguments were the following:

What, other than its racial aspect, can explain why Obama is so hung up on Ferguson? At the Congressional Black Caucus dinner Saturday, he was back stoking the embers.

*“Too many young men of color feel targeted by law enforcement, guilty of walking while black or driving while black – judged by stereotypes that fuel fear and resentment and hopelessness.”*

Obama is here implying that Michael Brown was profiled, judged “guilty of walking while black,” when shot and killed.

But that is false, and Barack Obama knows it is false.

Why is he parroting a party line about America that he knows is more myth than truth? White cops are not the great lurking danger, nor the leading cause of violent death, of black teenagers and men.

That role is fulfilled by other black teenagers and other black men. And the statistics on the ugliest forms of racial violence in America – interracial assaults, rapes, murders – reveal that such crimes are overwhelmingly black-on-white.

**Obama said that “young men of color” are too often “judged by stereotypes.” But behind those stereotypes are FBI statistics that show that black males between 16 and 36, 2 percent of the U.S. population, commit a vastly disproportionate share of all violent crimes.**

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<sup>48</sup> <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/alex-jones-government-will-use-ferguson-start-race-war#sthash.4fEBDrAL.dpuf>

Where are the stats to sustain Obama's stereotype of cops?

And what did the Ferguson police do to deserve to be invoked as exemplars of what is wrong with law enforcement in America, while the Ferguson protesters get a presidential pass?

Saturday night, a Ferguson cop was shot in an incident unrelated to August. But Chief Jackson and State Highway Patrol Capt. Ron Johnson have told the Washington Post their officers have been repeatedly threatened and, since August, have come under gunfire.

If a St. Louis officer is wounded or killed in revenge for Brown, President Obama will deserve a full share of the moral responsibility.

**It is time he started acting like a president of all the people and dropped this role of outside agitator.**<sup>49</sup> (Emphasis added.)

7.4.7 *Ted Nugent*

Ted Nugent wrote a similar analysis on the right-wing website World Net Daily:

**Learning his political lessons well straight out of the streets of Chicago and never letting a crisis go to waste, our president knows exactly when to play the ultimate Saul Alinsky race trump card in his never-ending political poker game.**

Now, horrifically, he has played it once again by talking about the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. Make no mistake – Mr. Obama has not spoken out of concern for racial harmony and unity, but rather to ensure black Americans remain squarely in his camp on the big-government boogie bandwagon known as the Democratic Party. Heartbreakingly, while Ferguson burns, I'm afraid this is all much ado about politics.

Facts are surely pesky and irritating to the president and his liberal accomplices in the national propaganda ministry who remain good soldiers and blame guns for America's urban warfare.

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<sup>49</sup> <http://www.wnd.com/2014/09/barack-obama-agitator-in-chief/#6MTOyBUZ6eWP6gQ3.99>

The bulletproof truth is that if you subtract gun-related suicides and the engineered recidivism of gun-related deaths in our major urban war zones by paroled and released street savages killing each other, what you are left with is an America that is largely a very peaceful place.

**The real cause of the carnage in Chi-raq and St. Louis isn't access to guns or racism, it's the absence of good old family values and the discipline that goes with them. America doesn't have a gun-related violence problem. We have a shattered-family-related violence problem.**

**Seventy percent of young blacks are being raised in single-parent households. This is a recipe for a cultural, economic and social death march. The ugly truth is that liberals are complicit in Michael Brown's death and the deaths of thousands of other young black guys who have been encouraged to become thugs.** The pesky fact is that America has a discipline-less related violence problem.<sup>50</sup> (Emphasis added.)

#### 7.4.8 *Larry Klayman*

(WorldNetDaily article titled "Time to Take a Stand Against Obama's Racism")

When I was a young boy, I watched scenes on television of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. speaking and fighting for equal rights for blacks. Even at age 10, I was moved not only by his inspiring oratory but also his steadfast determination to bring freedom to his people; indeed bringing freedom to all oppressed people. Be you black or white, the civil rights leader, a true giant among men, even with his leftist connections, set the tone for a nation in ascension.

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<sup>50</sup> <http://www.wnd.com/2014/08/ferguson-and-lbjs-war-on-blacks/#OHao1augPTrGH8Cj.99>

**Today, our country, now in steep decline, is not so fortunate as to have a civil rights leader like King. Rather, sitting atop our corrupt government is a bigoted anti-white socialist, who it has become clear not only despises Caucasians, but also Christians and Jews of all stripes. He is a black Muslim in the subtler mold of Louis Farrakhan and Malcolm X – only repackaged and warmed over to have duped enough Americans to have voted him into the presidency in 2008 and 2012. This destructive and evil man, Barack Hussein Obama, is more dangerous than Farrakhan or X; he is the nominal leader of the free world, an ironic position given that his view of governance is hardly one that fights for and preserves freedom, but instead through words and deed seeks to snuff out liberty for nearly everyone whose skin color and inherent Muslim faith does not match his own.**

My words today may at first seem extreme. They are not. They must finally be said, given the sad state of affairs we now find ourselves in – with time running out to confront and defeat Obama and his pliant leftist goons. More and more, Americans are starting to see these black racists for what they are. Fox News' Megyn Kelly, Bill O'Reilly, and Sean Hannity are now calling it like it is, but even ordinary Americans, also liberal ones, are also beginning to talk more clearly and openly about this threat to our formerly civilized society.

**The scary saga of black mob violence in Ferguson, Missouri, this week, where a cop was not indicted for the killing of Michael Brown – a young thug who robbed a convenience store and then attacked the arresting officer – unmasks in greater detail the frightening racial divide and criminal reverse racism among many black Americans incited by the Obamas, Holders, Sharptons and Jacksons of the world. This lot, and their minions, has triggered a racial war – only one that is one-sided. White Americans and others of non-**

**color have been slow to react and fight back, for fear of being branded racists and ostracized from their social and political communities.** Indeed, if white Americans and their ilk would again act in this fashion – as they did to an extent in the old South and elsewhere in the middle years of the 20th century, by burning and looting stores, setting afire buildings and mugging innocent people based on their race – then they would be branded as modern-day versions of the Ku Klux Klan and prosecuted by Obama’s Justice Department, among other law enforcement agencies under his direction and control.<sup>51</sup> (Emphasis added.)

## 7.5 SOCIAL MEDIA

In an article published minutes after the grand jury released its findings, entitled “Right-wing’s sick Twitter celebration: Ann Coulter, Ted Nugent, Brit Hume battle for grossest Darren Wilson tweet,”<sup>52</sup> Salon Magazine’s online web page put right wing dog whistle politics on public display. The “pithy” remarks that emerged provide a way to look at how Ferguson was boiled down to a few key themes consistent with the pundits’ longer statements provided above:

- **Ann Coulter**, self-described as an American conservative social and political commentator, tweeted:

*MO gov: Cops will protect lives, property & "free speech." Only people whose free speech is threatened are whites cowering in their homes.*

She is here using Twitter shorthand to respond to the Missouri governor, Jay Nixon’s earlier speech declaring a state of emergency requiring his activation of the National Guard. Here she telegraphs to her intended audience, conservative whites, that the enlistment of such law enforcement officers will do more to

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<sup>51</sup> <http://www.wnd.com/2014/11/time-to-take-a-stand-against-obamas-racism/#GWWXHRsbo13HOguS.99>

<sup>52</sup> [http://www.salon.com/2014/11/25/right\\_wings\\_sick\\_twitter\\_celebration\\_ann\\_coulter\\_ted\\_nugent\\_brit\\_hume\\_battle\\_for\\_grossest\\_darren\\_wilson\\_tweet/](http://www.salon.com/2014/11/25/right_wings_sick_twitter_celebration_ann_coulter_ted_nugent_brit_hume_battle_for_grossest_darren_wilson_tweet/)

curtail *their* freedoms than to maintain law and order to the public as a whole. It is a common meme and is explored more expansively in “Change They Can’t Believe In”, by Christopher Parker and Matt Beretta.

- **John Nolte**, a Hollywood screenwriter and contributor to the online right-wing website Brietbart.com, tweeted:

*Everyday Americans serve justice in grand juries while elite media only serves up mob justice based on lies.*

Here, “everyday Americans” is meant to be read as everyone *except* those who are thought by the targeted audience to be on the margins of society, those whose skins are darker, accents are less traditional, happen to be women, or whose sex partners are not of the opposite gender. These every *other* Americans are further distinguished by their hyphenated qualifiers and to the targeted audience are unfairly supported by a government too weak to be influenced by rationality that is rather swayed by a “mob” mentality system of so-called “justice.”

- **Laura Ingraham**, another well-known conservative circulated the following:

*Hardcore leftists'(sic) don't really give a rip abt(sic) facts. [The] goal is and has always been to undermine civil society, stoke unrest, chaos.*

Ingraham is predicting an Armageddonish outcome of unrest in the street unless conservative values—the only true and factual values—are applied wholesale.

She is signifying to her audience that they will suffer and at the same time transferring victimhood from those whom the powers that be would help, the less fortunate, to those who have too much to lose—long suffering, *civil* conservatives—whom it would hurt.

## 7.6 FRAMING THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION

The investigation undertaken in this chapter illustrates the prominence of racially coded language in national level conservative politics circles in the wake of Ferguson. Moreover, this development was arguably a process involving an inequitable power structure that mirrored the

dynamic at the heart of the incident that triggered it. National commentators—both those that at some point held public office and those who simply enjoyed the national forum that modern day media provides—often found themselves opposing those who were not comparatively positioned to put forward an alternative analysis.

So once again on a national scale, as was the case in our examination of their impact in the local Ferguson context, we see words being used for a partisan political agenda that also undermines any chance for a more meaningful racial dialog. Racially coded language becomes a mechanism by which particular whites devalue black concerns about social justice and reinforce a political coalition around hostility to such claims. David Horowitz and Larry Klayman, for example, turns the black protestors and their allies into a dangerous mob (in Horowitz's language, a lynch mob), in a reversal of the historical reality of white lynch mobs in the South. Stewart Rhodes, Pat Buchanan, and Jesse Lee Peterson draw on the related theme explored earlier of outside agitators as the real source of violence in Ferguson. Many of the commentators, including Alex James, Ted Nugent, Alan Keyes, and Larry Klayman, in different ways suggest that racial injustice was not the problem, but rather that race was only brought into the picture by African Americans as a manipulation of the situation with an underlying goal of undercutting white society (in extreme instances through a race war). All of these claims do the work of encouraging white conservative solidarity against the black community presented as violent, untrustworthy, and threatening to the society. We might treat any one pundit as a fringe figure, but the survey of a range of media figures here suggests a consistent line of argument within conservative political circles that has a cumulative effect that is mutually reinforcing in its consequences.

## Chapter 8. HAND'S UP, DON'T SHOOT, #BLACK LIVES MATTER, THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL RACE

The conversation sparked by the incident in Ferguson where Police Officer Darren Wilson killed Michael Brown has sparked a movement of political activists who are determined to have an influence upon the direction racial policy moves in the future. Primary among their targets is how candidates running for the United States presidency react to such matters. As one final indication of how racially coded political messaging has unfolded in the period since Ferguson, this chapter briefly outlines the competing political messages carried in the now widely recognized phrases “hands up, don’t shoot!” and more centrally, “black lives matter,” which has become the narrative tag for a movement but has also been countered with what might be termed racially coded language. Here we can see how the politics explored in this thesis have entered the discourse of the 2016 presidential election.

### 8.1 HANDS UP, DON'T SHOOT!

As referenced in previous chapters, the phrase “Hands up; don’t shoot,” has a troubled history concerning its relation to Michael Brown’s death. What at first glance may appear to be an innocuous, simple statement of fact was eventually transformed into the very embodiment of mendacity on the part of those who used it as a rallying call. In fact, the term can be found in the testimony of the suspect Darren Wilson before the grand jury, although the intended context is to support a more nefarious end. On page 210 of that transcript, Wilson says, “I see him ducking, and as he is ducking, his hands are up and he is coming in my vehicle.” More supportive of the purported innocence of the suggested gesture is the testimony of Dorian Johnson, who was Brown’s companion on Canfield Drive that day. Of his testimony, the Washington Post’s

Jonathan Capehart reported in its March 15, 2015, issue: “The DOJ report notes on page 44 that Johnson “made multiple statements to the media immediately following the incident that spawned the popular narrative that Wilson shot Brown execution-style as he held up his hands in surrender. In one of those interviews, Johnson told MSNBC that Brown was shot in the back by Wilson. It was then that Johnson said Brown stopped, turned around with his hands up and said, ‘I don’t have a gun, stop shooting!’”<sup>53</sup> When the St. Louis Rams, the city NFL franchise, entered their stadium using the gesture to show support for the unjustified killing, the city police force retaliated by publicly denouncing the team.<sup>54</sup>

Capitalizing upon the sensation caused by the revelation of the perceived falsity of the slogan and broadening it to describe untrustworthiness of anyone who would utter it, conservative commentators took to public media outlets to spread their message: liars cannot be trusted. Leading this repositioning of the narrative the Ferguson incident had wrought was the Fox Networks Megyn Kelly, who is frank about her views on the mendacity of the Hands Up movement.<sup>55</sup> Here, as was proven to be the case with racially coded language more specifically targeted, the use of a simple, innocuous term became the battleground for dueling ideologies.

## 8.2 #BLACK LIVES MATTER

Far more effective, both as a movement and as a rallying call, has been the Black Lives Matter movement, whose birth precedes the incident in Ferguson, but which has been somewhat empowered by it. The movement started in the aftermath of the acquittal of George Zimmerman, a white man, moonlighting as a rogue security officer for the killing of Trayvon Martin, an

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<sup>53</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/wp/2015/03/16/lesson-learned-from-the-shooting-of-michael-brown/>

<sup>54</sup> <http://usat.ly/1rLZyGT>

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=fox+news+megyn+kelly+hands+up+don't+shoot&FORM=VIRE1#view=detail&mid=F0980DEA9FA3398F572EF0980DEA9FA3398F572E>

unarmed black youth. According to its website, the movement's purpose is to send out "a call to action and [as] a response to the virulent anti-Black racism that permeates our society. Black Lives Matter is a unique contribution that goes beyond extrajudicial killings of Black people by police and vigilantes."<sup>56</sup> But, here again as was the case with the innocuous "Hands Up," the statement was politicized to evoke an alternate political agenda. The statement was countered by those promoting a conservative agenda, by the supposed more inclusive "All Lives Matter." When examined more closely within the theoretically semantic lens this thesis has employed, this reclamation of language is really meant to demean the value of a progressive movement.

### 8.3 THE 2016 RACE FOR THE PRESIDENCY

Given the impact, the issue of race has had upon the presidency of the United States during the Obama Administration, it is not that it has affected the race to succeed him. Two leading Democratic candidates, Senator Bernie Sanders and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, have had widely publicized encounters with the Blacks Lives Matter movement. The first of these, with the senator, occurred in Seattle, Washington on August 8, 2015. Sanders had just taken to the stage set up in front of the city's central shopping mall, Westlake Center, when two members of the movement's local chapter commandeered the proceedings. The Seattle Times reported that a raucous encounter ensued. Marissa Johnson, the group's spokeswoman at the event, began the exchange:

"If you do not listen ... your event will be shut down," one of the protesters told organizers, who offered to let them speak after Sanders.

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<sup>56</sup> <http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>

After a back and forth with the screaming protesters, organizers relented and said the demonstrators could go first.

Some in the largely white audience booed and chanted for protesters to let the senator talk. A few yelled for police to make arrests.

Marissa Johnson, one of the protesters, shot back, “I was going to tell Bernie how racist this city is, filled with its progressives, but you did it for me,” accusing the audience of “white supremacist liberalism.” She cited Seattle’s own police problems, including an ongoing Justice Department consent decree over use of force.

The activists demanded 4½ minutes of silence in memory of Brown, to symbolize the 4½ hours his body lay on a Ferguson street. While rally organizers raised their hands in support, some in the crowd yelled profanities.

After the few minutes of silence, the protesters said they wanted to confront Sanders for failing to address their concerns when he was similarly interrupted at a town hall for liberal activists in Phoenix last month. Johnson beckoned Sanders to stand closer as she spoke — he refused.

The Westlake protesters would not let Sanders take the microphone, prompting rally organizer Robby Stern to say the event was over because the demonstrators were determined to stop it.

Sanders left the stage and walked through the crowd, greeting supporters, before leaving in a white Jeep for a fundraiser at the Comet Tavern on Capitol Hill.<sup>57</sup>

Hillary Clinton’s encounter with the group was somewhat more productive, even as she did most of the talking. On August 18, 2015, she and the group met privately, backstage after she gave a speech at a forum on substance abuse in New Hampshire. Rather than simply absorb their demands, as Sanders did, Clinton proactively proposed alternatives. CNN recorded her remarks: "Look, I don't believe

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<sup>57</sup> <http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/black-lives-matter-protesters-shut-down-bernie-sanders-rally/>

you change hearts," Clinton said, arguing that the movement can't change deep-seated racism. "I believe you change laws, you change allocation of resources, you change the way systems operate. You're not going to change every heart. You're not. But at the end of the day, we could do a whole lot to change some hearts and change some systems and create more opportunities for people who deserve to have them, to live up to their own God-given potential."<sup>58</sup>

Whatever the alternate approaches to the demands on the presidential candidates, what is germane to this examination is the fact that this civil rights movement is being accepted as a legitimate member of a conversation that America desperately needs to have. Moreover, within the context of this examination, the key moments examined in this chapter demonstrate that even as the new civil rights activists who have come to be known as #BlackLivesMatter—and its erstwhile successor, Hands Up, Don't Shoot—establish legitimate standing as political movement, at the same time their names have entered the lexicon as powerful signals of the struggle to overcome racial injustice.

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<sup>58</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2015/08/18/politics/hillary-clinton-black-lives-matter-meeting/index.html>

## Chapter 9. CONCLUSION

The research presented in this thesis supports the theory that the charged racial climate that has come to engulf the United States in the era of the Obama presidency is in no small part influenced by the casual and deliberate use of racially coded language. Specifically, this has been shown with regard to the language tropes that were used in response to the killing of an unarmed black youth, Michael Brown, by Police Officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson Missouri. Importantly, the use of such racially coded language to mobilize a white political coalition and undercut black claims for justice extended all the way from Darren Wilson, to local Ferguson authorities, to police and other public officials in cities around the country, on up to national political pundits strongly tied to conservative political circles. Having surveyed the centrality of racially coded language to the conservative political responses generated by a major social upheaval in the era of the Obama Administration, this conclusion briefly considers how the social crisis revealed by Ferguson continues to unfold as we move towards the 2016 presidential election.

In the wake of the racial unrest that followed Michael Brown's killing by former police officer Darren Wilson, certainly both that locale and the nation as a whole have been provoked to more closely examine the ongoing significance of race in society, making clear the limitations of any sense that the Obama presidency marked the emergence of a post-racial America. The Justice Department report on the Ferguson Police Department ordered by former Attorney General Eric Holder

conveys a reality about Ferguson that might now be taken to represent a broader point about conditions across many communities in the United States. The Justice Department's report found that Ferguson's municipal policy regarding the direction of its police department played an instigating role in creating the atmosphere where such an incident as Michael Brown's killing could take place. The report's findings led Holder to observe of events in Ferguson that "seen in this context—amid a highly toxic environment, defined by mistrust and resentment, stoked by years of bad feelings, and spurred by illegal and misguided practices—it is not difficult to imagine how a single tragic incident set off the city of Ferguson like a powder keg." The conflagration would continue to be sparked by the embers that similar deaths in cities across the nation would ignite: Tamir Rice, aged 12, on November 22, 2014, in Cleveland, Ohio; Walter Lamer Scott, aged 50 on April 4, 2015, in North Charleston, South Carolina; Freddie Gray, aged 25 on April 12, 2015 in Baltimore, Maryland; and Samuel Dubose, aged 43, on July 15, 2015, in Cincinnati.

Ferguson has attempted to resolve these issues by reform. After the release of the Justice Department's report, the white sheriff, Thomas Jackson, resigned. He was replaced by an interim appointee, Andre Anderson, who is black. Anderson is veteran officer who was a commander of the Glendale, Arizona, Police Department, but his tenure as Ferguson police chief was short lived. He resigned on December 2, 2015 after reports emerged that he had been suspended three times while at Glendale. His replacement was not named as of that date.

In the local election that immediately followed the release of the Justice Department's report, high turnout resulted in the election of a new city council whose number included two new black members. The Justice Department report had also found a particular issue with the court system of Ferguson saying that it "does not act as a neutral arbiter of the law or a check on unlawful police conduct," (p. 3). Douglas McCullin, who is black, was named the new Ferguson Municipal Court Judge on June 9, 2015. One of his first official actions was to cancel by withdrawal all warrants issued by that court before December 31, 2014. The effect of this order will be to give relief to the citizens of Ferguson who have been unduly burdened by a municipal policy that relied upon an arbitrary tax system to finance its government.

Moreover, on December 17, 2015, The New York Times reported the city of Ferguson and the United States Justice Department had nearly reached an accord on the reorganization of the city's police department.<sup>59</sup>

On the national level President Obama issued an executive order on January 15, 2015 to set up a panel to review the police purchase of surplus weaponry decommissioned from active the use by the armed forces, in effect curtailing a practice that had been routine since the Department of Homeland Security started it in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 national tragedy. In fact, however, all of these measures were but surface solutions in the attempt to remedy the fracture that was revealed by the event in Ferguson, Missouri on August 9, 2014. In truth, a deep discord still exists that cannot be resolved by the reduction of deadly military

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<sup>59</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/17/us/ferguson-nears-deal-with-justice-dept-to-overhaul-police-force.html>

hardware and repressive court actions alone. Representative of this ever-widening rift are events that unfolded on the campuses of one of the state's institutions of higher learning, Missouri State University. After protests over a racial environment that many black students felt to be threatening—including one where dorm room walls were allegedly smeared with a swastika made of feces—the university president was forced to resign. This was after a list of demands was made to the university, demands that were crafted with the support of the school's influential football team. Here, in effect was a microcosm of how the newly formed, modern day civil rights movement meant to change the social justice system in post-Obama era America has worked. More broadly, Black Lives Matter has threatened to disrupt the national political conventions of both political parties. What is in question is not only the possibility of changing the content of the conversation on race in America, but also whether such a conversation can reach the breadth of white society, including those attuned to the racially coded language explored above. My findings suggest that however much we might have hoped otherwise, a post-racial America was truly beyond the ken of one black man, the 43<sup>rd</sup> person to hold the office the President of the United States.

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# APPENDIX

## Dedoose Screenshots demonstrating data collection

The screenshot shows the Dedoose web application interface. The top navigation bar includes the Dedoose logo, user information (words can hurt | Logout | Account), and various tool icons (Home, Codes, Media, Excerpts, Descriptors, Analyze, Memos, Training, Security, Data Set, Back, Projects). The main content area is divided into several panels:

- Project words can hurt:** A summary panel showing counts for Users (2), Media (49), Descriptors (0), Excerpts (49), Codes (8), and Code Applications (4). It includes buttons for 'Import Data' and 'Export Data'.
- Media:** A table listing collected media items with columns for Type, Title, Added, User, and # Ex.
- Codes x Descriptor:** A panel for analyzing codes, currently showing 'No Data Available'.
- Codes:** A tree view showing a code hierarchy: negative, positive, private person (adult, junior), and public person.
- Excerpts:** A list of 49 excerpts with details like Resource, Title, Added date, Username, and Code count.
- Packed Code Cloud:** A visualization tool for code analysis, currently showing a blacked-out area.

This screenshot provides a detailed view of the 'Media' section in Dedoose. It features a 'Columns & Filters' sidebar and a main data table.

**Columns & Filters:**

- Columns:** Type, Title, User, Date/Time, Excerpts, Length, Descriptors, Memos. All are checked.
- Filters:** Selected, Type, Excerpts, Length. All are selected.

**Media Table:**

Selected	Type	Title	User	Date/Time	Excerpts	Length	Descriptors	Memos
<input type="checkbox"/>		Why did the Michael Brown shooting happen here? FERGUSON POLICE SHOOTING	jpbums	05/09/2015	1	30948	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Expect Peace After Ruling	jpbums	05/03/2015	1	2787	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Cop Facebook Post	jpbums	05/03/2015	1	5111	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Police Flyer Apology	jpbums	05/03/2015	1	8007	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Union Facebook Post	jpbums	05/03/2015	1	6180	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Community Demands Accountability	jpbums	05/03/2015	3	6686	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Demonstrators Pass	jpbums	05/03/2015	1	7969	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		National Guard to Withdraw / China Daily	jpbums	05/03/2015	1	6385	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Not in Our Town	jpbums	05/03/2015	1	5821	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Dorian Johnson	jpbums	05/03/2015	0	6538	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Ferguson Schools	jpbums	05/03/2015	3	4749	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Reliving 1997	jpbums	05/03/2015	1	5477	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Mother's Tears	jpbums	05/03/2015	1	6733	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Baltimore Curfew	jpbums	05/03/2015	1	11151	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Ferguson Fires	jpbums	05/03/2015	1	5942	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Bigoted Texts	jpbums	05/03/2015	1	3277	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Police Tactics Forum	jpbums	05/03/2015	1	10120	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Justice Department Emails	jpbums	05/03/2015	1	382374	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Eric Holder	jpbums	05/03/2015	1	5976	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		James Comey FBI Director	jpbums	05/03/2015	1	19928	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Charles Blow	jpbums	05/04/2015	1	7270	0	0

Page: 1 of 3. Items: 1-21 of 49

<https://app.dedoose.com/App?Version=6.0.19>
Dedoose: 6.0.19
words can hurt | [Logout](#) | [Account](#)

[Home](#)
[Codes](#)
[Media](#)
[Excerpts](#)
[Descriptors](#)
[Analyze](#)
[Memos](#)
[Training](#)
[Security](#)
[Data Set](#)
[Back](#)
[Projects](#)

**Media**

**Columns & Filters**

**Columns**

- Type
- Title
- User
- Date/Time
- Excerpts
- Length
- Descriptors
- Memos
- Selected

Uncheck All    Check All

**Filters**

- Selected
- Type
- Excerpts
- Length

Clear Filters

Selected	Type	Title	User	Date/Time	Excerpts	Length	Descriptors	Memos
<input type="checkbox"/>		Charlie Blow	jpburns	05/04/2015	1	7270	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Hannity Excerpt Nov...	jpburns	05/04/2015	0	36997	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Fox News Hannity S...	jpburns	05/05/2015	0	3845	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Ferguson residents ...	jpburns	05/09/2015	1	7797	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		DC Rally	jpburns	05/03/2015	1	3294	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Ferguson on protests c...	jpburns	05/09/2015	2	8502	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Amemorial, a call to ...	jpburns	05/09/2015	0	9870	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Five in federal suit ov...	jpburns	05/09/2015	1	3952	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Baltimore - Clashes ...	jpburns	05/09/2015	2	12622	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Baltimore	jpburns	05/09/2015	1	5400	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Baltimore erupts in ri...	jpburns	05/09/2015	1	6407	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Funeral - Police sho...	jpburns	05/09/2015	0	5514	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Washington: Huckab...	jpburns	05/09/2015	0	1901	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Ferguson Police Br...	jpburns	05/09/2015	0	237	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		RWW News Huckab...	jpburns	05/09/2015	0	128	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		St Louis police grou...	jpburns	05/09/2015	0	218	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		The Media Is Respo...	jpburns	05/09/2015	0	134	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		'Hands Up! Don't Sh...	jpburns	05/09/2015	0	438	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Berkeley Protests tu...	jpburns	05/09/2015	3	5922	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		After the rage comes...	jpburns	05/09/2015	2	5443	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Protester in St. Loui...	jpburns	05/09/2015	2	2023	0	0

Page: 2 of 3. Items: 21-41 of 49

[Delete Selected](#)    [Select All](#)    [Select None](#)    [Export Selected](#)    [Add Media](#)

The screenshot displays the Dedoose 6.0.19 web application. The main content area is a table with the following data:

Selected	Type	Title	User	Date/Time	Excerpts	Length	Descriptors	Memos
<input type="checkbox"/>		Protector in St. Louis area charged with arson	jbbums	05/09/2015	2	2023	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Washington: Race and Beyond: Correcting the Me...	jbbums	05/09/2015	2	6900	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Baltimore, Murderland: a city steeped in violence	jbbums	05/09/2015	1	7837	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Baltimore mayor under pressure after 'space to d...	jbbums	05/09/2015	1	7002	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Calif. Mayor Who Sent White House Watermelon ...	jbbums	05/10/2015	1	2179	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		http://gawker.com/the-horrible-bigoted-texts-trade...	jbbums	05/10/2015	1	4122	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Megyn Kelly Loses It over Ferguson on Report 'Hand...	jbbums	05/10/2015	1	612	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		Wilson Grand Jury Testimony.docx	jbbums	05/15/2015	0	369182	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/>		NPR The Racially Charged Meaning Behind The ...	jbbums	05/15/2015	2	7076	0	0

The interface also shows a sidebar with 'Columns & Filters' and 'Filters' sections, and a top navigation bar with various icons and a search bar. The bottom of the screen shows the Windows taskbar with the time 10:19 AM on 6/9/2015.

PDF OF DARREN WILSON'S TESTIMONY BEFORE ST. LOUIS COUNTY GRAND JURY



Wilson Grand Jury Testimony.pdf

VIDEOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/AQUO5-EWDR8](https://youtu.be/AQUO5-EWDR8)

[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/XC6TSO9RY3I](https://youtu.be/XC6TSO9RY3I)

[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/ KCCA\\_SJNJS](https://youtu.be/KCCA_SJNJS)

[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/A7J6YGFLGNO](https://youtu.be/A7J6YGFLGNO)

## VITA

Having been graduated from the University of Washington in 2008 with a Bachelor's of Arts degree whose concentrations were English and the Humanities, the step to continue my academic journey through an exploration of the social justice implications resulting from the cavalier use of racially coded language is logical.

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