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Learning From the Ferguson Tragedy

TO THE EDITOR:

The New York Times and other media have focused enormous attention on the tragedy in Ferguson, Mo., where an unarmed black youth was shot and killed by a police officer. Unfortunately, there has been very little discussion about the economic and social tragedy that has befallen an entire generation of young black men.

Today, more than 5.5 million young Americans have either dropped out of high school or graduated from high school and have no jobs. Today, while youth unemployment is 20 percent, African-American youth unemployment is 35 percent, and in the St. Louis area, it is even higher than that.

Incredibly, there are estimates that if present trends continue, one of every three black American men born today can expect to go to prison in his lifetime.

If there is anything that we can learn from the Ferguson tragedy, it should be a recognition that we need to address the extraordinary crises facing black youths. That means, among other things, a major jobs program, job training and vastly improved educational opportunities.

BERNARD SANDERS
 U.S. Senator from Vermont
 Burlington, Vt., Aug. 20, 2014

TO THE EDITOR:

The tragic death of Michael Brown and the responses to it have brought a long-simmering distrust in Missouri's criminal justice system to a boil. Two concrete actions can go a long way toward easing tensions and moving us closer to the ultimate goal of "equal justice under law."

First, Robert P. McCulloch, the St. Louis County prosecutor, whose father, a police officer, was tragically killed in the line of duty by a black man in 1964, must have no involvement with charging decisions and/or sentencing decisions related to the police officer who killed Mr. Brown. If either side could so very easily have Mr. McCulloch disqualified as a juror under his circum-

stances, it cannot possibly be just or fair for him to make charging or sentencing decisions in this case.

Regardless of who initiates the action, the appointment of a politically neutral, highly respected special prosecutor is essential.

Second, there is obviously a widespread perception of substantial racial inequities in Missouri's criminal justice system. The mere fact that African-Americans are incarcerated at about six times the rate of whites is enough to justify the appointment of a politically neutral, highly respected blue-ribbon commission to identify the nature and extent of racial inequities and the steps that will most likely resolve them.

LOU HORWITZ

St. Peters, Mo., Aug. 21, 2014
 The writer is a lawyer.

TO THE EDITOR:

Police training must be changed from "shoot to kill" to protect police officers to "shoot or act to disable or stop" unless the officer is in clear mortal danger. Sometimes this will mean retreating or using nonlethal force.

Police training overwhelmingly emphasizes officer protection to the point of discouraging "shoot to wound" and allowing or even requiring use of hollow point bullets, formerly outlawed as too destructive of human tissue.

Otherwise, police officers when scared or excited will continue to empty their guns against suspects, unnecessarily killing hundreds where less than deadly force is appropriate.

As a lawyer representing innocent people shot at by the police and as a former general counsel to the New York State Crime Victims Board (1977-87), I have seen this scenario play out over the last 30 years. Equipping the police routinely with military-style weapons is likely to result in even more death and injury to innocent civilians as well as to more criminal suspects.

PAUL HUDSON
 Sarasota, Fla., Aug. 21, 2014

they were popularized by Latin American revolutionaries in the 1970s, as has been the debate over whether to pay ransom. The United Nations estimated that about \$30 million was paid out in ransom for political kidnappings in Latin America in 1973 alone.

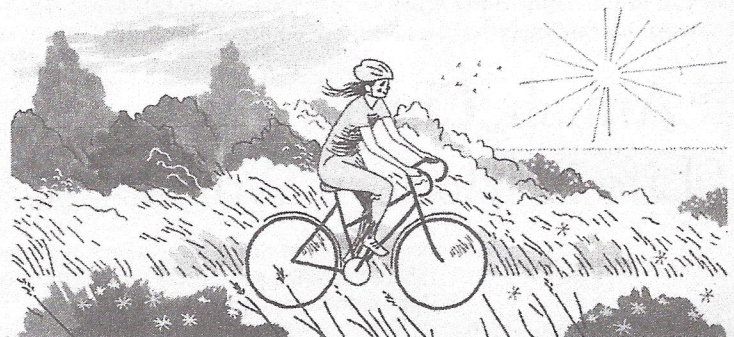
The practice was exported around the world and especially to the Middle East, where many hostages, including journalists, were seized over the past decades. More recently, ransom income has played a major role in financing the Qaeda network — a recent report by Rukmini Callimachi in The Times found that more than 50 hostages have been seized by Al Qaeda over the past five years, and many have been ransomed for substantial sums paid by European governments.

Still, there have been changes in recent years. First is the cruelty of kidnapping foreigners purely to post their executions online. The beheading of Daniel Pearl, a Wall Street Journal reporter, by a top Qaeda operative in 2002 revealed the viciousness of the Islamic fanatics, a cruelty raised to new levels by ISIS. Second, while journalists are by no means the only victims — many more humanitarian and government workers have been seized — the death of Mr. Foley and the threat to Mr. Sotloff point to the special danger faced by the freelance reporters, who have become more numerous in war zones with the proliferation of Internet news sites. Without the resources, credentials or experience of established news organizations, freelancers are often at greater risk in conflict zones.

There is no simple answer on whether to submit to terrorist extortion. The United States and Britain refuse to pay ransoms, and there is evidence that hostage takers target victims based on the potential for a payout. If everyone refused to pay, terrorists might not have had the incentive to turn kidnapping into an industry. At a Group of 8 summit meeting last year, Western countries agreed not to make ransom payments, but some European governments continue the practice.

In the meantime, we can honor the many brave journalists, aid workers and civil servants who risk their lives

'Riding With the Music of My Gears'



HENRY MCCAUSLAND

TO THE EDITOR:

Re "My Life in Bicycles" (Op-Ed,

TO THE EDITOR:

Like Jennifer Finney Boylan, I have