

It was Alexander Pope who once wrote: "...fools rush in where angels fear to tread." ^{recently} Nevertheless, I'm going to rush in and talk about a topic, which is close to my heart and ~~often~~ ^{often} on ~~my~~ ^{my} minds.

For over ten days now there has surfaced an alarming amount of racial tension regarding the shooting of teen Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. There is much we do *not* know. Here's what we *do* know. Police claim there was a struggle between police officer Darren Wilson and Michael at the time of the shooting. Others say Michael had raised his hands and was not struggling with the officer when he was shot. Brown was unarmed, and an autopsy showed that six bullets entered his body: two striking him in the head.

This might have gone relatively unnoticed, except that there has been considerable unrest ever since August 9th. Protests have been staged more or less daily since the shooting, and sometimes there has been looting and further violence. The racial tension in Ferguson is great enough that US Attorney General Eric Holder decided to visit Ferguson yesterday. Even President Obama has weighed in on the situation, mostly asking for calm.

The National Guard was recently called in to back up police after the Missouri Highway Patrol had taken over from the Ferguson police. All these efforts did not seem to calm rioting or resolve racial tensions because, Monday this week officers had to use tears gas and stun grenades after they came under 'heavy gunfire' petrol bombs, rocks and bottles.

Meanwhile, I read that the family says the funeral for young Michael Brown will take place Monday. *I offer condolences.*

I offer 3 observations:

1. Anarchy is not a happy state for anyone because looting, rioting and mayhem hurts everyone-- especially the business owners in the areas so afflicted. Police and the National Guard have a ^{responsibility} responsibility to keep law and order.

2. Some police *are* trigger-happy. I do not know if officer Wilson was ^{not} or not. I believe officers have a right to defend themselves if their lives are threatened; I also believe it is not a felicitous situation when they use excessive force to subdue suspected criminals. We have seen some of that in our not too distant past here in Eureka. I am glad to see that in the past few days ~~the~~ ^{Ferguson} ~~officers~~ ^{officers} have been restrained even in the face of bottles and rocks ~~thrown and worse.~~ ^{thrown and worse. Likewise in Eureka!} ^{of late!}

3. There are many hopeful signs even in the midst of this tense situation. I found a web site that chronicles inspiring scenes of kindness in Ferguson. They include things like people of all colors cleaning the streets, handing out water and food to both police and protestors. I also noticed a pastor at a local church has his people out (with their children) cleaning and making contact with all sides—he urged us ^{the} all to have humility enough to talk and listen to each other in the midst of this tumult.

Another picture shows a group of people laying hands on Captain Ron Johnson from the ... MHP who is in charge of policing ^{the} the area. They are praying for him---an action that we would all do well to emulate, because Pope also wrote, "to err is human, to forgive divine."

This has been Dan Price for Community Comment