

Congressional Record Daily Edition - - House

Title Info

Title:	NO INDICTMENT IN ERIC GARNER'S CHOKE HOLD CASE
Citation:	160 Cong Rec H 8360
Section:	House
Document Date:	December 03, 2014
Congress-Session:	113- 2
Reference Volume:	Vol. 160 No. 146 Pg. H8360
Permalink:	https://congressional.proquest.com/congressional/docview/t17.d18.cr03de2014_dat-144?accountid=131239

Speakers

Speaker(s): Henry C. Johnson Jr.

Full Text

Page 8360

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. Brat). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. Johnson) for 30 minutes.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight, ladies and gentlemen, with a heavy heart because today we had a secret grand jury finding in New York that resulted in no charges against the police officer who killed an unarmed man named Eric Garner, a man whom they accused of trying to sell some cigarettes. That man was approached by law enforcement on the streets of New York, and when approached, he said that he had not done

Page 8361

anything wrong. He held his hands up in the hands up, don't shoot position, and they took him down while his hands were up and applied a choke hold, an illegal choke hold, and applied it until the man took his last breath.

What did Eric Garner say 13 times before he died? What did he say 13 times before he died? He said, "I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe." And he said that over and over again until he could not breathe. He took his last breath just like Michael Brown, accused of stealing some cigarettes-or cigars, excuse me-Michael Brown, accused of stealing some cigars, Eric Garner, accused of selling some cigarettes. I don't know when possession and/or sale of tobacco merited a death penalty in this country, but both of them, both of those cases involved tobacco products. Both of them involved men-Black men-with their hands up in the "don't shoot" position. Both of them were killed. Both cases were handled in a secret grand jury process. We don't know the names of the grand jurors, we don't know what went on in that grand jury room, although we do have the transcript in the Michael Brown case, and it shows that a lot of injustice was done in that grand jury room which resulted in an unjust no bill against the police officer involved in that case.

We don't know what happened in the New York case, but we got a result, a no bill against that police officer who was caught on tape just like in the Rodney King case, all caught on tape, Eric Garner caught on tape, the killing, but still no justice done. Cameras are not the sole answer, it appears. It runs deeper than a camera.

These are dark days, ladies and gentlemen, that we are living in today. The first African American President is treated like no other President has ever been treated before. Is this a symptom of the Obama backlash that is occurring in this country? Is there any connection between what we see happening in the streets of Ferguson and on the streets of New York, with what is going on with the dehumanization of the leader of the free world?

First they said he was not a resident, not a citizen of this country. Then they said he was a Communist, a socialist. They accused him of being weak and indecisive as a President and not really having the intellectual capacity to be the President. Now they are saying he was a Muslim. Now they are saying that he is an emperor, a king, disregarding the Constitution. Where are we in America when it comes to Black males and how we treat them and how they end up faring in life?

Is it our fault? Yes, we do have responsibility. We can always do better. But don't put your foot on my neck and tell me that it is my fault that your foot is on my neck. People are tired of seeing what is happening over and over again. A young, 12-year-old Black male with a BB gun at a park on the streets and a police car rolls up, a police officer gets out and immediately shoots the young man and kills him. Will that go to another secret grand jury process and have the same result as what we saw with Michael Brown and Eric Garner? It is happening throughout the streets of the Nation.

I tell you, I have been gratified by the protesters. I have seen protesters out there. It has been Black and White protesters out there demonstrating peacefully being met with a militarized response. And I say that to say this, that I am going to paraphrase something that you will probably be familiar with:

They first came for the gypsy, and I wasn't a gypsy, and I didn't say anything. Then they came for the Jews, and I was not a Jew, and so I didn't say anything. Then they came for the women, and I wasn't a woman, and I didn't say anything. Then they came for me, and there was nobody left to say anything.

Is that where we are headed in this country, ladies and gentlemen? Because there are all kinds of people out peacefully protesting, and that is what I advocate for, peaceful protests. Violence is not the way. Violence just produces more pain and agony. Violence is not the way. Nonviolence is the way that we must confront this because really, when you move past the fact that Black males are at the bottom of the totem pole, and we are the ones who bear the brunt, these who come to aid us are in the line of fire also.

What happens to one of us happens to all of us. If not you now, then what happens tomorrow when you come to my assistance? So we all are our brother's keeper.

Right now, we are operating under an economic philosophy in this country that only the strong survive. If you are weak, it is your fault, and I don't owe you anything. Don't ask me for nothing. You get yours. I got mine; you get yours. Don't worry about me. Don't ask me for nothing.

That is the economic attitude that we have that we are trying to preserve and protect in this hallowed body here. It is called laissez-faire capitalism, and it is supported by the U.S. Supreme Court that has contorted itself in such ways so as to rule in ways that enable a corporation to become a person.

When we have a corporation having a right to free speech and having unlimited funds and unlimited duration and we have a corporation that has a right to religious freedom, so that it can dictate to its employees their religious beliefs-it doesn't even make sense for a corporation to have a religious belief, but that is what our Supreme Court has found-and every other way that it can aid corporations to become richer.

The rich get richer, and the poor get poorer, and I don't owe you a thing-you are on your own. That is what they want us to believe, but it is time for people-for us to come together. It is all about economics.

They put Blacks against Whites, poor Whites and poor Blacks against each other, and then they are going to the bank in the Brink's truck, and we are sitting, pointing fingers at ourselves, when we are all in the same boat together, the 99 percent-or the 47 percent, as one of our Presidential candidates most famously talked about in the last election. I am proudly one of those 47 percent, and I represent the 47 percent that is really the 99 percent.

So this extrajudicial killing of Black men has to end. If not, then what is going to happen to you tomorrow?

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

Copyright

