

## Current topics in short

# Racism and police violence in the USA – Über *equal rights* sprechen und diskutieren (S II)

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Der Tod von George Floyd im Mai 2020 erschütterte die Welt und rief zahlreiche Proteste unter dem Motto „Black Lives Matter“ hervor. Polizeigewalt und dessen Zusammenhang mit Rassismus beherrschen noch immer den Alltag der Amerikaner. Jedes Jahr werden über 1000 Menschen – häufig Afro-Amerikaner – unbegründeter Weise – meist weißen Polizisten getötet. Dieser Kurzbeitrag behandelt den Vorfall und bezieht (aktuelle Ex-Präsident Barack Obama) sowie historische Stimmen (John F. Kennedy und Martin Luther King) mit ein.

### KOMPETENZPROFIL

**Klassenstufe:** 10–12 (G8), 11–13 (G9)

**Dauer:** 4 Unterrichtsstunden

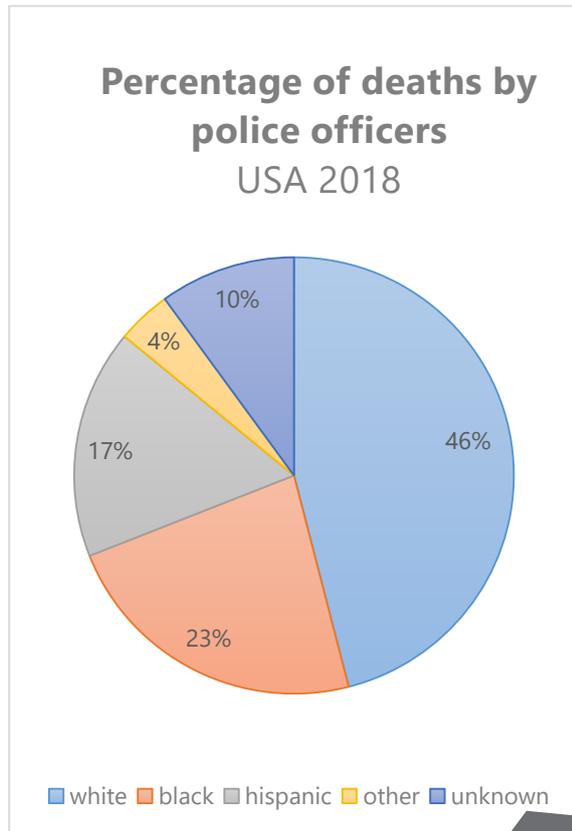
**Kompetenzen:** 1. Leseverstehen: Sachtexten, Reden und Zeitungsartikeln Informationen entnehmen, die Rhetorik analysieren; 2. Schreiben: Texte zusammenfassen und analysieren; 3. Sprechkompetenz: sich über Abbildungen, Themen und Meinungen austauschen und diskutieren; 4. Hör-Seh-Verstehen: einem Kurzvideo Informationen entnehmen

**Thematische Bereiche:** society, police brutality, racism, ethnic minorities, civil rights

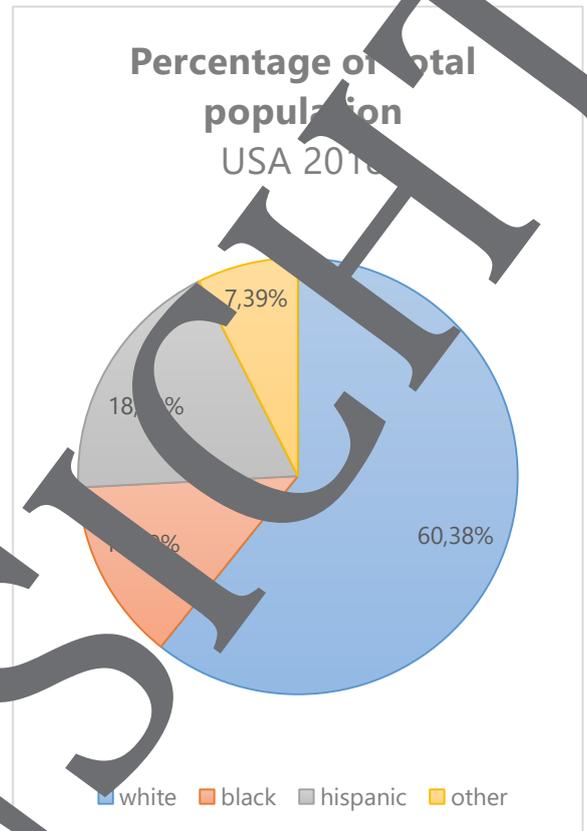
**Medien:** Texte, Bilder, Kurzvideo, Grafiken

## Police violence – current data

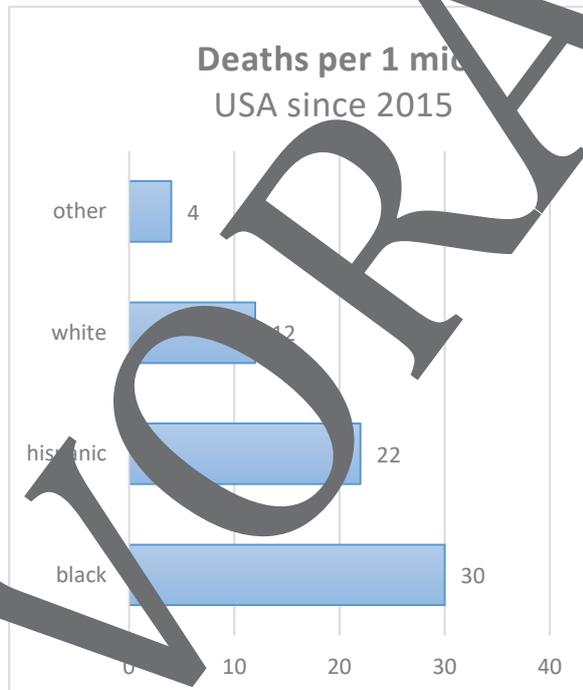
M 2



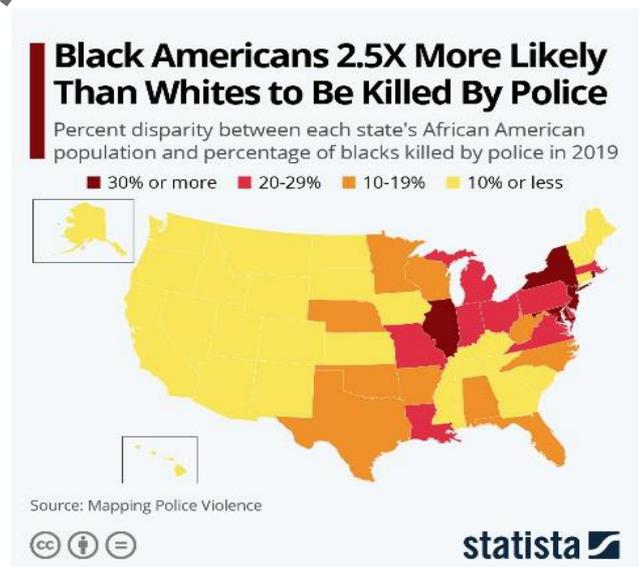
Data source: <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/611009/umfrage/durch-polizisten-getoetete-menschen-in-den-usa-nach-bevoelkerungsgruppen/>



Data source: <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/166858/umfrage/ethnien-in-den-usa/>



Data source: <https://de.statista.com/infografik/5487/toedliche-polizeigewalt-in-den-usa/>



Source: Statista/ cc by sa

## M 3



## Police violence – finding out about the case

### Police violence in America: six years after Ferguson, George Floyd's killing shows little has changed

*In 2014, Michael Brown's killing by white police prompted talk of reform – but the country has failed to stanch the bleeding*

After the African American teenager Michael Brown was shot dead by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri in August 2014, the epidemic of police violence against people of colour in the US captured national and global attention, for a time.

When Brown was killed, the words of Eric Garner, gasping<sup>1</sup> “I can’t breathe” as he was crushed<sup>2</sup> by officers in New York City a month earlier, were still echoing in the national conversation. Protests rose up in Ferguson, a new movement for racial justice grew under the banner of Black Lives Matter, and talk of systemic reform filled the air.

Six years have passed. As national protests spread anew in reaction to the death in Minneapolis of George Floyd, another African American man killed by a white officer, a new chorus could be heard to ask what America has done to stanch<sup>3</sup> the bleeding. A tragic answer hung heavily in the air.

“What is true about this moment that was also true in 2014 is that these are the symptoms of a centuries-old virus of white supremacy in America,” said Ruckelshaus. Ruckelshaus, co-founder of the Campaign Zero movement against police violence. [...]

“[...] it took us hundreds of years to get to this set of circumstances, and it’s going to take us more than six years to get us out. And it’s insulting because it’s usually the work of non-black people to uproot<sup>4</sup> anti-blackness, and it is the work of white people to dismantle white supremacy, because it directly benefits them.”

Floyd, 46, died under the knee of a white police officer as he struggled to echo Garner’s words: “I can’t breathe.”

The killing came even as the country struggled to come to grips with<sup>5</sup> the cold-blooded shootings of a young jogger, Ahmaud Arbery, in Georgia, and a medical technician, Breonna Taylor, by police inside her home in Kentucky.

“This shouldn’t be ‘normal’ in 2020 in America,” former president Barack Obama said in a statement on Friday, referring to another recent incident, in which a white woman in Central Park in New York threatened to call police on an African American birdwatcher.

“What we to remember is that for millions of Americans,” Obama said, “being treated differently on account of race is tragically, painfully, maddeningly<sup>6</sup> ‘normal’ – whether it’s while dealing with the healthcare system or interacting with the criminal justice system, or jogging down the street, or just watching birds in the park.” [...] [441 words]

Source: McCarthy, Tom: *Police violence in America: Six years after Ferguson George Floyd's killing shows little has changed*, *The Guardian*, 30 May 2020 found at <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/may/30/michael-brown-ferguson-america-george-floyd>

1 **(to) gasp:** to breathe heavily, to pant for air – 2 **(to) be crushed:** to be killed, to be put down – 3 **(to) stanch:** A.E. for staunch: to stem, to stop – 4 **(to) uproot sth.:** to remove violently or tear away from native place – 5 **(to) come to grips with:** to understand, to deal with – 6 **maddeningly:** unbearably, intolerably

## 1) Barack Obama



After George Floyd's death and a week of protest in the USA, Obama addresses the nation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wkhidTtklxo>.

### Tasks

1. Read the questions below and then watch the video. Take notes.
2. Watch it a second time and finish your answers.
  - a) Why is former President Obama addressing his audience?
  - b) Who is he addressing specifically?
  - c) What kind of frustration is he aware of within the young community?
  - d) To whom is he referring when speaking of "folks"?
  - e) How is he comforting them?
  - f) Why is he talking about his daughters, nieces and nephews?
  - g) How is he going about to diminish their despair and hopelessness?
  - h) What does Obama mean when talking about young people's 'sense of urgency'?
3. Conclude: Point out the former President's opinion regarding the current situation.

**debt:** sth. that is owned or that one is obliged to pay – **folk:** people – **(to) thrive:** to become successful or very strong – **sense of urgency:** feeling for acute loss, need for action – **transformative:** with the potential to change

## 2) Martin Luther King

### Tasks

1. Read the excerpts from the speech by Martin Luther King and highlight the most important statements.
2. Indicate how Martin Luther King's power of rhetoric<sup>1</sup> works:
  - a) The words in the box are taken from King's speech. Are they about the past/the reality in 1963 or about the future of his dream? Assign the words to "the past/the reality" and "the future/the dream" in a table.

freedom – justice – join hands – sisters and brothers – judged by the colour of their skin – judged by their character – justice – live its creed that all men are created equal – oasis – oppression – white owners – slaves – sweltering heat – table of brotherhood – vicious racists

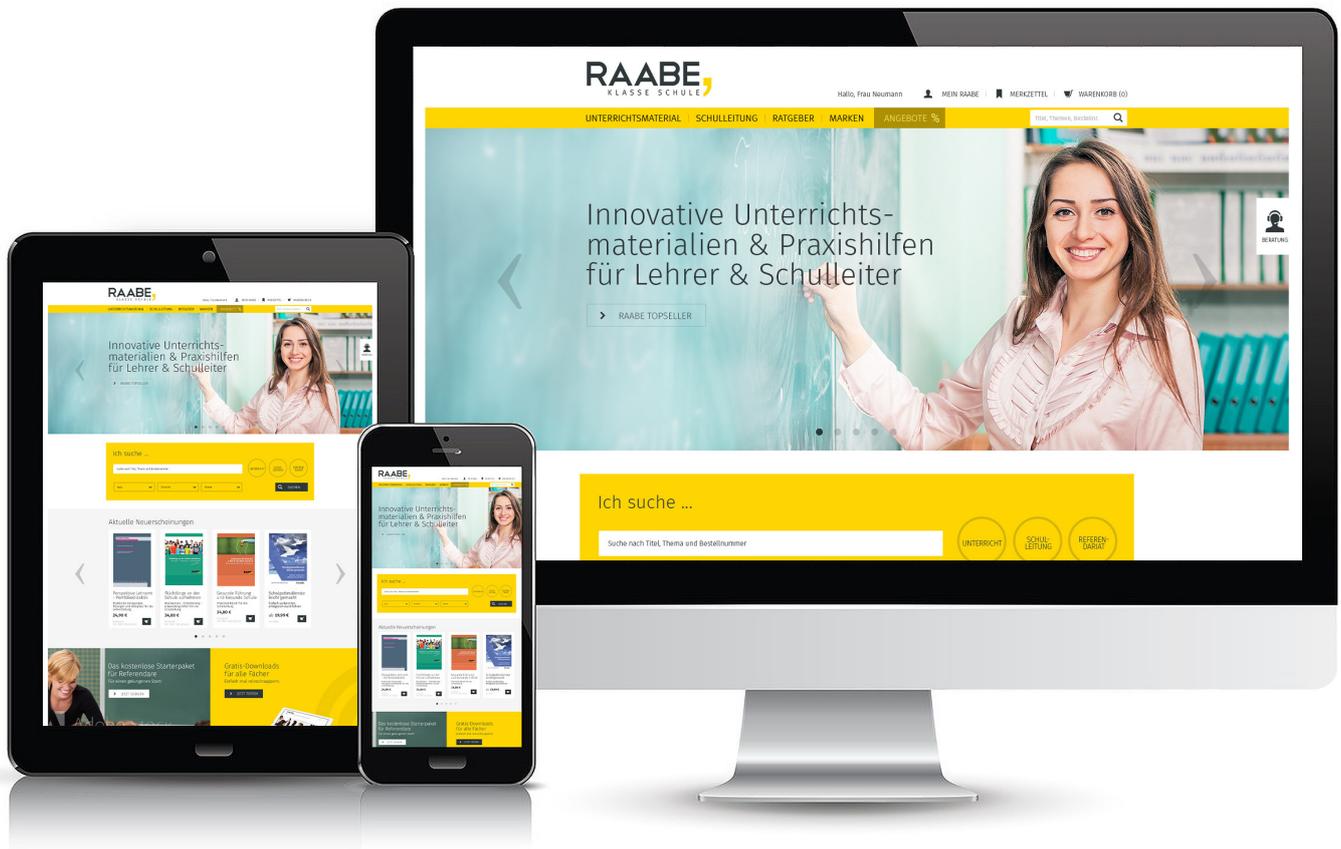
- b) Which of the words and expressions in the box are opposites or are used for contrasting<sup>2</sup> images<sup>3</sup>? Draw lines between them.
3. How do Martin Luther King's words sound? Tick all the correct answers.
 

• amusing	• prophetic	• stirring <sup>4</sup>	• inspiring
• bitter	• furious <sup>6</sup>	• optimistic	• pessimistic
- Conclude: Point out King's opinion and worries regarding the situation.

1 **rhetoric:** art of speech – 2 **(to) contrast:** to counterpoint, distinguish – 3 **image:** picture, impression, idea – 4 **stirring:** touching, moving – 6 **furious:** very angry



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