



## Interview: Protests expose racial, human rights scars of U.S. society

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Recent race-related protests across the [United States](#) reflect not only simmering tensions over alleged excessive police powers and racial discrimination in the country but also an absence of human rights and justice.

The comments came from some leading experts on social studies and human rights as images of vigorous protests across the United States had topped newscasts around the world after U.S. grand jury decisions not to indict white police officers in the killing of two unarmed African-American men, Michael Brown and Eric Garner.

Darrell West, senior fellow at Brookings Institution, told Xinhua that racism remains a serious problem in the United States.

There are major inequities in incomes, jobs and education. Black males are often targeted by police and African-Americans do not believe the police are impartial in the administration of justice, said West.

Blacks are more likely to go to jail than whites, he said, adding that this breeds cynicism and ill will among minorities.

To ease racial conflicts, he suggested that changing poor performance by law enforcement requires better training. "The police need greater diversity so they can understand the fears and concerns of the minority community."

For the recent CIA torture report, West noted that it presents a disturbing image of government actions.

"This makes the U.S. look hypocritical and does not present a great image to the world," he said.

On U.S. police action and grand jury decisions in Michael Brown and Eric Garner cases, Tim Lynch, director at the Project on Criminal Justice at the Cato Institute, emphasized that this is a point of confusion between trial juries and grand juries in the United States.

"With trial juries, there's a defense attorney asking questions and there's a judge overseeing the process," he told Xinhua.

With a grand jury, it's different. "There's no defense attorney in the room, there's no impartial judge overseeing it. It's really just a prosecutor," said Lynch.

"So when the grand jurors show up, they naturally defer to who they think is the expert, someone who knows the law, so they follow his lead," he said. So it's really misleading when the prosecutors afterward said things like "the grand jury decided this." They were really just following his lead.

He said that besides race, there is also questionable use of force, questionable shootings during the conflicts in Ferguson and other areas.

"I see it as more of a general problem of police misconduct, rather than an indication of racial bigotry in the police departments," he said.

Minorities bear the brunt of a lot of inappropriate policing, the expert said, and that police officers' "stop-and-frisk" tactics often mean that minority males are being illegally searched, illegally detained, and that certainly breeds resentment in the communities.

In addition to minorities issues, human rights problems also exist in the United States.

Michelle Mittelstadt, an official of the Migration Policy Institute, said that there are a number of human rights aspects while resolving the status of 11.4 million people who are in the United States illegally, but most of whom have been living in the United States for many years, working, having U.S.-born children, and establishing roots in U.S. communities.

"The United States needs a contemporary, flexible immigration system that meets employer and family-based immigration needs via legal channels and that adjusts to reflect economic and labor market realities," she said.

Meanwhile, effective enforcement policies and programs are also required to keep out those who pose a threat to national security or public safety and that deter illegal immigration, she added.

Experts suggested that it must be acknowledged that there is a need for more than a conversation, and right now, the protests in the streets are bringing the pressure to make real improvement on elimination of racial discrimination and protection of human rights.