Author’s name

Instructor Name

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Research Essay: Police and Media

In the early part of 2014, a case surfaced about the Orlando Police Department through a video on social media in which a police officer was seen punching and kicking a man who was already in handcuffs. The case caught the attention of the national media and made the news all over the country and in some cases, the world. An investigation was initiated by the State department directed at the police officers while the charges against the arrested was dropped. This paper will discuss the developments of the case in detail and the perception of the media regarding it.

In the march of 2014, Orlando Police Department responded to a call regarding a possible fight between six individuals. The police report that was developed afterwards, showed that the police had an initial idea about the type of people that they would possibly be dealing with. The area from where the call was received was notorious for crime and drug related activities. The officers also reported that they saw a handgun in possession of one of the individuals named Verrel Sheals at the scene and that was the reason they decided to arrest him. During this arrest, as per the police officers, an individual by the name of Holloway charged them and was thus arrested as well. The case burst open when a video made by the sister of Mr. Holloway surfaced and showed that at the time of his arrest, he was being assaulted while being in handcuffs. It also showed that at the time when Mr. Holloway was on the ground, he was being kicked by the officers. This video went viral on social networks and was then taken into the case as relevant evidence. The officer who was seen assaulting Mr. William Escobar, said that during the arrest, Mr. Holloway attempted to kick him and was thus kicked by the officer. On the emergence of the video, charges were dropped on Mr. Holloway and the State Attorney said that they were considering putting charges on Mr. Escobar. Another aspect of the case to which Mr. Escobar’s lawyer eluded to, was the idea that the video could have been tampered and that Mr. Holloway’s sister tampered with the video to make Mr. Escobar look bad and that the personal computer and the mobile phone of the lady should be investigated by a technical expert (*Attorney for Fired Orlando Cop Questions Video of Beating*). The court, however, did not allow for the personal belongings of the lady to be searched as the right of privacy could not be breached in search of evidence which may or may not exist. The officer then fought for his innocence as he thought that this case can be an example for police officers across the states. He then succeeded and was found not guilty on all allegations as the court ruled that the man who was being arrested was not complying to the instructions of the police officers and that the action taken by Mr. Escobar was fair. The court also concluded that the officer was not given a fair trial beforehand and that the city of Orlando had no right to fire Mr. Escobar (Harris).

The role of media in the investigation was also notable. The case seemed to be on a trial in the media as well while it was being tried in the court. Mr. Escobar was shown to be an unprofessional and unreasonable police officer and Mr. Holloway, the hero. He was even interviewed by the media when he stated the story of his innocence and said that the Police officer had some pre-conceived notions regarding him on the basis of his looks and that the officer sprayed, kicked and verbally abused him while he was in his hand-cuffs. A severe problem arises when the media plays the role that it did play in this case. A perception of unprofessionalism creeps into the minds of the common public regarding the police department and the rule of law is ultimately compromised.

The role that media should play in such a scenario is that of responsibility. They should be responsible enough to show both sides of the story and ask the Police Officers regarding the incident as well. The journalists reporting the incident should be careful enough with their wordings to not cause any discord between the public and the police department. The respectable police officers should also be given the benefit of the doubt on certain occasions as, many a times, they put their life at risk when serving the common public and facing hardened criminals.

Certain media outlets, at times, showed the police officer William Escobar in such a bad light that it occurred to the viewers that the man being shown was not in fact a police officer, but a hardened criminal. Such cases of irresponsible journalism should also be investigated by the courts and put to trial. The repercussion for such journalism for the fate of the city can be enormous. The people observing the incident, might think that since the police is showing such unprofessional behavior, it must be right for them to not cooperate with them. Such public perception can lead to more of such incidents and cause more harm than good for the city. The media should be willing to suggest that these incidents are not common and that the police department is a professional department otherwise.

**Works Cited:**

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