



AVOID THE PROBLEM: At last week's forum on police brutality, panelists offered this advice.

Police brutality addressed at forum

JULIAN WILLOCK
Spectrum Staff Writer

The burning issue of police brutality took center stage this past Monday at a public forum sponsored by UB's Black Student Union (BSU). Topics addressed included what could be done in the event of police brutality or harassment, and how students could counteract police brutality by taking political, legal and community measures.

Distinguished panelists included Ted Kirkland of *The Challenger*, Donald Muhammed from the nation of Islam and Lieutenant McCarthy Gipson from the Buffalo Police Department.

In their presentations, the panelists reminded the students that as African Americans, they have to always expect that white and black officers will treat them differently.

Muhammed advised students of color to always avoid conflict with police. He urged students to try and be polite and respect authority and that maintaining this respect could go a long way in defusing situations.

File a report

One audience member suggested that everyday in Buffalo, there is a "Rodney King-like situation, but we never hear about it."

Most students present complained that they are constantly stopped by the police for no reason. Many said they are harassed on a daily basis.

Gipson advised students to go down to the police precinct and file reports if they feel that they are victims of brutality and/or unwarranted harassment. Kirkland urged students to be aware of their rights and to apply pressure on local elected officials to, in his words, "help bring justice and equality for all victims of police brutality."

'Racism' in uniform

Many of the students expressed what they have seen as a pattern of racism in the police department. They said they do not trust the 'men in blue,'; instead they feel "threatened" and "intimidated."

Keeanga Talya, a UB student who attended the forum, said, "The cops and courts are instruments of the racist class oppression and the blame should not be put on the backs of black students to act polite...even if you act polite and do the right thing, they will still mess with you."

In response, Kirkland said he was simply trying to give advice on how to deal with a racist society, and he admitted that both the police and the students must play an equal role in respecting one another.

Rodney King: a symbol

Students and members of the panel asserted that the image of a 'lynch mob in blue uniforms' torturing a black man lying helpless on the ground has become the symbol of racist police brutality in America.

BSU President James Minter said, "The best thing we can do is use the law and avoid situations where the cops will have reasons to harass us." When asked what blacks should do if that fails, Minter suggested, "We protect ourselves by whatever means necessary."

Muhammed reminded students that there are more black males in jail than in college, and told them "you here have a responsibility to work hard and uplift your people and stop blaming every one else for your problems."

Another student, Andrew Campbell, complained that every time he has a party at his house, the cops come and break it up. Campbell said at times "they [police] use racial slurs and treat students of color as if they are second class citizens."

Once again, use of the legal system was encouraged and considered the best combatant to harassment and brutality.

"Racist cop atrocities occur all the time," Gipson said. "The problem is how we deal with it."