April 8, 2015

AAA: Racialized police violence … again

It has happened too many times, in too many cities. A black man shot down by a police officer, this time in North Charleston, South Carolina.

The American Anthropological Association (AAA) joins its voice to the rising chorus of horror. The Association is working with its members to contribute to broad alliances aimed at re-building a fair justice system, from healing for those who are targeted and traumatized, to changing the culture of policing, to addressing the underlying structures of racism that so often produce such violence. We add our understanding of power, inequality, race and violence to the knowledge brought in by community members, police, state officials and others, and who know change is imperative. We must share knowledge and ideas about how to make it happen.

Anthropologists have a long history of research and public engagement on race, racism, and inequality. Through the public education initiative RACE: Are We So Different?, which has been seen by more than 1 million people in 37 cities, anthropologists have put the spotlight on the social construction of race, the lived experience of racialized inequality, and the differences between the science of human biological variation and how people imagine and use it.

As events have unfolded in North Charleston, Ferguson, and elsewhere, anthropologists have contributed to public discussions of law enforcement practices and the sociocultural, economic, and historical dynamics that have shaped the U.S. justice system. We hope shortly to make public some of AAA’s specific efforts to focus on the intolerable continuation of racialized police violence. Watch this space.

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The American Anthropological Association, dedicated to advancing human understanding and addressing the world’s most pressing problems since its founding in 1902, is the world’s largest professional anthropology organization.