

## News Roundup

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Michael Brown. Eric Garner. Walter Scott. Freddie Gray. The past year has been dominated by news of encounters between police officers and unarmed black citizens that have resulted in tragedy. [Sandra Bland](#) is the latest name on the list. She died in jail from what is reported to be a self-inflicted hanging, but the videotape of the traffic stop that led to her arrest has many questioning why the encounter, which began with an officer stopping Bland for failing to use her turn signal, ever resulted in her arrest.

The New York Times evaluated the lawfulness of the stop and arrest of Bland in [this article](#), which reads like a tailored version of Jeff's [paper on traffic stops](#). Yes, the stop was lawful. Yes, an officer may order a suspect out of his or her car for officer safety. And, yes, a person may be arrested for a minor traffic offense. Unlike Jeff's paper, the Times article includes commentary from experts about how the officer should have exercised the lawful authority he possessed differently. *(After this post was published, a colleague suggested I clarify that, while a person may be arrested for a misdemeanor traffic offense in North Carolina, a person may not be arrested for an offense classified as an infraction.)*

**Mass shootings and armed civilians.** Another disturbing trend of the past year—and the past decade before it—is the gunning down of unarmed people by an armed assailant. CNN reports that [last night](#) a shooter in a Lafayette, Louisiana movie theater opened fire during the previews, killing two and wounding nine before shooting and killing himself. Last week, [police say](#) a gunman fired at an Armed Forces recruiting office in Chattanooga, Tennessee and then drove to a nearby Navy operational support center, where he rammed through a security gate, entered the building, and began shooting people inside. Five service members were fatally wounded before the gunman was shot and killed by the police. The New York Times [reports](#) that in cities across the country, armed civilians have taken up posts outside army recruiting centers to guard against future attacks. The Times notes that the presence of these armed people creates a dilemma for the recruiters. They appreciate the protection, but worry that the civilian security force may intimidate potential recruits from stopping by.

**Dylann Roof indicted on federal hate crime charges.** Meanwhile, [U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch announced on Wednesday](#) that Dylann Roof, the man charged with killing nine people at a historically black church in Charleston in June will face federal hate crime charges. Federal officials have not yet announced whether they will seek to bring the federal case to trial before Roof is tried in South Carolina state courts for murder. The New York Times [reported](#) that there were mixed views within the Justice Department about which case should proceed first. Some say the feds should defer to local prosecutors because a state trial will be quicker. Others say the federal charges should be handled first as “the shooting is precisely the kind of crime Congress intended the federal government to prosecute when it enacted hate crime laws.”

**Free-man problems.** One of my favorite movies is Shawshank Redemption, but I can never watch [the scenes that follow](#) Brooks' release from prison without tearing up. The New York Times Magazine just published [this heart-warming and heart-breaking article](#) about two men, Carlos Cervantes and Roby So, who are working in partnership with a California nonprofit to help people released after serving long prison terms under California's three-strikes law to reintegrate with society. Cervantes and So know of what they speak—each served long terms in prison and confronted

many of the same difficulties the three-strikers they assist face upon their release. The article chronicles the hours following Dale Hammock's release from prison after serving twenty-one years. One of the best lines in the story is when the trio finds themselves stuck in Los Angeles traffic, and So grumbles about it. Right afterwards, he says to Hammock: "See, that, Dale? I'm complaining about traffic. You know what that's called?" So answers his own question. "That's called 'free-man problems.'"

**Not G-L-T-Y.** [Above the Law](#) had such fun at this lawyer's expense that I couldn't avoid jumping on the bandwagon. [Their headline](#) says it all: "Lawyer Leaves Keys In \$100,000 Sports Car. Dude Steals \$100,000 Sports Car." Well, it says almost all of it. Said lawyer exposed himself to even more ridicule by outfitting his sports car with a vanity plate. As he reportedly explained to the 911 operator, the plate was "Not Guilty," spelled in license-plate language as "zero G-L-T-Y." I'm guessing that's one piece of the State's evidence that the defense lawyer won't object to at trial.