

## EXAMPLES OF POLICE USE OF FORCE

There have been several examples of use of force cases that drew nation-wide attention. The celebrated case of the beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police officers was partially captured on videotape. Other high-profile cases have involved the use of firearms: the February 1999 shooting of Amadou Diallo and the November 2006 Sean Bell case in New York City, and the January 2012 shooting of a 15-year-old student who refused to drop a replica gun in Brownsville, Texas.

Part of the Rodney King incident involved legitimate use of force to take a resisting suspect into custody. At some point, many feel the event turned into an episode of street justice, the extralegal use of physical force as a punishment for “contempt of cop.” The police community is split over whether some of the force was illegitimate, or all was legitimate, and over whether alternative tactics could have been used.

The Abner Louima case in New York City shocked the nation, as an out-of-control police officer sexually assaulted a prisoner with a nightstick because he thought the man had punched him in a street scuffle. The Louima case was a clear-cut case of brutality, personal abuse of authority to avenge a perceived personal affront. The Amadou Diallo case is more problematic. Diallo was confronted in the early morning by four armed plainclothes officers searching for a rape suspect. Diallo, an immigrant with poor English skills, reached for his wallet, which appeared to the officers as an attempt to draw a weapon. The officers fired a total of 41 shots, killing Diallo. The issue of imminent possible danger and the need to make a split-second decision in defense of themselves and their partners is a major factor that distinguishes the Louima and Diallo cases. The issue of racial prejudice is an element in both cases, like the

Rodney King incident and many fatal shootings, because they involved black suspects and white officers.