

EDITORIAL

More proof that reform is needed

As the nation reels from the graphic video of an unarmed black man fatally shot in the head by a white University of Cincinnati police officer during a traffic stop, a state appellate court in Brooklyn has refused to unseal grand jury records in the death of Eric Garner, the unarmed black Staten Island man who died as NYPD officers arrested him.

The officer in the Cincinnati case, Ray Tensing, pleaded not guilty yesterday to a murder charge in the July 19 death of Samuel DuBose, whom he stopped for not having a license plate on the front of his car. "He purposely killed him," the local prosecutor said of Tensing.

The indictment also revealed how fellow officers may have covered up for Tensing, endorsing his story of shooting in self-defense because DuBose dragged him along the road. Unfortunately for Tensing, he was wearing a body camera when the two-minute episode went down and the video didn't back that story.

That the evidence supporting a murder indictment of a law enforcement officer came from the video camera he was wearing is sure to influence the rollout of the program in New York City — which is still haunted by the Garner case.

Garner died in an apparent chokehold by NYPD Officer Daniel Pantaleo. A grand jury declined to indict Pantaleo, and no one knows why. The video of Garner being wrestled to the ground seems to be at least the foundation of a criminal case but no one knows what other evidence was presented that may have led to the grand jury's surprising decision. The lack of information undermines confidence in the justice system.

The appeals court found there was no "compelling" need to make an exception to state secrecy laws. We disagree. Needed reforms failed in Albany this year. Knowing how Garner's case was presented and what charges were considered could have made a strong case for change.

In reviewing the decision, the state's top court might rule differently. But even then the disclosure would only apply to Garner's case. The State Legislature needs to ease secrecy laws to restore confidence in the system.



Demonstrators rally in Brooklyn last week seeking a federal probe into the death of Eric Garner.



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OPINION

Workers shouldn't live in poverty

BY VICTOR TAN CHEN

Amid all the controversy over the recent push in New York for a \$15 minimum wage, it's important to remember the big picture.

In the decades after World War II, the United States had powerful policies and popular movements that lifted up working men and women. A third of employed Americans were members of unions, and a pro-worker lobby pushed Washington to raise the minimum wage to more than \$10 in today's dollars.

That culture has changed — so much so that today we're even debating whether a worker should, at a minimum, earn enough to make ends meet.

In my book, I tell the stories of unemployed autoworkers struggling to stay afloat, cut off from the good jobs that built a broad middle class in this country. The secure livelihoods they once enjoyed are the opposite of the jobs in today's economy — jobs manning cash registers and restaurant counters for low wages, or hustling daily to survive as an independent contractor.

Indeed, the Silicon Valley-spawned jobs multiplying nowadays — the Uber driver, the TaskRabbit gopher — amount to the "ownership society" on steroids: You, the worker, own the risk.

No one is immune from the changes affecting the modern economy. American autoworkers, now in negotiations with car companies, may take heart their industry has rebounded. But with more factory jobs moving to Mexico, entry-level



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auto jobs capped at much lower wages, and foreign automakers setting up shop in right-to-work states that make union organizing hard, the future for the auto industry, and the manufacturing sector that paid so well, remains grim.

Meanwhile, the all-for-one, one-for-all attitude that the unionized autoworker voiced proudly has been pushed aside. Today, politicians talk about job-creating "makers" and parasitic "takers." "Loser" and "fail" have become epithets of a society more tolerant of everything but low marks on test scores or performance reviews.

This attitude fed an intense self-blame among some of the unemployed people I met. Many started taking antidepressants. Several became suicidal. They thought they had let their families down. They didn't make the right choices. They didn't get enough education. As their time without work dragged on, they saw themselves as losers in a soci-

ety that values winning at all costs.

But this way of thinking is shortsighted. It's based on a narrow moral viewpoint. If we only blame other people for failure and do not acknowledge the lack of opportunity, then it makes sense to tell people to just get an education and go it alone. If we care only about the number of jobs created — rather than whether they're good jobs — then it makes sense to do whatever the company wants.

But as the experience of other countries reminds us, we don't have to be so passive in our politics. We can do the right thing, regardless of what the doom-sayers tell us.

No one should be living in poverty if they work full time. This is about more than just economics. It's about our values, which our economy is supposed to serve.

We need to expect more from our corporate citizens, too. Government can't just subsidize them with worker and other tax credits as they go down the road of paying meager wages. It needs to set a higher bar that lets good companies do right by their workers, rather than being unfairly forced to compete with their bottom-feeding rivals. A higher minimum wage alone won't solve the problem of our declining middle class. But it will be a step toward an economy that actually works for ordinary Americans.



Victor Tan Chen, a former *Newsday* reporter, is a sociologist at Virginia Commonwealth University. He is the author of "Cut Loose: Jobless and Hopeless in an Unfair Economy."