

RELEASED: Tuesday, December 1, 2015

Foreign Correspondent: #BlackLivesMatter

Monday December 7 at 8:30pm on ABC – a one-hour special

Reporter Sally Sara takes to the streets of Baltimore and Chicago to investigate a reawakened civil rights movement that's fighting to stop the killing of black Americans.

A preview of this one-hour special is available on request and Sally Sara is available for interviews.

"We're still fighting to be free. Every once in a while it looks like we're gonna get there – and then it all gets killed." – J.C. Faulk, community organiser in Baltimore

For African Americans like J.C. Faulk, the great civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s was unfinished business. Battles were bravely fought and won, but somewhere along the way the ball got dropped.

Now, black America is rising up again over the mounting death toll of unarmed civilians killed in encounters with police, and the incomprehensibly routine atrocities that torment gang-infested neighbourhoods.

"What we're seeing is the birth of a mass movement" – Melina Abdullah, #BlackLivesMatter

This time there's no Martin Luther King. #BlackLivesMatter is a leaderless movement that wants to shake up America by harnessing direct protest and the mobilising power of social media.

Consider: One third of black men in the US are likely to go to jail at some time in their lives; Unarmed black Americans are twice as likely as whites to be killed by police; In Chicago more than 2500 people were shot last year – one every three hours. Most were black; In South Side Chicago special safe passage zones have been set up so children don't get shot walking to and from school.

"Long live Freddie, Black Lives Matter, f... the police!" – young man on Baltimore street

Reporter Sally Sara encounters a Baltimore still simmering over the death of Freddie Gray, 25, whose face looms from murals at the corner where police arrested him in April. Angry protests erupted when he died of spinal injuries after being taken into custody.

Among those who took to the streets was Tawanda Jones. Every Wednesday night for 114 consecutive weeks she has run her own protest for her brother Tyrone – another who died after being stopped by police.

"I will never give up. The day I give up is when killer cops are in cellblocks" – Tawanda Jones

#BlackLivesMatter is not just about changing policing. It is also pursuing real reform in places like Chicago's South Side, where 40 per cent of kids grow up in poverty, gangs run rampant and violence is nearly all black on black. Here it's easier to get a gun than a job.

"All the damn demons and devils are running free here" – Nortasha Stingley, whose teenage daughter Marissa was shot dead by a man in a passing car

At Nortasha Stingley's church nearly every worshipper has lost a friend or relative to gun violence. When Foreign Correspondent follows Nortasha home after church she discovers that her neighbour's 14-year-old son Tyjuan has been killed in a random drive-by shooting.

"I'm scared to grow up. If I have kids I'd be scared to bring them into the neighbourhood"– teenage girl at Tyjuan's vigil

Incredibly, Tyjuan's was just one of more than 50 shootings in Chicago in the single weekend that Sally Sara was there...

In a one-hour Foreign Correspondent special, the people who must live in this pall of violence express their fury and their fear. Amid the mayhem though, a rich and vibrant street culture thrives; so too does the optimism of the individuals who dedicate themselves to changing and saving lives.

Sally Sara reports on #BlackLivesMatter – a special one-hour Foreign Correspondent report, 8.30pm Monday December 7 on ABC.

Sally Sara is available for interviews and a preview of this one-hour special is available on request.

Coming up next in the series of one-hour *Foreign Correspondent* special reports:

Our Man in China – Airs Monday December 14 at 8:30pm on ABC

In his farewell report for the ABC, correspondent Stephen McDonnell looks at the spectacular changes that have swept China during his 10 years there – and the untold sequels to some of the big stories he's covered.

Digital Disruption – Airs Monday December 21 at 8:30pm on ABC

Mark Corcoran reveals how the digital revolution is changing the way we get the news.

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