

Butler, Paul. (2017). Chokehold: policing Black men. New York New Press

For several years, I have appreciated Paul Butler's comments and perspective about criminal justice issues on news programs. As a Black former prosecutor with twenty years-experience, a Harvard-educated legal scholar and a Black man who has been falsely accused of a crime, Butler brings a wealth of clear-eyed information about what it is like to be a Black man in the criminal justice system in the United States.

He speaks with authenticity and regret about the role he played in the criminal justice system, obtaining guilty pleas from Black criminal defendants. He writes about the importance of knowing how the system works. He recognizes that, although he was innocent of the crime he was accused of, he could have easily been convicted, if he had not had a good lawyer, who helped him manage his reactions to the stress of the court experience.

Butler describes the many meanings that the title Choke Hold have for the black man, including the physical act of the maneuver that has been clearly associated with the death of Eric Garner at the hands of the police. He also records the many ways the Choke Hold affects Black men, who are portrayed as "thugs," controlled as "thugs," manhandled during the process of arrest, and perpetrators of violence who live out the Choke Hold within themselves. He identifies four "crises" with very different perspectives on the problem: 1. Black Male Behavior 2. Underenforcement of the Law 3. Police Community Relations 4. Anti-Black Racism/White Supremacy. These four crises could be the focus for discussion groups.

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