MINNEAPOLIS WITHOUT POLICING

Building a Safe and Free Future: #DefundPolice Minnesota Resource Guide

This guide is our invitation: A letter to the reader

Black people have always known that systems of criminalization and surveillance are designed to destroy. The overwhelming sadness and rage we feel when one of us is murdered by the police yet again is the same sadness and rage that our ancestors felt. They knew that if they wanted justice, they had to build their own communities centered in love, accountability, and care. Now more than ever, we must follow in their footsteps. As we write this, we are surviving in a police state, during a pandemic that disproportionately kills and disables Black people, with a recession looming and a clear expiration date for our planet. The moment for transformation is upon us; will you step into it with us?

Organizing in Minneapolis since 2017, Black Visions is a Black-led Queer and Trans-centering organization seeking to build powerful campaigns to free Black folks in Minnesota while holding healing and transformative justice at the center. We work within a powerful ecosystem of organizations and organizers to dismantle systems of policing and uplift community-led systems of safety and accountability. Using a Black Queer Feminist lens (shout out to BYP100 and the many Black feminists we've learned from for this organizing framework), we bring our full selves into our work, strategize and organize with full liberation in mind, and trust Black people.

"It's gonna take every single one of us learning new skills and building new relationships and really trying things we haven't done before. But we believe the reward is gonna be a city that really invests in life-affirming policies and programs and services that care for our people instead of police that terrorize us." — Miski Noor

But this work and this movement aren't just about us; they're about you, and all of us. We created this resource guide with you in mind, and for every Black Minnesotan who dreams of our collective liberation. When you imagine liberation for all Black people, what does it look like?

Throughout this guide, we'll walk you through why we think the work of defunding the police is essential to our lives and future. In Part 1 of this guide, we'll offer context and history—starting with why #DefundPolice—and look to the history and white-supremacist origins of the police, as well as the broader structures of the prison industrial complex. Then, we'll turn to introducing an abolitionist and transformative-justice approach. In Part 2, we offer some concrete tools for you to begin engaging in this fight with us—whether you are still on the fence, ready to begin talking to your community, or ready to organize yourself. In Part 3, we'll look to further resources to build the world we want to see and explore further alternatives to policing that already exist and have been proven to be impactful.

We give this resource guide to you as a gift and an invitation. Our hope is that these pages will empower you to take your next step in embracing community-led safety. We offer guidance about starting and leading these conversations, context to help you understand how far-reaching police violence is, and resources across the Twin Cities to support your work. The work to transform the world we live in isn't easy, but we love you, ourselves, and our communities too much to not fully invest in this movement. Consider this an invitation to join us on this journey, to one day reach the liberation we dream of.

"We are each other's harvest; we are each other's business; we are each other's magnitude and bond." — Gwendolyn Brooks

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#DEFUNDTHEPOLICE:

WHAT IS THIS DEMAND ABOUT?

#DEFUNDPOLICE:

WHAT IS THIS DEMAND ABOUT?[1]

#DefundPolice is a demand that has gained popularity in re#DefundPolice is a demand that has gained popularity in response to the recent police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Tony McDade. It is rooted in the failure of decades of commissions, investigations, police reforms, and oversight to prevent their deaths. It is also a response to the fact that officials are increasing or maintaining police budgets although cities, counties, and states are experiencing drastic losses in revenue and many life-saving programs are on the chopping block. All of this is occuring in the face of a pandemic; the most devastating economic crisis of a generation; and the continued impact of racial capitalism.

#DefundPolice is a demand to #DefendBlackLives, by shutting off resources to institutions that harm Black people and redirecting them to meet Black communities' needs and increase our collective safety.

#DefundPolice is a demand to cut funding and resources from police departments and other law enforcement, and invest in things that actually make our communities safer: quality, community-owned, and accessible housing; universal health care, including holistic healing practices and community-based mental-health services; safe living-wage employment; income support to stay safe; education; youth programming; and more. It is rooted in a larger Invest/Divest framework articulated in the Movement for Black Lives' Vision for Black Lives.

#DefundPolice is a strategy that goes beyond dollars and cents; it is not just about decreasing police budgets, it is about reducing the power, scope, and size of police departments. It is about delegitimizing institutions of surveillance, policing, punishment, and these strategies themselves, no matter who is deploying them, to produce safety. It is a strategy (part of the HOW) to advance a long-term vision of the abolition of police through: divesting from policing as a practice; dismantling policing institutions; and building community-based responses to harm, need, and conflict that do not rely on surveillance, policing, and punishment.

While #DefundPolice focuses on law-enforcement agencies, we are also calling for the defunding of jails, prisons, detention centers, immigration enforcement, and sites of involuntary commitment, as well as the incarceration of disabled people. We are also calling for defunding the military-industrial complex. Visit War Resisters (warresisters.org), Dissenters (wearedissenters.org), and Jewish Voice for Peace (jewishvoiceforpeace.org) to learn more about work to reduce military spending and military collaboration with police.

We also recognize the need to resist the expansion of policing—both in terms of the presence of officers, and of policing ideologies and technologies—into many institutions, including social services, healthcare provisions, and educational settings, as well as professions including social workers, medical providers, and teachers. We need to be careful not to transfer policing functions, practices, and technologies to different people and places.

Defunding is not just about cutting city budgets across the board as an austerity measure in the midst of an economic crisis—it is about reinvesting money cut from police departments into community-based services that meet basic needs and advance safety without using methods of policing, surveillance, punishment, and coercion. It is also about investing in cultural life, arts, recreation, and the things that make and strengthen community and our dreams for our future.

When we say #DefundPolice, we mean reducing the size, budgets, and power of all institutions that surveil, police, punish, incarcerate, and kill Black people to zero—and investing in and building entirely new community infrastructures that will produce genuine safety and sustainability for our communities.
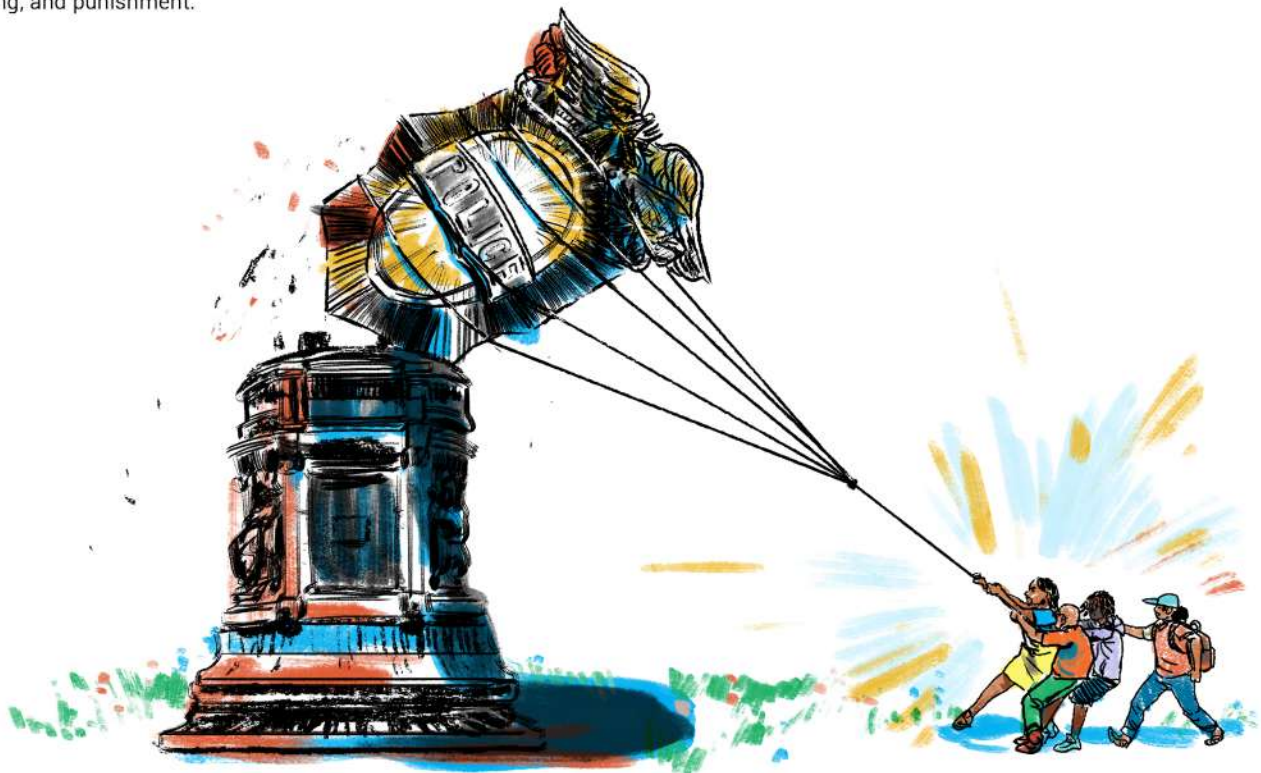
THE HISTORY OF POLICE SHOWS US WHY WE DON'T NEED THEM[2]
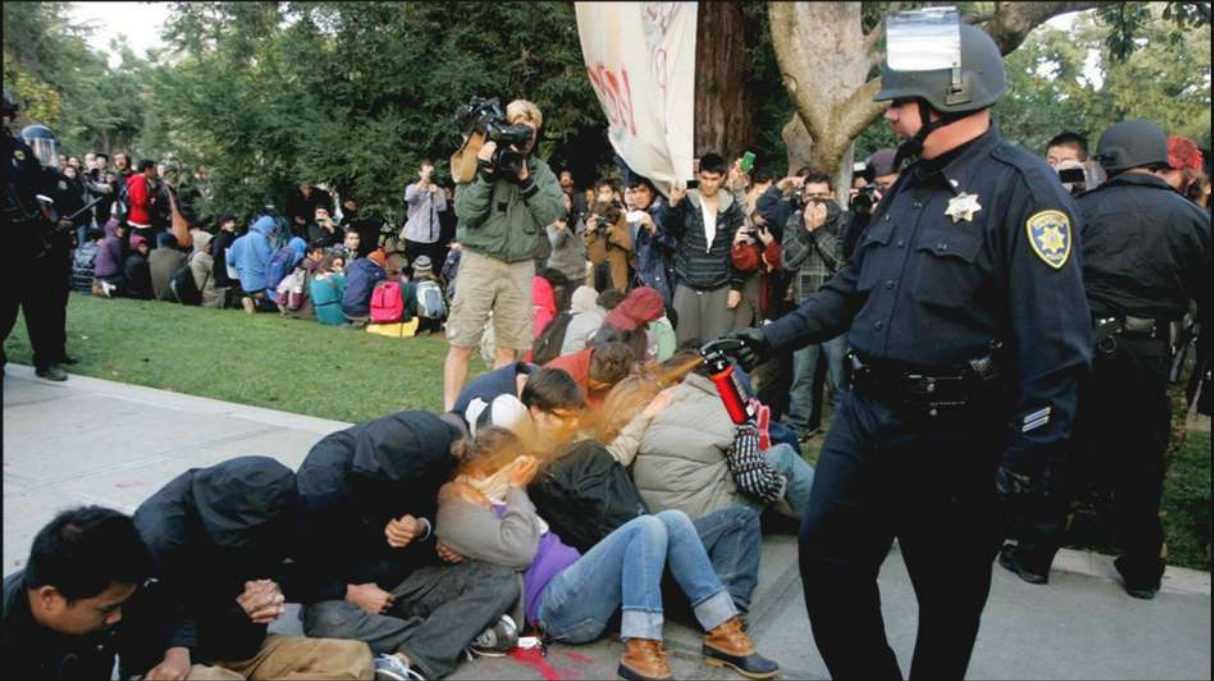
We often talk about police as if they've existed for all of human history, when in reality they're a relatively recent invention. The first modern police force in the world was established in England in the 19th century; before that, communities were largely kept safe by informal institutions. In 1829, growing levels of property crime caused by urbanization and the creation of urban poverty led to the creation of a police force in London—the Metropolitan Police Department. Home Secretary Robert Peel was the creator of the department and based it on the model of the Royal Irish Constabulary, a "peacekeeping" force designed to maintain British rule and control rebellious communities in occupied Ireland. From their very beginnings in London, police departments were rooted in colonialism and the protection of property. Policing's origins in the United States, though, are even more dreadful.

Though the 13 colonies imported a system of elected sheriffs and constables, who were empowered to enforce some laws, formalized American policing began with slave patrols. Slave patrols were made up of local militias and slave owners who patrolled the countryside to stop Black people and force escaped enslaved people back into bondage. Slave patrols enforced white supremacy from some of the earliest days of the European occupation of the Americas. These patrols (and their Northern equivalents, known as town watches) were empowered to enforce curfews against Black and Indigenous folks, search and confiscate their property, and brutalize them, with or without cause. These groups were gradually granted additional powers and

THEY'VE NEVER SERVED OUR COMMUNITIES: A DETAILED TIMELINE OF THE ORIGINS OF POLICING

Colonization and the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade Era;
1100s-1800s.
Resistance: Armed Resistance, Revolutions, Cultural Survival

Militias, Patrols and White Supremacist Consolidation of Power;
1680s-1800s
Resistance: Armed Resistance, Escape and Subversion, Cultural Survival

1680s: South Carolina passes law that allows any white person to punish a runaway slave. In 1690 a law was passed that required whites to act in this role. Slavery and white supremacy were so fully institutionalized in the American South that, as one author put it, "White supremacy served in lieu of a police force."

1703: Boston passes a curfew law for all Blacks and Indigenous people, establishing race as defining criteria in law enforcement in the new colonies
 (even non-slavery ones).

1700s onwards: Southern cities such as Charleston, Savannah, New Orleans, and Mobile form paramilitary groups tasked with the control of enslaved people, with the goal of preventing and repressing rebellion. Slave patrols and militias often work together. In the U.S., these organized patrols are the first proper antecedents to "modern" police forces.

Early 1800s: Pass laws were passed in several Southern states requiring all Black people to carry passes and allowing for arrest of any Black person without a pass, regardless of their status.

Mid-1800s: Police in the U.S. coalesce into one relatively uniform type. Previous law enforcement models such as guards, watchmen, militias and slave patrols begin to coalesce into city-run, 24-hour police.

Property Control and Maintenance Era: 1840–1940
Progressive Era: Reform and Bureaucratization to Protect Elite Interests
Resistance: Armed Resistance, Growth of Urban Social Movements, Immigrant and Labor-Union Organizing, Reforms

1845: Establishment of first unified and uniformed police force in New York City. Boston and Philadelphia follow.

1865: Emancipation of enslaved people. Emancipation is followed immediately by passage of laws controlling Black people's public movement and work; Under the 13th Amendment, emancipation also stipulates that slave labor may continue for those convicted of a crime, creating an incentive for whites in power to arrest Black people in order to exploit their labor and prevent their entry into wage labor and political power.

1860s–70s: Reconstruction and a rapid gain of political power by Blacks in the South is met with extreme legal and extralegal backlash, including violent vigilante and militia action against Black people attempting to vote or run for office. Southern "law enforcement" is often indistinguishable from white-supremacist vigilante groups.

1882: Chinese Exclusion Act is passed, banning all Chinese laborers from entering the U.S. and preventing residents from naturalizing. This marks the first major piece of legislation restricting immigration to the U.S., followed by several laws restricting immigration through quotas and mandatory registration.

1886: Haymarket Riot. After an anarchist throws a bomb at police at a workers rally in Haymarket Square in Chicago, police riot against demonstrators, killing at least a dozen. Seven police are also killed. Raids on activist communities ensue, and ultimately, eight men are convicted as examples. Four of them are murdered by execution.

1914–24: Police repression of labor organizing/strikes.

1920–33: Prohibition. Policing is about enforcement and dealing with organized crime.

1920s–30s: IWW and other unions are particularly active. Police are routinely employed as a shield between unions and corporations, breaking up strikes and threatening labor organizers with violence.

1890–1930: Progressive Era reforms lead to "kinder, gentler" system and reforms of local corruption in city governments. Police departments become more disciplined and hierarchical as a result. Progressive reforms also lead to innovations like the probation and parole systems, legalizing bureaucratic state intrusion into poor people's homes. Urban professional social services and public housing are also invented, often working in tandem with these new, reformed government systems, such as child welfare and the juvenile courts.

1900–40: Formation of state police forces begins as a response to union actions. Large corporations had employed their own private forces, and reformists saw this as unsavory while corporations saw it as expensive. State Troopers are the solution.

Crime Fighting Era: 1930–70
Birth of Civil Rights Movements
Resistance: Armed Resistance, Nonviolent Tactics Inspired by Anti-Colonial Revolutions Abroad, Solidarity with Anti-ColonialMovements, Legal Reforms, rioting

1930s: J. Edgar Hoover and the U.S. Bureau of Investigation (BI) receive expanded crime-fighting responsibilities. The BI is renamed the FBI (adding explicit federal jurisdiction). The FBI establishes an academy to train local police.

1940s–50s: McCarthyism and the Red Scare. Anti-Soviet sentiment and a government-produced fear of nuclear war and Communism are rallied as a justification for blacklisting and surveilling anyone who is a suspected Communist—a precursor to "anti-terrorism" policy today.

1950: Schools begin creating their own security forces to crack down on property destruction and vandalism.

1950s: Emergence of the Civil Rights Movement as we know it, which strategically uses civil disobedience in national campaigns. Nonviolent protestors, most of them Black, are routinely met with violence.

1950s onward: The birth of COINTELPRO, a secret FBI program, active in monitoring and disrupting Civil Rights and Black Power activities for two decades.
COINTELPRO is ultimately a key player in dismantling the radical movements for justice that emerged in this era.

Height of Struggle for Racial Equity and Self-Determination
Resistance: Armed Resistance, Black Nationalism, LGBTQ and Women's Liberation Organizing, Peaceful Demonstration, Rioting, Legal Reforms

1960s–70s: After decades of quashed attempts, police themselves are finally able to form unions. State concessions to police create further unity up and down the police hierarchy.

1961: Southern Freedom Riders are met with police violence, notably in Birmingham, Alabama, where the riders are arrested and removed. When they return on Mother's Day of that year, they are beaten by Klansmen while police look away.

1964: On July 10, a group of African American men in Jonesboro, Louisiana, led by Earnest "Chilly Willy" Thomas and Frederick Douglas Kirkpatrick, found the group known as the Deacons for Defense and Justice to protect members of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) against Ku Klux Klan violence.

1964–67: Nationwide uprisings in New York City, Los Angeles, Detroit, and Newark,, are a response to police brutality against the Black community.

1965: Selma to Montgomery march (Bloody Sunday, March 7, 1965).

1966: Black Panther party is formed.

1967: Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders finds that reasons for civil unrest include unemployment, job and housing discrimination, inadequate social services, unequal justice, and police actions. Kerner Commission finds that police are committing acts of brutality, harassment, or abuse; that they have little training or supervision; that community relations are poor; and that there is a failure to employ Black officers. Af police subculture is formed, with an emphasis on hierarchy and following orders; officers are not on the streets, and regular contact with people is limited.

1968: Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act establishes Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. Feds can funnel millions of dollars to local law enforcement, helping thousands of cops pay for college and funding technological innovations such as computers and communication devices.

1968: First police SWAT team established in Los Angeles.

1968: Police repression of the protests at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Although many are injured and killed, this moment is an important watershed in that police mob violence is captured on camera and distributed internationally. Even Chicago police officials are forced to admit things "got out of control."

1969: Murder of Fred Hampton in Chicago. FBI works with Chicago police to commit premeditated murder of Black Panther Party leader Fred Hampton in his house on the South Side.

1969: Stonewall Riots in response to police harassment.

Order Maintenance and Suppression Era: 1970s
Backlash Against Activist Movements, Control of Urban Spaces
Resistance: Armed Resistance, Continued Nonviolent Resistance, rRoting, Struggle for Political Power Including More Black Voices within Police Forces and Mainstream Politics

1970: Kent State and Jackson State murders. Four college students at Kent State in Ohio and two college students at Jackson State in Mississippi are murdered by police during anti-war protests. The four white students' killings are national news, while the murder of the two Black protestors is downplayed by the media and historians. Both events, though tragic, help to strengthen antiwar sentiment throughout the country.

1970s: Radical Black Power movement and other groups such as the Young Lords and the Gay Liberation Front are routinely infiltrated and criminalized by police and FBI. These movements are eventually torn apart in the process, forcing activists into either more mainstream politics and tactics, or permanent incarceration and marginalization.

1970s–80s: Through federally funded "drug war" programs and surplus equipment from the military, paramilitary police units, SWAT teams, and anti-drug task forces begin springing up.

1971: Detroit police create the notorious STRESS anti-crime unit, which stands for Stop the Robberies Enjoy Safe Streets. Over a two-year period, this unit is responsible for the deaths of more than 30 individuals in the city, most of whom are Black.

1972: Chicago Police Torture begins. Under the leadership of Police Commander Jon Burge, at least 135 African American men and women are tortured by Chicago Police between 1972 and 1991. By the time the issue is brought to the surface, the statute of limitations is up for a torture trial.

1979–80: Miami Riots. The police murder a Black salesman named Arthur McDuffie after a chase. When three officers are acquitted by an all-white jury in Tampa (the case is moved by a judge), crowds riot in Miami. Seventeen are killed and nearly 500 injured.

New Conservatism and Drug War: 1980s
Resistance: Media and Legal Campaigns to Expose Corruption and Racism, Rioting, Peaceful Demonstration

1980s: "Drug War" begins at Reagan's urging, setting up urban communities of color as both victims and perpetrators in an ongoing process of criminalization. Crack-cocaine shows up in these communities while the feds look away. Many police raids, especially in South Central Los Angeles.

1988: STEP (Street Terrorism Enforcement and Protection) Act. The act provides for felony prosecution of active gang members, felony penalties against adults who coerce youth into joining a gang, and possible life terms in prison for murder convictions involving drive-by shootings. It also outlines penalties for graffiti vandalism and sale of illegal weapons. Other provisions call for publication of a gang-prevention resource guide for community organizations and in-service teacher training in preventing gang violence and drug abuse.

Late 1980s: ACT-UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) begins to use civil disobedience to draw attention to the growing AIDS crisis and demand government support for research and aid to victims. Police suppress protests, but ACT-UP is successful in getting AIDS on the map as a social-justice issue.

Backlash Against Immigrants, Birth of New Movements: 2000s–present

2001: 9/11 changes face of policing and surveillance.

2001 and 2006: USA Patriot Act expands federal law-enforcement authority, especially around surveillance. Homeland security grants programs funnel more money to local police departments. Terror enhancements are used to trump up charges.

2002–14: NYPD establishes Demographics Unit (later renamed Zone Assessment Unit) to engage in a mass surveillance campaign of Muslim communities in the New York area. This campaign lasts ten years and includes mapping neighborhoods with large Muslim communities, photo and video surveillance, maintaining files on thousands of Muslim individuals in databases, and embedding informants within Muslim Student Associations and mosques.

2003: Oakland Riders acquitted of misconduct involving kidnapping, beating, and planting drugs on people who were then either charged and did time or paid fines on those drug charges.

2009: Tasers first deployed to police.

January 2009: Oscar Grant killed by BART officer Johannes Mehserle, followed by uprisings in Oakland. Mehserle is convicted of involuntary manslaughter in 2010.

2010: Passage of Arizona's SB-1070 is the first in a rash of draconian anti-immigrant laws that task local police with immigration enforcement and formalize racial profiling by police and, in Alabama, even by school officials. The events lead to the strengthening of Black/brown coalitions against policing and racial profiling.

March 2011: Secure Communities expands to more than 1,200 jurisdictions. Secure Communities is a program of Homeland Security that uses partnerships among federal, state, and local law-enforcement agencies, including shared databases, to more effectively deport immigrants by giving ICE access to fingerprints taken at local jails.

July 17, 2014: Eric Garner is killed by officer Daniel Pantaleo in Staten Island, New York, after being put in a choke hold. On December 3, 2014, a grand jury decides not to indict Pantaleo.

August 9, 2014: Michael Brown, an 18-year-old unarmed Black man, is shot by white officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri. On November 24, 2014, it is declared that the St. Louis County grand jury has decided not to indict Wilson.

November 2014—January 2015: Protests against the killings of Michael Brown and Eric Garner and ongoing police violence against Black communities erupt around the country and last for months.

May 2016: Louisiana passes "Blue Lives Matter" legislation to include law enforcement and first responders under its hate-crime protections.

July 2016: Police shootings of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile launch protests in cities across the country. Micah Johnson is killed by police with an explosive- carrying robot after shooting five Dallas police officers at a protest.

September 9, 2016: More than a hundred demonstrators from the Bay Area's Stop Urban Shield coalition successfully lock down outside the Urban Shield weapons and military training expo in Pleasanton, California.

September 2016—February 2017: Indigenous-led demonstration at Standing Rock over the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) results in deployment of private security, local law enforcement, and the National Guard. Police use water cannons, rubber bullets, and tear gas to attack water protectors camped out in subzero temperatures. Energy Transfer Partners, the corporation backing DAPL, hires private security firm TigerSwan to digitally track activists and share information with the FBI and local law enforcement.

November 2016: The American Public Health Association (APHA) issues a policy statement naming law-enforcement violence as a public health concern.

January—February 2017: Trump issues Muslim ban, leading to immigrants and travelers detained at airports, quickly followed by widespread protests at airports across the country. Riot police are deployed at many airports.

February 2017: Trump signs three executive orders aimed at increasing policing.

February 2017 onward: Sweeping ICE raids are conducted across the country following threats by the Trump administration to increase deportations.

May 2020: Darren Wilson of the Minneapolis Police Department murders George Floyd. Protests against policing erupt in Minneapolis and ripple throughout the world. The protest wave leads to efforts to defund police across the country

June—September 2020: The Trump regime targets protests across the country, including Portland and Chicago.

THE HISTORY OF POLICING IN MINNESOTA

IN MAY 2020, THE WORLD WATCHED MINNEAPOLIS AS THE UPRISING, LED BY BLACK AND BROWN YOUTH, BEGAN IN THE WAKE OF THE MURDER OF GEORGE FLOYD. IT'S UNDERSTANDABLE THAT MOST OF THE MEDIA ATTENTION DURING THAT TIME CENTERED ON THE MINNEAPOLIS POLICE DEPARTMENT, BUT IT'S ALSO NO SECRET THAT POLICE VIOLENCE AND RACISM ARE ISSUES FACED BY MINNESOTANS ALL OVER THE STATE—FROM THE TWIN CITIES, TO THE SUBURBS, TO SMALLER CITIES AND RURAL AREAS.

FOR EXAMPLE, IN 2016, THE STAR TRIBUNE BEGAN BUILDING A DATABASE OF "POLICE-INVOLVED DEATHS" IN MINNESOTA. "CULLING INFORMATION FROM DEATH CERTIFICATES, NEWS STORIES, CROWDSOURCING SITES, STATE AND LOCAL POLICE RECORDS, FBI SUPPLEMENTARY HOMICIDE REPORTS AND ARREST-RELATED DEATH REPORTS AND MEDICAL EXAMINER DATA," THE DATABASE HAS BEEN CONTINUALLY UPDATED. [3] AS OF SEPTEMBER 2020, THE DATABASE INCLUDES 195 NAMES. AND WHILE ABOUT 6% OF MINNESOTA'S POPULATION IS BLACK, BLACK VICTIMS MAKE UP 27% OF THE NAMES ON THE LIST.

THIS VIOLENCE HAS BEEN MET, BOTH HISTORICALLY AND IN MORE RECENT TIMES, WITH ORGANIZING, AND CALLS FOR CHANGE AT THE STATE LEVEL. AS RICARDO LOPEZ WRITES IN VANITY FAIR, "SINCE THE NINETEEN-SIXTIES, BLACK RESIDENTS HAVE BEEN DEMANDING A WIDE-RANGING OVERHAUL OF LAW-ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES, INCLUDING COMMUNITY POLICING, CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT, IMPROVED TRAINING, AND STRONGER ACCOUNTABILITY. INSTEAD, POLICIES ENACTED BY GOP GOVERNORS AND LAWMAKERS HAVE EXACERBATED MISTRUST OF THE POLICE." [4]

THAT RESISTANCE TO CHANGE, WHICH EXISTS AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT BUT IS PERHAPS MOST ACUTELY FELT AT THE STATE LEVEL, STEMS IN PART FROM MINNESOTA'S HISTORY. WE KNOW WHEN IT COMES TO STATE-SANCTIONED VIOLENCE, POLICE BRUTALITY IS ONLY THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG.

1862 Dakota War

1920 Lynchings of Three Black Men in Duluth

From the 1862 Dakota War (one of the brutal, "genocidal efforts to forcibly remove the Dakota from Minnesota"[5]), to the horrific 1920 lynchings[6] of three Black men in Duluth, to countless other acts of violence, Minnesota's history is anything but "nice." The history of pervasive violence in Minnesota started long before the murder of George Floyd. The Dakota War of 1862 is a striking example of the genocidal efforts and conflict enacted in order to **erase the Dakota peoples** from this land. Sometimes, that violence is explicit, such as in the highly publicized police murders of George Floyd and Philando Castile. We must also recognize, however, the violence that is embedded in laws, policies, and practices throughout Minnesota.

One of the most explicit manifestations of that violence is the history of the Rondo neighborhood in St. Paul. Ehsan Alam, writing for the Minnesota Historical Society's "Mnopedia" project, describes the Rondo of the 20s and 30s:

Supported by the booming railway industry and local businesses, Rondo's black families were upper-middle and middle class as well as working class. Integrated schools, such as Central High School, Maxfield Elementary School, and parochial schools, created a relatively high level of education and literacy among minority residents. This openness in turn attracted southern blacks who faced stark racial prejudice and violence.

Several organizations arose to meet the growing community's social needs. The Hallie Q. Brown Community Center provided human services and gave African Americans a place to meet and socialize. In 1928, the Credjafawn Social Club began to offer a social and recreational space for young blacks. It went on to create a food cooperative and a credit union that helped residents finance their homes and educations.[7]

Interstate I-94 facing downtown St. Paul.
The historic Rondo neighborhood once spanned much of
what is now Summit Hill and ran north to University Avenue.

Between 1956 and 1968, the construction of I-94, along a route chosen by city engineers, effectively cut Rondo in half. Laura Yuen, reporting for MPR, describes a snapshot of resistance to the project, and the consequences of that project:

Before Interstate 94 plowed through St. Paul's Rondo neighborhood, the Rev. George Davis tried his best to stay in his home. . . . When Davis refused to move, authorities forcibly removed him. Police arrived at the preacher's house on Sept. 28, 1956. They came bearing axes and sledgehammers, a sight that caused his 13-year-old grandson to cry.

. . . this is the legacy of I-94: The government moved about 650 families in all, and tore the neighborhood in half. The new freeway wiped out homes and businesses, as well as some of the equity that longtime residents built in their homes and would have passed onto their children.[8]

This pattern of interplay between racist city planning and the police role in enforcing those plans echoes throughout Minnesota in different ways.

Another example: Like other states, Minnesota has a history of "sundown towns."[9] That term refers to communities that, through some combination of formal, discriminatory policies and informal threats of violence, did not welcome Black residents or visitors. While this concept isn't just linked to police and policing, it isn't difficult to see that link. Police can enact violence through action (like racist harassment), through inaction (like refusing to charge white people who practice racist harassment), or just by upholding unjust laws (like racist housing covenants, for example).

Indeed, issues related to housing, redlining, and racial covenants are central to the story of structural racism in Minnesota. In "The Minnesota Paradox," Professor Samuel L. Myers Jr. writes:

At one point in its history, blacks in Minnesota had high home ownership rates, high levels of academic achievement and impressive contributions to the rest of the world. There were thriving black owned businesses, a vibrant community of fraternal and social organizations and leaders in virtually every walk of life. Unfortunately, the small number of black households faced brutal red-lining practices by real estate brokers and lenders, racial covenants and limitations on what types of jobs they could hold. Historic black neighborhoods were destroyed after World War II to make way for a federal highway connecting Minneapolis and St. Paul. Policing policies evolved that substituted explicit racial profiling with scientific management of racially disparate arrests. Child welfare and public housing policies emerged that resulted in heavy concentrations of poor minorities in a few isolated census tracts. In short, racially discriminatory policies became institutionalized and 'baked in" to the fabric of Minnesota life.[10]

Professor Keith Mayes makes the connection between these discriminatory policies and the "defund" movement:

"The devastating consequences of housing segregation is felt, I believe, mainly in education. . . . So the housing disparities created the educational disparities that we still live with today. . . . The calls to defund police departments—we're saying defund the police departments by shifting and reprioritizing and reallocating monies to fix the schools, to fix the housing problems that were created early in the 20th century because of racism."[11]

We can't talk about the history of police and policing in Minnesota without talking about this other history—of discrimination, displacement, and violence—that Black people, Indigenous people, and other people of color have endured since the state's founding in 1858 (and, indeed, before then).

When it comes to state violence, we must recognize the connection between "Indian removal" in 1862 and Minnesota sheriffs taking part in the crackdown on Dakota Access Pipeline protestors in 2016.[12] We must recognize the connection between the displacement of Rondo residents in 1956 and the ongoing displacement of our neighbors in 2020, due to gentrification, evictions, or the clearing out of encampments for people experiencing homelessness.

As Professor Rose Brewer stated in an interview with Politico, "The history of racism here is unknown; it hasn't been exhumed and challenged. And unless you root that out, systematically it remains."[13]

THE SYSTEMS WE LIVE IN ARE INTERCONNECTED:

THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

WHAT IS THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX?

The term prison industrial complex, or PIC, was first used by Angela Davis to describe the network of public and private groups with economic, social, and political interests at play in incarceration, policing, and surveillance as a "solution" for problems. Rather than working to address and minimize problems, the PIC profits off their growth.

There are more than 2.3 million people in prison and jails across the country, but the correctional system is actually much bigger than that.

People under correctional control include everyone under "community supervision," such as those on probation or parole, in ICE detention, under involuntary commitment, in military incarceration, and in youth detention; that number is more like 6.7 million people. In Minnesota, that number looks like 2,228 per 100,000 people.

The PIC includes those whose jobs depend on this system of "justice." Police, prison guards, and prosecutors are part of this group, but so might be investment bankers, politicians, and social workers. The PIC uses prisons, police, and surveillance in order to repress communities targeted by business interests to maintain control over the broader population. It is **dependent on multiple aspects of our** lives to continue its function.

One huge way that prison relates to the economy is that it warehouses masses of poor, Black, and Latino people in order to maintain discipline over the larger population. It is no coincidence that there was an extreme boom of prison expansion in the early 1980s, just as most factory work had been deregulated, moved off shore, or shut down entirely. As multinational business interests cut **jobs to challenge the power of unions, the U.S. had to** manage a sudden sharp increase in unemployed citizens and a decrease in living-wage jobs. As this was a period during which the same group of people were calling for more justice and democracy, the solution rapidly became the need to criminalize and incarcerate large parts of the population. Such a pattern keeps the entire population **trapped in a** cycle of primarily low-wage labor.

Forty years later, the situation is much the same. There is a severe need for access to education and jobs for young people and those who are released from imprisonment, as well as the broader public. The federal government, even under the Obama administration, has been focused on repackaging and reforming our system of punishment, wasting much of our communities' general funds for **policing and incar**ceration instead of release from prison, community infrastructure, and job guarantees for all.

WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH POLICING?

Policing is an integral part of the prison industrial complex. Policing is a set of practices used by the state to enforce laws and practice social control. Policing is used to target poor people, people of color, immigrants, and others who do not conform on the streets and in their homes. Policing is also used as a way to control people from these neighborhoods through constant surveillance and patrolling, eroding the fabric of these communities.
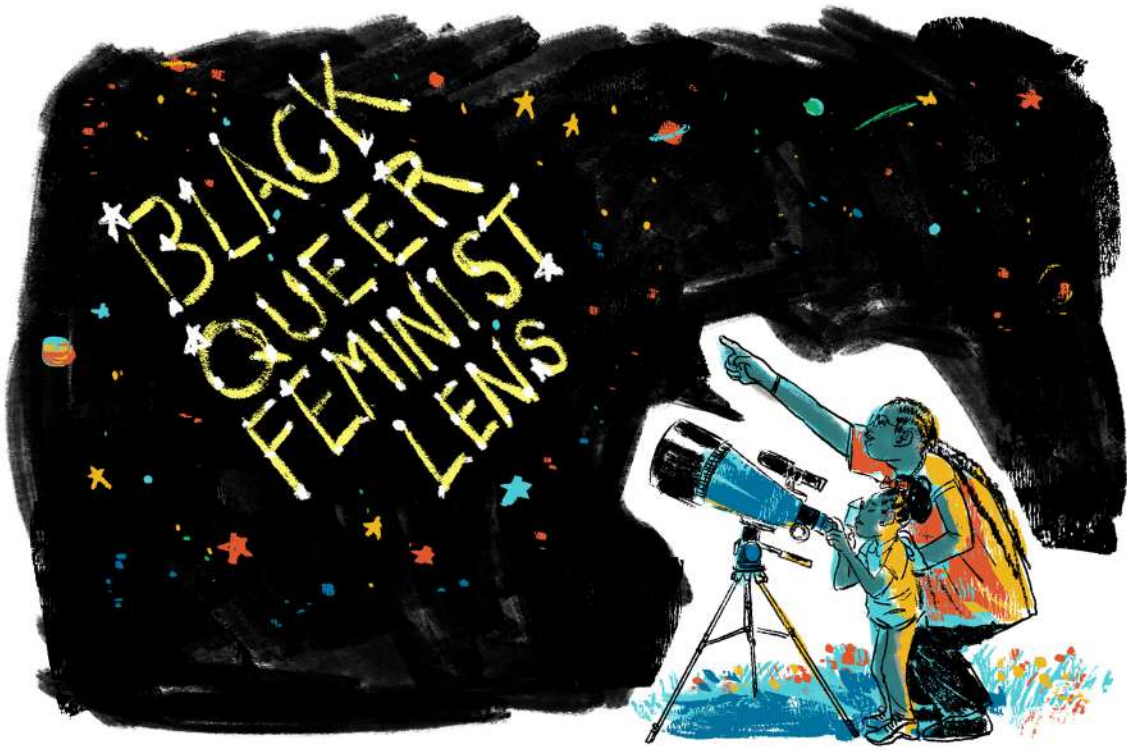
A VISION FOR OUR FUTURE: AN ABOLITIONIST APPROACH

What is abolition?

Prison industrial complex abolition is an ideology and a practice with the goal of eliminating imprisonment, policing, and surveillance, and transforming the conditions that make caging, policing, and social control possible. As PIC abolitionists, we organize to dismantle and defund these systems. We also work to build up the resources, infrastructure, and **relationships we need to build community** accountability and keep each other safe. This looks like organizing to abolish police and all law enforcement, including ICE and the military; to stop jail/prison construction and close existing facilities; and to end racist, predictive policing practices that use zip codes to target Black and Brown neighborhoods. It **also looks** like not calling the police on people, ever; learning to de-escalate conflict before it turns violent; and helping your neighbor out when they need it and you are able.

"Abolition is not just about eliminating something (e.g., police and prisons); it is about creating what we need to live, love, and thrive." — Stevie Wilson, abolitionist prisoner held in the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections

Abolition is not some long-distance vision possible only in another lifetime. Abolition is work that people already do.

Dismantle, Change, Build

Abolition is not just one thing. Abolition requires us to be working in many spaces at once. Critical Resistance's Dismantle, Change, Build framework helps us to understand abolition as a three-pronged strategy; these three strategies are not employed in linear order, but work together simultaneously.

- Abolition is about organizing to dismantle the PIC and all oppressive structures and practices in all the spaces we show up in.

- Abolition is about working to change common sense about what really makes us safe; how we approach justice; and how we address harm, conflict, and violence in our communities. It is also about changing common sense about the role that policing, surveillance, and imprisonment plays in the lives of oppressed people.

- Abolition requires us to build community systems of care, accountability, and interdependence. It also requires us to build up the resources and muscles we need to take care of each other, prevent harm, and keep each other safe without relying on the PIC.

Policing and cages do not keep us safe

As abolitionists, we understand policing and imprisonment as violence—and we fight to be free of these systems. We also see oppressive conditions as violence against our communities; for example, unaffordable rent and forced eviction, fines and fees that target poor people, being forced to live in unsafe conditions, and not having access to healthy food or healthcare are all forms of violence against which we fight. These violent practices have always targeted people who are Black, brown, Indigenous, queer, poor, and disabled.

As abolitionists, we care deeply about preventing violence and transforming harm in our communities. It is why we do the work we do to dismantle policing, caging, white supremacy, capitalism, patriarchy, and all the violent and oppressive systems that create inequality and seek to control and destroy us. We also understand that conflict, violence, and harm will happen, even outside of the state—whether in our neighborhoods, workplaces, homes, churches, schools, or other community spaces we are part of.

We know that we are all capable of violence and harm, and we believe that we are also all capable of transformation and forgiveness. As abolitionists, we ask ourselves: How can we build up our muscles to respond to violence and harm when they happen in our own communities? How can we accomplish this without relying on the state? How can we embody our abolitionist values of care, safety, self-determination, healing, and accountability without replicating carceral logics of punishment and disposability?

Reclaiming Our Conflicts

Abolition is about reclaiming our conflicts from the state. As a society, we've outsourced our conflicts to state agencies. When conflict happens in our community, instead of dealing with it directly, we are trained to pick up the phone and call someone else. Examples include calling child services on a single mom who left her kid at home while she worked the night shift; dialing 911 when you hear your neighbors arguing, or when you see someone having a mental-health crisis, or because some stranger won't move their car out your driveway, or because you see an unfamiliar Black kid on your block. We are socialized to police each other. We are socialized to outsource our conflicts. And when the police or state agency arrives, they almost always bring more violence and family separation, and ruin people's lives and relationships with each other.

Reclaiming our conflicts first requires an understanding that police, prisons, and state agencies do not keep us safe. They have never kept Black, brown, Indigenous, disabled, trans, and undocumented communities safe. Being supported and cared for in our communities is what keeps us safe. Having the resources we need to be happy and meet our everyday needs is what makes us feel safe. Abolition requires a radical reimagining of safety, and a commitment to community care and community accountability. This looks like community members being responsible for each other and building the relationships, structures, and resources that help everyone get their needs met so that we can reduce instances of violence and harm.

Crime vs. Harm

Reclaiming our conflicts requires us to recognize the difference between crime and harm. It's important for us to distinguish harm vs. crime so that we can begin to understand crime as a colonial concept used to control oppressed people. What is criminalized in legal code is determined by those in power, usually embedded in white-supremacist, capitalist, ableist, patriarchal logics. The overwhelming number of Black, brown, queer, disabled, and poor people in cages or otherwise under carceral control is evidence that both the design and application of criminal law have targeted us. If we are serious about abolition and getting free, we must let go of the colonial idea of crime.

Harm, however, happens all the time. Violence is happening all the time, even within the law. In fact, state responses to "violence" often reproduce violence and traumatize those who are exposed to them. As abolitionists, we are committed to addressing harm when it happens in our communities. We do not, however, believe in punishing people for breaking laws designed by a white-supremacist, capitalist system.

The prison industrial complex takes a punitive approach to responding to crime or a suspicion of a crime. As abolitionists, we ask ourselves: How can we prevent and respond to harm and violence in our communities by using transformative practices? Abolition calls us to take responsibility for each other's healing and repair when harm happens and support each other in getting our needs met on an everyday basis to prevent harm from happening in the first place.

"Vengeance is the impulse of the state. . . . Abolition helps us conceptualize new forms of justice." — Angela Davis
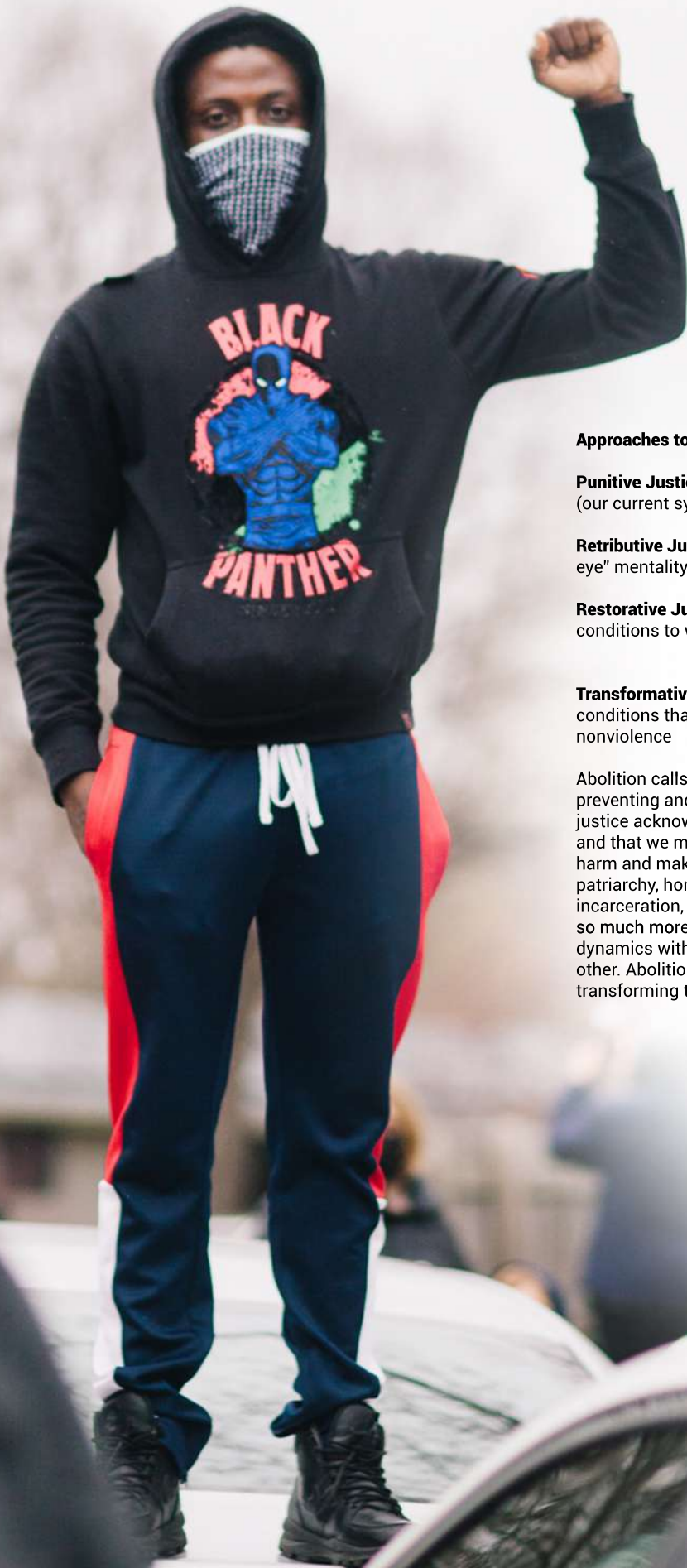
TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE: ACCOUNTABILITY WITHOUT MORE VIOLENCE

Approaches to Justice

Punitive Justice - Rooted in punishment, isolation, and disposability (our current system)

Retributive Justice - Rooted in revenge, anger, and an "eye for an eye" mentality

Restorative Justice - Rooted in repairing harm and restoring conditions to what they were before the harm rook place

Transformative Justice - Rooted in repairing harm and transforming conditions that allowed the harm to take place; rooted in nonviolence

Abolition calls us to embrace a transformative-justice framework for preventing and responding to harm in our lives. Transformative justice acknowledges that violence does not happen in a vacuum, and that we must work to end/transform the conditions that enable harm and make violence possible (poverty, trauma, isolation, patriarchy, homophobia, white supremacy, misogyny, ableism, incarceration, displacement, war, gender violence, xenophobia, and so much more). This also includes transforming harmful, oppressive dynamics within our organizations and our relationships to each other. Abolition is about transforming how we respond to harm and transforming the conditions that make harm possible along the way.

What is transformative justice?

Transformative justice is a framework to prevent, intervene in, and address harm through non-punitive accountability.

Transformative justice responses and interventions include:

Do not rely on the state—for example, police, prisons, the criminal legal system, ICE, or foster-care system (though some TJ responses do rely on or incorporate social services like counseling).
Do not reinforce or perpetuate violence, such as oppressive norms or vigilantism.
Actively cultivate the things we know prevent violence, such as healing, accountability, resilience, and safety for all involved.

It's helpful to think of transformative justice as a wider framework or approach, and community accountability as more of a strategy. Community accountability in a TJ framework cannot be applied as a universal so-called alternative because it must be voluntary.

"Transformative justice is not a happily ever after and it's not 'an alternative to prison.' It's a framework that prioritizes relationship-building, developing our skills, and uprooting various oppressions. It seeks to address violence without using violence. We are working on transformative justice now, currently. It's not something we are waiting to take on in a nebulous or utopic future. TJ exists already as its own framework for preventing, intervening in, and transforming harm. It's needed today and will always be needed." — Mariame Kaba

"The goals of Transformative Justice as a response to all forms of violence are:

- Survivor safety, healing, and agency
- Accountability and transformation of those who have caused harm
- Timely community response and accountability
- Transformation of the community and social conditions that create and perpetuate violence, i.e. systems of oppression, exploitation, domination, and State violence"
— Generation Five

"We are trying to build alternatives to our current systems and break generational cycles of violence within our communities and families. We do not believe that prisons or cops make us safer. We believe that we can create the things we need. Transformative justice is one way that we are trying to address violence, harm, and abuse in our communities in ways that are generative and do not create more destruction and trauma. Transformative-justice processes are not perfect, and we are still learning a lot.

TJ is not simply the absence of the state and violence, but the presence of the values, practices, relationships, and world that we want. It is not only identifying what we don't want, but proactively practicing and putting in place things we want, such as healthy relationships, good communication skills, skills to de-escalate active or 'live' harm and violence in the moment, learning how to express our anger in ways that are not destructive, incorporating healing into our everyday lives." — Mia Mingus

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WHEN HARM HAPPENS

**Questions to ask yourself when you feel harmed (Spring Up)**

• Is this a disagreement, conflict, or harm? Have I tried to address a similar issue with this person or organization in the past? Is this part of a pattern of behavior or abuse?
• What system(s) of oppression or harm is this perpetuating?
• What are the power dynamics at play?
• Does this hurt/activate a past harm for me? What happened then, and how have I worked through it personally? What is my instinct or pattern of response?
• How does this relate to my expectations of this person or this organization? Are these reasonable expectations? Were they explicit and consensual?
• What is this person directly responsible for? What part of this issue is within their locus of control? Is there anyone else who should be part of this conversation?
• What did I need when this happened? What do I need now?
• What did I need to prevent this? Are there institutional policies/protocols, or community
• norms that contributed to this or could be shifted to prevent this in the future?
• What is my point of intervention? Will I contact them directly? If so, how? Do I need a support person? Should this be mediated? Is there anyone else who should be informed of this or involved in addressing it?
• How will I know this is resolved?

Questions to ask someone who has done harm

• What happened?
• What were you thinking?
• What have you been thinking since?
• Who has been affected/impacted, and how?
• What needs to happen to make things right?
• What is important to you? Why?

Questions to ask someone who has experienced harm

• What happened?
• What did you think when you realized what happened?
• What impact has the incident had on you and others?
• What's been the hardest thing for you?
• What needs to happen to make things right?
• What do you need?
• How can we repair it?
• What kind of support do you need?
• What else happened?
• What happened next?
• How were you impacted?
• How can I support you right now?
• How do you feel right now?
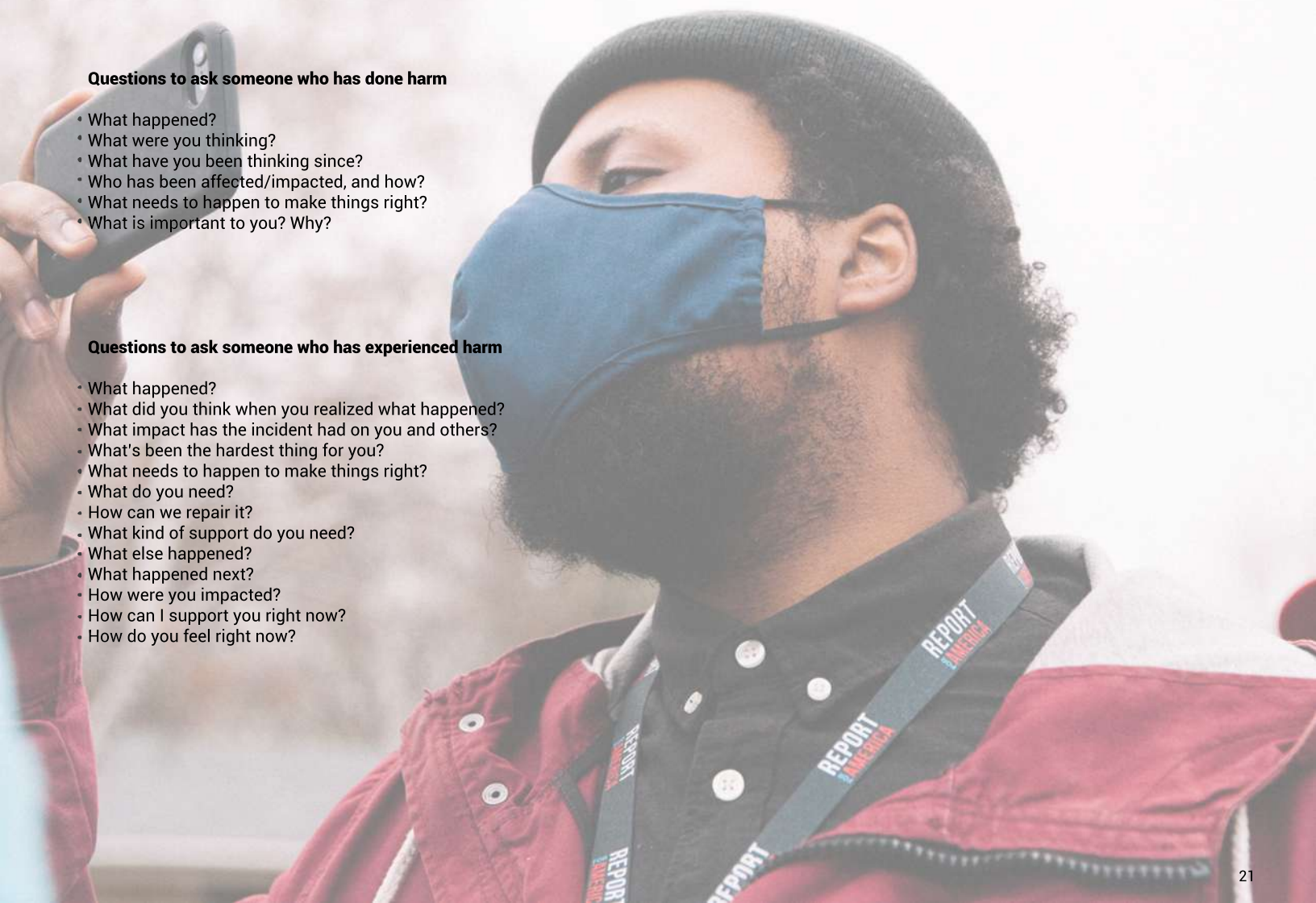
REFORMS DON'T WORK: WHY WE NEED AN ABOLITIONIST APPROACH

Decades of attempted police reform have proven that police cannot be reformed away from their core function: to protect whiteness and white wealth.

Rachel Herzing helps break it down for us, "If one sees policing for what it is—a set of practices empowered by the state to enforce law and maintain social control and cultural hegemony through the use of force—one may more easily recognize that perhaps the goal should not be to improve how policing functions but to reduce its role in our lives."[17]

MPD150, a people's project evaluating policing, articulates this in their answer to a frequently asked question: What about body cameras? What about civilian review boards, implicit bias training, and community policing initiatives?

Video footage (whether from body cameras or other sources) wasn't enough to get justice for Philando Castile, Samuel DuBose, Walter Scott, Tamir Rice, and far too many other victims of police violence. A single implicit bias training session can't overcome decades of conditioning and department culture. Other reforms, while often noble in intention, simply do not do enough to get to the root of the issue.

History is a useful guide here: community groups in the 1960s also demanded civilian review boards, better training, and community policing initiatives. Some of these demands were even met. But universally, they were either ineffective or dismantled by the police department over time. Recent reforms are already being co-opted and destroyed: just look at how many officers are wearing body cameras that are never turned on, or how quickly the Trump administration's Justice Department moved to end consent decrees. We have half a century's worth of evidence that reforms can't work. It's time for something new.[18]

Having more cops who are women or people of color doesn't change police violence:

An attempt, or at least the perceived attempt, to diversify a police force to include more non-white officers is a common but ineffective response to the community demands to address police terror. One such example of this played out recently in 2017, when the former chief of the Minneapolis Police Department was forced to resign directly following the shooting of Justine Damond, an affluent white woman, by a Black Somali American officer. The mayor immediately appointed a new Black chief of police. Data show that hiring more non-white officers does not reduce police violence[19]. Neither does hiring more female-presenting officers, who are more likely to shoot than their male-presenting counterparts. However, the primary correlation of an increase in shootings by police is not an increase in crime but simply an increase in Black residents.[20] [21]

In 2016, a group of researchers at the University of Cincinnati analyzed 60 studies on the relationship between numbers of police and crime levels from 1968 to 2013. The data showed that increasing the numbers of police does not reduce crime, and reducing the numbers of police doesn't increase crime. One of the researchers stated, "We can reduce police staffing some amount and use that money to renovate our neighborhoods and our communities. And I think that's better than just increasing the police force."[22]

Promises to reform MPD through culture and policy changes are not new, but they are futile. Trying to reform MPD makes about as much sense as trying to reform, rather than abolish, the institution of slavery back in the 1800s. Countless individuals, as well as formal and informal collective efforts, planted seeds that sprouted into the growth of the abolitionist movement over time.

"This is the era for bold ideas and big dreams. While the whole world is watching and monitoring how the United States will address its policing crisis, why not take steps forward toward a future free of the violence of policing rather than one that has improved the functioning of a killing machine? The surest path toward a future free of the violence of policing is one that aims to eliminate contact between those violent forces and the people it targets. Why not start taking steps down that path today?" — Rachel Herzing

But there are abolitionist reforms!
In order to get rid of the government institution of policing, there are some things we can do within the government to move toward abolition. Here are some ideas from Critical Resistance, a U.S.–based organization that works to build a mass movement to dismantle the prison industrial complex:

"I think that history shows us that it's important to carry out work along abolitionist lines. ...If we don't approach that work with a critical eye to what it is that we're creating in its place, and if we're not doing the work in a way that actually undermines the power structure, then that's where we have a problem, because if we're not questioning the underlying—not just causes and reasons for why people become incarcerated but the underlying causes and reasons that give others a vested interest in seeing more and more people being locked up, then we're not addressing the problem. We're simply putting band-aids on some underlying issues of inequality and power in our society... If we don't attack the systemic structures and institutions and power structures that lead to the problem in the first place, then rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic, as people say, isn't ultimately going to get us where we all say we want to be." — Melissa Burch

WHAT COMMUNITY CONTROL OF POLICE IS, AND WHY IT DOESN'T WORK

"Community control of police" began as an idea in the late 1960s to address police brutality and racism by creating a system of elected councilors and commissioners who would hire, fire, and discipline police officers and set policies. It is presented as a one-size-fits-all management model to be implemented in all cities. Fifteen-member neighborhood police councils would hear complaints against police and administer discipline. They would also elect a police commission that would set policies and salaries and "make necessary agreements with other police departments and government agencies." The proposal includes procedures for recalling commissioners through petitions.

In contrast to the abolitionist approach—which includes shifting police budgets (and any useful functions) into community resilience, safety, and basic needs initiatives—community control seeks to restabilize the police under new management, integrating community leadership into the tasks of police management. This structure is expected to transform the police into a community institution by implementing familiar reforms such as residency requirements, hiring criteria, training, transparency, and oversight. Some supporters even believe that it can turn the police into a kind of people's militia that aims to confront the power of the system.

Community control and police restoration

The local, electoral model of community control lends itself to the restoration of police power. If you organize to demand an administrative apparatus instead of a social vision, you have no protection when it gets taken over by police supporters, community gatekeepers, politicians, and business interests committed to the status quo. It would be easy for such interests to put forward "moderate" candidates for council and commission posts: candidates who will "listen to all sides," be "uniters, not dividers," and support cooperation and data-sharing with other agencies. Leaders who want to limit and regulate police power can be depicted as "extremists" lacking professional expertise. Proposals to truly limit police autonomy and inter-agency cooperation could threaten funding streams, not only to the police department but to the community or municipality as a whole.

How is it different from "community policing"?

Community policing is a public-relations strategy designed to increase the flow of information to the police by building trust—for example, sponsoring sports leagues, handing out ice cream, and courting community leaders. It is paired with militarized tactical units to carry out raids based on the intelligence gathered. It originated in military counter-insurgency strategies in the 1970s. Community control also seeks a merger of the police and community but insists that, because of the elected nature of the councils and commissions, the community will be in control.

An abolitionist approach

Community-control leaders call abolition a "slogan without a program." Actually, Abolition has had a clear, understandable program from the beginning. It is to shift investment from policing/mass incarceration, and exploitation into meeting people's basic needs for stable housing, adequate income, well-resourced education, green spaces, healthy food, and emotional and social supports, while maintaining violence-intervention options designed to minimize harm.

The police are not a prize to fight over but the chief enforcers for the racial and class power of the elite. Limiting their power in the course of the struggle is best won by organizing, protesting, pressuring, defunding, disrupting, and sharpening rather than blurring the lines between the community and the police.

A bureaucratic "solution" is not up to the task of challenging the powerful forces behind the police. Defunding, dismantling, and abolishing the police is a more practical and far-reaching strategy than trying to turn it into the opposite of what it's been for 200 years.

PART 2: TAKING ACTION

STEP 1: REAL TALK WITH YOUR PEOPLE

Self-reflection questions before beginning

It's helpful to think through these questions to ground yourself through what can be difficult conversations. Sharing your story and staying rooted in your truth can help bring back a conversation that has gone off track and can lead to generative conversations.

1. What brought you to this issue, this work, the Movement for Black lives, #DefundPolice?
2. How has police violence impacted you and/or your people?
3. What is your personal experience with de-escalating and resolving conflict outside of the criminal legal system?
4. What would you like to see law-enforcement budgets redirected to, and why?
5. Are your answers to the above questions inclusive of groups most impacted by these issues? For example, do you find yourself only considering how Black men are affected by police killings?

Helpful conversation-starting questions

These questions can be resources to deepen conversations with family, friends, and neighbors about policing and abolition.

1. How do you understand safety? What has made you feel safe? Who in your community and life has supported that?
2. How have policing and prisons impacted your life and your family? When have you seen them bring more violence to a community?
3. What would you do with hundreds of millions of dollars for your city? How would you use that to make life better for yourself and your family?
4. If you could imagine a world without policing, what are all the best parts about it?

Tips for talking to kids:

1. Talk with kids in age-appropriate ways they can easily understand about defunding the police, the criminal legal system, and the prison industrial complex. Younger children will be able to understand that it is not fair that only some people are targeted for policing and punishment. Older children will be able to learn about structural racism, building people power, political processes to defund the police, etc.

2. Use everyday, mundane experiences to talk about defunding the police. For example, when you see a cop on a bike or on foot, you can talk about where you usually see cops and whether they're in cars, bikes, on foot, etc. Then, you can share how Black and brown neighborhoods are overpoliced and how that means that more Black and brown people are criminalized. You can talk about how, because of that, we should redirect money the police have to making sure everyone in our community has access to sufficient support when in crisis.

3. Engage children in abolitionist world-building through art, play, and conversation every day. Make space for kids in movement work: bring them to rallies with handmade signs, help them figure out what they want to say at the city-council meeting, or let them know it'd be dope if they shared their poem at the beginning of the next organizing meeting.

4. Disrupt the "community helper" myth. We must avoid replicating from children's media and products the categorization of police as service professionals in the same vein as doctors, teachers, firefighters, etc. There should be no cop costumes for Halloween. Nobody should want to be a cop when they grow up. What can we create and institutionalize to help our children learn whom to turn to for support? How can we co-create this with the babies?

5. Talk about how to avoid policing and punishing each other. Practice talking about and listening to feelings, needs, etc. Practice talking through consequences and explaining how consequences are directly related to harmful behavior. Model apologizing to them and making repairs.

6. Practice safety and care with the children in your life and with your community, and talk about it with them as an ongoing process of relationship-building. What does it look like to give and receive care? Pod-map together and practice caring for your pods. How does it feel? What is working well, and what adjustments do we think we want to experiment with?

A SCRIPT FOR TALKING WITH YOUR PEOPLE

This script was written to be used while talking to many people on the street, but it can be easily adapted for different contexts. You can make this basic outline more formal or informal, more detailed or less, and more personalized.

Introduction

Hello! My name is **[your name]** and I am hoping to talk with you today about how to make **[your location, e.g., Minneapolis]** a safer place for everyone who lives here. I've been talking with my friends, my family, and people like you—members of my community—about how and why we need to defund the police. Because even though police murders of Black people have stayed in the news, I'm learning that a lot of people find it helpful to really talk through what that could look like. I know I did. Now, I believe in a vision to defund the police and transform how we all relate to each other and support each other.

Would you find it helpful to talk with me about this?

[if they say no] Bye.

[if they say yes] Great! With these conversations, I'm learning that so many of us have so many inspired ideas about how to redirect law enforcement budgets into community-based solutions that actually save lives. Enough is enough. We need to get resources directly into the hands of people who are doing the work to address the root causes of harm and violence. Because we know that we keep each other safe. When we say "defund police," we mean reduce to zero the size, budgets, and power of all institutions that surveil, police, punish, incarcerate, and kill Black people. When we say "defund police," we envision investing in and building entirely new community infrastructures that will generate genuine safety and sustainability.

Context and history

I know it can be challenging to envision a world without police, but the truth is, the institution of policing is a product of the modern, industrialized world. For most of human history, police have not existed. From their very beginnings in 19th century London, police departments were rooted in colonialism and the protection of property; those methods were imported to this country. Police in the U.S. began from slave patrols, which were granted powers like enforcing curfew for enslaved Africans and Indigenous people, searching them and taking their property, and brutalizing them. Slave patrols protected and enforced white supremacy. Since that time, the institution of policing has refined its violent methods and grown in size and power. There are police and security forces everywhere: our schools and grocery stores, and everywhere else as we ride bikes down our blocks and in our parks. Would you like to hear more about how policing actually doesn't keep us safe?

[If they say no, move on to the next section.]

[if they say yes] Policing is violent. **Rather than using tools to prevent harm or connecting people with the resources they need, police bring weapons, intimidation, fear, explicit and implicit biases, military tactics, and too often death into every circumstance they are called into.** Marginalized groups are targeted most by this violence. Black people, Indigenous people, undocumented people, disabled people, young people, and so many other people are suffering. But we know that generations of policing have not resulted in public safety. Today, when faced with a conflict, most of us do not call the police. And most of us do not have access to better systems for preventing harm, or to seek justice and accountability. So, what can we do?

What you can do

The good news is, there are things you can do right now to build toward a world without police. There are so many people across the country who have been reinvigorating traditional processes for safety and justice. I've been learning about and practicing some of these things with other people. Would you like to join me in making this vision real? **Insert a specific ask or next step here if you're recruiting for an event or campaign.**

[if they say no] Even if you can't plug in now, we'd love to get your name and phone number so we can follow up. This is a really important conversation we're having with our friends and neighbors throughout the city, and we'll continue to do this work and learn together for a long time to come. **[Collect their name, phone number, and email here: http://bit.ly/PplsPathSurvey.]**

[If they say yes, share details about your event, ask, or campaign here.]

Some ideas for an "ask" or next steps

- *Come to the next action or event with Black Visions [or Reclaim the Block or another local group].*
- *Attend city council hearings and meetings on this issue.*
- *Join a documentary watch party I'm hosting.*
- *Join a reading and conversation group we're doing to learn about how to defund police.*
- *Call your city-council member to demand that they defund police.*
- *Talk to five other friends or community members about abolition and defunding police. Talk with your neighbors and family about safety-planning for your block.*

STEP 2:

PRACTICING ALTERNATIVES TO POLICING

A police-free future isn't just something we can hope for in the future. It's something we can practice right now. Below, you can find a series of tips for how to respond to crises without involving the police, who often introduce more violence into a situation; how to build up your own skills for navigating conflict and urgent situations; how to prepare in advance and build safety within your community; and how to meet people's needs with community resources.

INSTEAD OF 911

Police do not keep us safe. Police bring fear, anxiety, harm, violence, and separation to our communities.

It is a myth that calling 911 is the only way to deal with crises and emergencies. This myth strips us of our own power, skills, and confidence in responding to crisis and harm in our communities. Part of building a world without policing means building up the skills and relationships we need to be responsible for each other's safety and healing. In the words of Gwendolyn Brooks, "We are each other's harvest"

If you witness or are experiencing a crisis or emergency, and you get the urge to dial 911,

DONT.

Challenge any assumptions you have

• If you think you should call 911/the cops, challenge yourself to consider how your own assumptions about someone's race, ethnicity, housing status, gender, or mental health impact your perception of this person and inform how you make decisions that affect them.

Assess the risk or threat

• If you have the impulse to call 911, assess whether there is someone who is truly at risk of violence or harm. If the activity you are concerned about is directed at property or is simply something that makes you feel uncomfortable—loud conversations, expression of feelings, or group gatherings outside—consider removing yourself from that situation, giving space, or directly engaging others. Think creatively about your own ability to reduce the risk of harm.

• Consider that calling 911 will put people at risk of being jailed, abused, or killed. Keep in mind that calling police and affiliated "authorities" can escalate domestic violence and abuse situations, resulting in an increased risk of harm and criminalization for survivors who are already targets of violence.

Assess the impact of calling 911
• Bringing any type of police response into a community endangers people who are Black, brown, trans, immigrants/undocumented, houseless, and have mental-health or other accessibility needs. Police officers respond with force, intimidation, and aggression, and are armed with guns and other weapons that cause trauma, harm, and death.

Consider other options
• Are there other local numbers or organizations that provide emergency-response services? For example, in most cities, you can call your local fire department to dispatch an ambulance without calling 911.

• Can you provide care; reduce risk of harm; mediate a dispute; de-escalate; or ask a trusted friend, neighbor, or community leader for support?

Assess whether you or those around you can help

• Consider that you and others around you may be able to de-escalate a situation, provide help, or find other solutions that are more timely, more effective, and less violent than police response.
  ◦ Provide basic care. Ask the person if they need help, if it is okay for you to help them, and about the type of help they want. Ask if they need water, food, transportation, or other types of care you are able to provide. Listen to the person's response and respect their decisions.
  ◦ Ask others around you if they are trained or skilled in health, mental health, crisis response, de-escalation, etc.
  ◦ If you have access to a car or other transportation (cab or ride app) and it is safe for you, you can take someone or accompany them to the hospital or urgent walk-in clinic without calling 911.
  ◦ Think about other resources that you can mobilize: neighbors, people around you, friends with particular skills, etc. You can support people in your life who are being harmed by abusers by offering them a safer place to stay, a ride to a safer location, or other types of care and resources.

You can find more resources in Part 3 on alternatives for whom you can call in emergency situations to avoid involving the police. can call in emergency situations to avoid involving the police.

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Tips for helping someone through a crisis moment

1. Pose the question: "Who can you ask for help right now?" This might be a friend, someone with a car, someone else who knows them, or someone who has experience supporting community with mental-health needs.

2. Help them calm down so they can get through this crisis moment (the next 30 minutes to an hour). Help them shift focus from themselves to doing something physical—like walking, cooking, or drawing—but still give them space to talk.

3. If the person is manic, they could take deep breaths, do some stretches, or take a seat with their hand over their heart and wait quietly until they feel calmer.

4. Let them talk! It's important that people know they are being heard and that their feelings/thoughts are valid.

5. Find out if their basic needs are being met. Have they had water today? Had a meal? Slept? Do they need a place to stay tonight?

6. Make sure they know they have options. Remember, being helpful doesn't mean that you need to have all of the answers.

Tips for responding to emergency situations

1. Introduce yourself, and your skills to help.
   a. "Hey, my name is . . ."
   b. "Is it okay if I try to help you?"
   c. "What do you need?"
   d. "What can I do to help?"
   e. "Do you have any issues with 911/police?"
   f. "Can I help you contact someone you trust?"

2. Ground yourself, take deep breaths, and consider the types of action you can take in a given situation.
   a. Can you provide care; reduce risk of harm; mediate a dispute; de-escalate, or ask a trusted friend, neighbor, or community leader for support?

3. If there is no option other than calling 911, state that it is a medical emergency and describe the physical issues affecting the person you are concerned about, making it clear that you need an ambulance. This is a harm-reduction tactic. Do not make statements about what you perceive to be their race, ethnicity, housing status, gender, or mental health, as this impacts the dispatcher's assumptions, leading to harmful protocols and dispatching the police in a way that can have serious consequences.

4. Before the police arrive, ask the person if there is anything you can do to help. Examples include writing down the person's name and date of birth to find them if they go into custody, finding out if they use any medications to help advocate for their health access, calling a loved one, and holding onto their ID.

5. If the police are present in addition to medical care, calmly advocate for medical care to be provided: "This is a medical situation. We need medical help." Stay with the person. Observe or record police activity.

6. If it is safe and OK with the community member or loved one for you to accompany them to the ER, please consider doing so.

Prepare yourself and your community in advance

1. Get to know your neighbors and people in the networks you already have. Ask people in your life that you trust if they would be willing to be available to support you in case you need to call them in a crisis or need help in mediating conflict.

2. If you are knowledgeable about de-escalation, have skills such as medic training, or can be available to help in other ways, consider offering yourself in advance as a resource for your neighbors, friends, family, and/or community so they know they can call you when they need to ask someone for support.

3. Call on your neighbors and people whom you and others trust to intervene before a situation escalates: Many landlords tell tenants who have disputes with their neighbors to call the police on each other when disputes could be handled in other ways. There is also a common belief that the police will simply come "and teach a lesson" to a difficult family member. It is important that we find alternatives to calling the police for family, tenant, or community disputes. The more self-reliant we become **as a community to** create solutions and resolve issues, the less reliant we are on the police.

4. Practice and prepare for different scenarios in which your first reaction might be to call 911. Think about how you, your neighbors, family, and community may be able to respond, care for others, or create accountability without relying on police. Share your ideas and ask people in your life to do the same.

5. Hold and attend conflict-mediation, de-escalation, first-aid, and mental-health first-aid training in your community. Commit to building skills, learning, and practicing creative solutions together to help everyone trust and care for each other to create real safety.

Building up our muscles to respond to harm: How to reclaim your conflicts

1. STOP calling 911!

2. Stop policing the people around you. Check yourself and your assumptions about people's choices and behaviors.

3. Get to know your neighbors and deepen your relationships with the people you interact with on a regular basis. Build community all the time, not just in times of crisis.

4. Get out of your comfort zone! Start dealing with conflict directly instead of involving police and institutions. Have the hard conversations, so that small conflicts don't fester and become bigger instances of violence and harm.

5. Cancel "cancel culture!" It's so important to create safe containers or a safe environment so that people are OK with messing up and stepping into accountability, because they know that they won't be disposed of. We all cause harm. We have to believe in people's transformation and forgivability, even when they cause harm.

6. Skill up! Invest time into learning about conflict de-escalation tools, mental health crisis de-escalation practices, and how to be a first responder in your communities.

7. Do your research and get involved! Learn about existing alternative resources in your community, how people on the ground are navigating violence and harm reduction without relying on police, and how you can get involved.

8. Start at home. Practice nonviolent communication, conflict de-escalation, and harm reduction with the people closest to you. We have to be kind to each other and curious about each other's well-being. We have to get familiar with and embrace nonviolent communication practices and truly transform the way we relate to people in our lives on an everyday basis.

9. Don't give up. We have to keep experimenting, all the time. As abolitionists, we don't have a response for every single instance of violence and harm. We don't want to have a catch-all response—that's what the prison industrial complex has become. And that's not what we want to model our approaches after. Part of our work is de-conditioning ourselves to have urgent band-aid responses for everything. Reclaiming our conflicts takes patience and requires consent from everyone involved, as well as deep self- and interpersonal reflection.

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MUTUAL AID: A TOOL FOR ABOLITION

Moving toward abolition doesn't only mean reducing the power and eventually eliminating the police; it also means transforming the economic and structural conditions that lead people to harming others. Mutual aid, or providing for one another through coordinated collective care, is radical, generative praxis that reduces harm and conflict in our communities. People do less harm when they feel supported by their communities and their needs are met. Mutual aid keeps us safe and provides lifelines for our communities.

Mutual aid is a form of political participation in which people take responsibility for caring for one another and changing political conditions, not just through symbolic acts or putting pressure on their representatives in government but by actually building new social relations that are more survivable (Dean Spade). Simply put, mutual aid is supporting the people you are in relationship with in meeting their basic, day-to-day needs and deepening our relationships to each other in that process.

Examples of mutual aid are:

- Carpooling
- Free-food programs/giving away food
- Giving away clothing and hygiene supplies
- Helping a family or community member pay a bill or rent
- Offering your home or space to someone who needs a place to sleep
- Offering free childcare support
- Being a first responder in your neighborhood
- Providing relief to survivors of storms, floods, earthquakes, and fires
- Supporting protesters with supplies

Mutual aid is work people already do. Oppressed people have always survived by supporting each other's survival. Historically, communities of Indigenous, disabled, trans, undocumented, enslaved, and imprisoned people, as well as so many other oppressed groups, have had to build creative systems of care and emergency responses without relying on the state. Practices that can be understood as mutual aid predate colonialism and are ancestral traditions for so many of us.

Effective social movements always include elements of mutual aid. The most famous example on the left in the U.S. is the Black Panther Party's survival programs, including the free-breakfast program, the free-ambulance program, free medical clinics, a program offering rides to elderly people doing errands, and a school aimed at providing a liberating and rigorous curriculum to children. The Black Panthers' programs mobilized people by creating spaces where they could access basic needs and build shared analysis about the conditions they were facing. During the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Black people supported each other **with rides to work, meals, child care**, and fundraisers to help workers meet their needs and get to work throughout the boycott. The Underground Railroad was a mutual-aid project, too. There is nothing new about mutual aid.

Mutual aid is solidarity, not charity. Mutual aid challenges capitalism and philanthropy, which isolate us and put us in competition with each other. Mutual aid gives us the framework to destigmatize our poverty, meet our basic everyday needs, and be a part of the projects that help us to survive.

People have worked together to survive for all of human history. Mutual aid helps us to resist capitalism and colonial domination, whereby wealth and resources are extracted and concentrated, and most people can survive only by participating in various extractive relationships. Practicing mutual aid helps us tap into our ancestral instincts of collective care and interdependence.

"Abolition is about building a world where we all have the relationships, ancestral wisdom, material resources, and skill sets we need to be free of state-sanctioned and interpersonal violence. It's an everyday practice [of] decolonizing ourselves and activating our radical imaginations, and finding ways to heal from layers of intergenerational trauma. It's about doing the everyday work to identify and uproot all the oppressive systems and practices in our lives, in our homes, in our workspaces, in our neighborhoods—and putting in the work to build transformative, life-affirming ways to shift our material conditions and get all **our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual needs met.**" — Jamani Montague

STEP 3: ORGANIZE YOUR COMMUNITY

WHAT IS ORGANIZING: A SHORT INTRODUCTION

"In order for us as poor and oppressed people to become part of a society that is meaningful, the system under which we now exist has to be radically changed. . . . It means facing a system that does not lend itself to your needs and devising means by which you change that system." — Ella Baker

Organizing is about building people power in order to demand changes that improve the lives of communities living under conditions of systemic oppression, by empowering those communities to lead the way in that transformation.

Organizing is a form of leadership. Organizers identify, recruit, and develop the leadership of others; build community around that leadership; and build power from the resources of that community. Organized communities learn to strategize how they can turn resources they have into the power they need to get what they want.

Organizing is distinct from other forms of change; it is not advocacy, direct service, charity, or lobbying. It is specifically about developing the power of a community to demand and win the change the community wants to see happen.

The following are terms and concepts used by organizers to understand and plan their work—through organizing and strengthening their communities, and by taking direct action to confront the status quo and build the world we want to see.

Below these concepts, we introduce a critical tool we have in organizing: direct action.

IMPORTANT ORGANIZING TERMS AND CONCEPTS

- Social movement: One of the most powerful ways to bring about transformative social change around economic, political, and social conditions. Social movements require massive numbers of people to participate in sustained, visible ways, and dramatically shift political possibilities by changing public consensus on an issue or range of issues. Social movements typically involve many groups and individuals, and often appear spontaneous, though they may involve many years of organizing and preparation before a movement explodes into visibility and public consciousness. (Momentum)

- Base-building: The work of "building a base" of people that organizes together involves outreach into a community, organizing that community into shared vision and purpose through intentional relationship-building, and developing the leadership of people in that community so that the base can be effective in reaching its collective goals.

- Strategy: Strategy is your overall plan, and tactics are those things you do to implement the plan. Good strategy requires analyzing the problems, identifying your goal, understanding your targets, choosing your specific tactics, assessing the political conditions and opportunities, and creating a feasible plan to accomplish your goal.

- Tactics: These are specific forms of creative actions you can take in order to move your strategy forward. Tactics include occupations, marches, flash mobs, sit-ins, banner drops, blockades, car rallies, vigils, street theatre, strikes, projections, and many more. Hundreds of tactics exist, and the art of choosing the best tactic for your action includes making sure that the tactic tells the story of your movement to all who see it. (See 198 Methods of Nonviolent Action)

- Demand: This is what we want: the world we want to see, the change we want to happen. It can be instrumental, as in a concrete institutional change, like a specific piece of legislation or result of a particular vote. An example of a demand is to cut the police budget by $1.1M by the end of the year." It can also be symbolic or aspirational—that is, not possible to pass with a single piece of legislation, but signaling the direction in which the movement should go. The vision and boldness of symbolic demands often resonates with everyday people—for example, #DefundPolice. (Momentum)

- Target: This is where you focus on applying pressure to move support to your side. Traditionally, targets are often individuals who have significant institutional power over what you are trying to win, and who meet your demands by signing the check, introducing the legislation, canceling the contract, etc.

- Targeting the public: Additionally, movements should always be oriented to targeting the public; that is, your goal is not only to convince a single decision-maker to give you what you want, but to convince as many people as possible in the public to join your side. It also means bringing the public into all of the actions, even if they aren't physically there, by imagining what it would be like to be in their shoes, viewing the action and the movement. (Momentum)

- Theory of change: A certain belief, hypothesis, or assumption about how and why change happens within a specific context.

- Escalation: Increasing the pressure by sequencing actions or tactics in increasing levels of size, risk, or disruption, in order to "turn up the heat" in a campaign or movement. (Momentum)

- Absorption: The art of bringing people into the movement in a sustained way after a moment of protest or uprising. It usually looks like giving people sustained ways to participate and grow the movement. It can be through digital tools like petitions and online donations, and through giving people meaningful roles and training. (Momentum)

- Campaign: A campaign is a series of tactics deployed over a specified period of time, each of which builds the strength of the organization and puts increasing pressure on the target until it gives in to your specific demands. A campaign is not a series of events on a common theme; it is a series of tactics, each one carefully selected for its power to ratchet up pressure on a target over time. A campaign is not continuous; it has a beginning, middle, and end. Ideally, it ends in a specific victory. (Beautiful Trouble)

- Civil disobedience: Civil disobedience is a specific form of direct action that involves intentionally violating a law because that law is unjust—for instance, refusing to pay taxes that would fund a war, or refusing to comply with anti-immigrant legislation. In these circumstances, breaking the law is the purpose. (Beautiful Trouble)

- De-escalation: De-escalation uses verbal communication and physical positioning to prevent a potentially dangerous situation from escalating into verbal abuse, physical confrontation, or injury. De-escalation is what we use during a potentially dangerous or threatening situation in an attempt to prevent a person from causing harm to us, themselves, or others. (Vision Change Win)

Direct Action: What is it?

You've likely seen or heard of direct action at some point. Mass marches, rallies, banner drops, and meeting takeovers are all examples of direct action. But what is direct action and why do we use it?

Let's start with a definition of direct action from The BlackOUT Collective:

> Direct action as a tactic used to make an immediate intervention that stops business as usual. The purpose is to cause a crisis of conscience for the public, and a crisis for the state, the elite, and/or corporations. It is transformational in nature for those using the tactic, and aims to transform the practitioner, material conditions, target, and the relationship of the oppressed to power.

So we use direct action to amplify our demands, pressure decision-makers, raise awareness around our issues, defend our communities, bring more people into our movements, and assert our visions for the world that we want to live in, among other things. Or, as Bayard Rustin put it, "The only weapon we have is our bodies, and we need to tuck them in places so t...

Tips for Attending a Direct Action

Here are some quick tips on what to bring and how to keep yourself and your comrades as safe as possible when attending an action:

- Go with a crew of people (or even one person!) you trust.
- Tell someone you trust where you will be and how long you expect to be there.
  Wear clothing and shoes that you can easily move around in.
  Bring the necessities! (Seriously, just the necessities.) Wear a face mask and any other protective equipment for COVID-19. Pack water,
- an extra mask, gloves, hand sanitizer, an ID, and any other essentials in a fanny pack or light backpack. (Remember that what you bring, you have to carry!)
  Don't bring unnecessary technology (tablet, computer, smart watch, etc.).
- Have an exit plan. Decide with your crew when you will leave and how (Where will you all meet before leaving? How will you get home?) before the action begins.
- Memorize one to two numbers of emergency contacts. You never know when you may be separated from your group and be without your phone.
  Keep an eye on your crew members and trust your gut! If it doesn't feel right, it likely isn't.

ROLES IN AN ACTION

BEFORE ACTION

Organizer, Coordinator, Campaigner: Leads on action design, coordination, and mobilizing the teams to make the action happen; keeps an eye on the big picture and where this action fits in the campaign
Fundraiser: Raises money for logistical costs and potential bail costs
Researcher: Learns about the target and gathers facts for the campaign
Scout: Visits the site or route to identify important considerations
Community Outreach: Recruits people to the action
Logistics: Provides support in planning
Artist: Makes props, signs, banners, political theatre, etc.
Media Outreach: Sends out media advisory and media release
Writer: Writes materials, flyers, media-kit contents, website, etc.

DURING ACTION

Risks Arrest: Intends to risk arrest and commit civil disobedience, and has gone through adequate training
Direct Support: Risks arrest by staying with those locked down as long as possible and necessary, and providing a human shield to those directly risking arrest
Police Liaison: Maintains communication between police and demonstrators
Marshal: Supports the success of the action by helping to direct the march, protecting demonstrators at the edges of the action, keeping an eye out for the well-being of the crowd, and de-escalating situations as necessary
Media Outreach: Stays instays back in the office, coordinates press releases and making outreach calls
Media Spokesperson: Delivers crisp, six-second sound bites to hungry reporters; is the first contact for media and press; has done particular training or preparation on the movement's messaging, including what to say
Social Media: Generates independent media, sharing FB live or Instagram live footage on the action page or their own pages, spreading the word across multiple social-media channels
Song/chant Lead: Prepares songs and chants, and leads them during the action according to the vibe of the action moment
Song/Chant Marshal: Spreads out through the crowd, following song/chant lead as best as they can, and keeping the energy up in the crowd
Demonstrator/Sign-Holders/Chanter/Singer: Participates in the action; can hand out literature, join chants and songs, and grow the action
Videographer/Still Photographer: Documents the action and provide images to media
Medic/EMT/Medical Team: Deals with emergency health issues among participants
Care Team: Especially during COVID, ensures that adequate materials such as masks, water, hand sanitizer, are available; innon-COVID times, provides water and snacks to demonstrators
Legal Observer: Observes the police action, paying close attention to police violence
Jail Support Contact: The person on the "outside" whom we call to update

AFTER ACTION

Legal/Jail Support: Helps people in jail and coordinates with lawyers
Lawyer: Provides support and information about our choices
Documentarian/Historian/Archivist: Keeps track of the paperwork and footage
Fundraiser: Coordinates efforts to collect money/resources for bail, legal fees, and costs for future campaign activities
Spokesperson: Speaks on behalf of organization on intentions and goals of action
Follow-Up Organizer/Volunteer: Continues to publicize action, pressure decision-makers, and bring more people into the organizing work by building on the momentum of the action

PART 3 - BUILDING A NEW WORLD:

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

WHO YOU CAN CALL:
LOCAL ALTERNATIVES TO THE POLICE

If you find yourself in a situation in which you need a professional, here are some non-police resources that could help you. This list is not exhaustive, and no organizations and systems are popping up every day.

Who should I call if...

I'm in a situation in which an animal is in danger or putting someone else in danger?
- CIty of Minneapolis Animal Control
  Animal Control Officers serve Minneapolis from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday to Friday, and 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on weekends. We're on call 24/7 for animal-related emergencies: 612-673-MACC (6222); http://www.minneapolismn.gov/animals/
- City of Saint Paul Animal Control
  Shelter Hours: 1 to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday; in the field: 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday: 651-266-1100

I meet a houseless community member who explicitly asks me for assistance/resources?
- St. Stephen's Street Outreach Team
  St. Stephen's Street Outreach team provides the first contact for individuals experiencing houselessness and for the community members concerned for them. Available in Minneapolis: 612-879-7624; http://ststephensmpls.org/programs/emergency-shelter/street-outreach
- The Bridge for Youth:
  Crisis-intervention services and shelter, LGBTQ-friendly, located in Minneapolis, open to all: Text 612-400-SAFE (7233) or call 612-377-8800; http://www.bridgeforyouth.org
- Metro Shelter Hotline
  The Metro Shelter Hotline operates through a toll-free number to link homeless callers to shelter information, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. For information about additional shelters and housing programs in the metro area (including for youth, families, and domestic violence): 1 (888) 234-1329

I have a concern about odors/noise/illegal dumping/parking/etc.?
- City of Minneapolis Environmental Management Complaints
  Complete the following form or call 311 to report an issue with air quality, odors, noise, water pollution, illegal dumping, or chemical spills:
  http://www.minneapolismn.gov/environment/environmental-complaint
- City of St. Paul Property Violations:
  Should a problem require urgent attention, please call us immediately: 651-266-8989;
  https://www.stpaul.gov/report-incident
- Minneapolis 311
  Provides information about City services (Need to report a pothole? Lost cat? etc.): 311 or 612-673-3000

- I'm concerned that a loved one is going to act on suicidal ideation?
  Day One Services
  LGBTQ-friendly, statewide agency that offers crisis services and hotline; information on shelters; and resources for victims of domestic abuse, sexual violence, or human trafficking if you're hurt or abused: 1.866.223.1111; http://dayoneservices.org

A loved one tells me they have been the victim of rape, sexual assault, or domestic violence?

Sexual Violence Center
Serving Hennepin, Carver, and Scott counties in the Twin Cities Metro Area, crisis line and support: 612-871-5111 952-448-5425; http://www.sexualviolencecenter.org/i-need-support/

Phyllis Wheatley Community Center
Stronger Together Men and Women groups for men with a history of violence and women who have been victims of violence. Located in Minneapolis, open to all: (612) 374-4342; http://phylliswheatley.org/family/

Advocare
A free confidential service to provide support and resources to those in domestic-abuse situations, available in Minneapolis; also provides training for volunteers: 952-993-6670 (Park Nicollet)

Tubman
Offers a wide range of services from shelter to counseling to in-school programs for youth; if you are in need of help or services, call the 24-hour crisis and resource line: 612-825-0000; https://www.tubman.org/

Canvas Health 24/7 Sexual Abuse Crisis Hotline
24-hour telephone crisis response, short-term counseling, 24/7 response to local hospital emergency rooms, support groups, legal advocacy, Safe at Home application assistance, and community education; all services are free: (651) 777-1117; https://www.canvashealth.org/crisis-support/abuse-response-services/

Bluff Country Family Resources
Provides free individualized crisis intervention, legal and personal advocacy, support groups, as well as information and referrals; 24/7 sexual-assault and domestic-violence crisis hotline: 1 (866) 367-4297; http://www.bluffcountry.org/

Other resources that offer programming for folks who have caused harm/used domestic violence:
Domestic Abuse Project
Asian Women United
Oasis of Love
Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center
OutFront's Anti-Violence Project

I need some form of physical health care?

Minnesota Poison Control
The emergency call center is available 24/7/365 to advise on safe management of poisonings at home or the need for immediate transport to a medical facility. Poison Center staff advise throughout the care process and call to follow up anywhere in Minnesota: 1-800-222-1222; http://www.mnpoison.org

Treatment Referral Routing Service
Provides 24-hour free and confidential treatment referral and information about mental and/or substance-use disorders, prevention, and recovery in English and Spanish: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)/TTY, 1-800-487-4889; http://goo.gl/H81XrL

If you are interested in becoming a community caretaker to skill up in navigating emergency situations, consider the following resources:

1. Free online course in psychological first aid: https://learning.umn.edu/search/publicCourseSearchDetails. do?method=load&courseId=1735854&selectedProgramAreal d=18870&selectedProgramStreamId=18871

2. Other U of M Public Health free online courses: http://www.sph.umn.edu/academics/ce/online/

3. Anti-violence advocate training, OutFront MN: http://outfront.org/programs/avp/advocates

4. Red Cross training and certification programs: http://www.redcross.org/ux/take-a-class

5. Legal Observer Training Manual: https://www.sds-1960s.org/sds_wuo/nlg/LO_Manual.pdf

6. NAMI Minnesota's free classes (including mental-health first aid, mental-health emergency planning, etc.): http://www.namihelps.org/classes.html

BUILDING A POLICE-FREE FUTURE: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

We believe in the power, possibility, and necessity of a police-free future. However, we also understand that this is a new idea for many people. Here are some frequently asked questions and our responses to them.

Won't abolishing the police create chaos and crime? How will we stay safe?

Police abolition work is not about snapping our fingers and instantly defunding every department in the world. Rather, we're talking about a process of strategically reallocating resources, funding, and responsibility away from police and toward community-based models of safety, support, and prevention.

The people who respond to crises in our community should be the people who are best equipped to deal with those crises. Rather than strangers armed with guns, who very likely do not live in the neighborhoods they're patrolling, we want to create space for more mental-health service providers, violence-prevention specialists, social workers, victim/survivor advocates, elders and spiritual leaders, neighbors, and friends—all of the people who really make up the fabric of a community—to look out for one another.

But what about armed bank robbers, murderers, and supervillains?

Crime isn't random. Most of the time, it happens when someone has been unable to meet their basic needs through other means. In order to really "fight crime," we don't need more cops; we need more jobs, more educational opportunities, more arts programs, more community centers, more mental-health resources, and more of a say in how our own communities function.

Sure, in this transition process, we may need a small, specialized class of public servants whose job is to respond to violence. But part of what we're talking about here is the role police play in our society. Right now, only a small fraction of police work involves responding to violence; more often, they're making traffic stops, arresting petty-drug users, harassing Black and brown people, and engaging in a range of "broken windows" policing behaviors that only serve to keep more people under the thumb of the criminal legal system.

But why not fund the police and fund all these alternatives, too? Why is it an either/or?

It's not just that police are ineffective: In many communities, they're actively harmful. The history of policing is a history of violence against the marginalized; U.S. police departments were originally created to dominate and criminalize communities of color and poor white workers, and this is a job they continue doing to this day. The list has grown even longer: LGBTQ folks, people with disabilities, and activists are among the many groups attacked by cops on a daily basis.

And it's bigger than just police brutality; it's about how the prison industrial complex; drug war; immigration law; and web of policy, law, and culture that forms our criminal legal system have torn apart families and destroyed millions of lives. Cops don't prevent crime; they cause it through ongoing, violent disruption of our communities.

It's also worth noting that most social-service agencies and organizations that could serve as alternatives to the police are underfunded, scrambling for grant money to stay alive while being forced to interact with officers who often make their jobs even harder. In 2016, the Minneapolis Police Department received $165 million in city funding alone. Imagine what that kind of money could do to keep our communities safe if it were reinvested.

Even people who support the police agree that we ask cops to solve too many of our problems. As former Dallas Police Chief David Brown said: "We're asking cops to do too much in this country. . . . Every societal failure, we put it off on the cops to solve. Not enough mental-health funding, let the cops handle it. . . . Here in Dallas we got a loose dog problem; let's have the cops chase loose dogs. Schools fail, let's give it to the cops. . . . That's too much to ask. Policing was never meant to solve all those problems."

BUILDING A POLICE-FREE FUTURE: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What about body cameras? What about civilian review boards, implicit-bias training, and community-policing initiatives?

Video footage (whether from body cameras or other sources) wasn't enough to get justice for Philando Castile, Samuel DuBose, Walter Scott, Tamir Rice, and far too many other victims of police violence. A single implicit-bias training session can't overcome decades of conditioning and department culture. Other reforms, while often noble in intention, simply do not do enough to get to the root of the issue.

History is a useful guide here: Community groups in the 1960s also demanded civilian review boards, better training, and community-policing initiatives. Some of these demands were even met. But universally, they were either ineffective or dismantled by the police department over time. Recent reforms are already being co-opted and destroyed—just look at how many officers are wearing body cameras that are never turned on, or how quickly Jeff Sessions' Justice Department moved to end consent decrees. We have half-a-century's worth of evidence that reforms can't work. It's time for something new.

This all sounds good in theory, but wouldn't it be impossible to do?

Throughout U.S. history, everyday people have regularly accomplished "impossible" things, from the abolition of slavery, to voting rights, to the 40-hour work week, and more. What's really impossible is the idea that the police departments can be reformed, against their will, to protect and serve communities whom they have always attacked. The police, as an institution around the world, have existed for less than 200 years—less time than chattel slavery existed in the Americas. Abolishing the police doesn't need to be difficult; we can do it in our own cities, one dollar at a time, through redirecting budgets to common-sense alternative programs.

Let's get to work!

ENDNOTES

[1] Interrupting Criminalization Initiative (a member of Movement for Black Lives). Interrupting Criminalization #DefundThePolice Guide. InterruptingCriminalization.com | M4BL.org

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Thank You!

Closing letter

With this offering, we hope that you feel more empowered to go forth and do the work that needs to be done. Moving beyond the world we have now to the liberated future we dream of will take all of us putting in work. So whether it's your family, your neighbors, your coworkers, your organization, or another community entirely, get your people together and get started.

With that said, don't be afraid to ease yourself into movement work. A commitment to caring for yourself and your community while trying to change the world is necessary, no matter what your first step looks like. We transform our society and our systems by moving from a place of love, care, and accountability in everything that we do. We transform our society and our systems by transforming our relationships with one another, and by transforming ourselves. This is lifelong change work and we hope you will continue to learn, grow, adapt and repeat the transformation needed with community to bring to fruition the world as it should be.

"We are the ones we've been waiting for."

— June Jordan