

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/protecting-black-lives-the-crisis-of-american-policing>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, Eric Garner, and so many others should be alive today. In just the past five years, there have been 1,254 documented incidents of police officers shooting and killing Black people. This devastating statistic represents just a fraction of our nation's problem of police violence and its legacy in slavery and white supremacy.

The police make **10.5 million arrests a year**, mostly for minor offenses. In fact, less than [5 percent](#) were for incidents that involved serious violence. Every police encounter threatens escalation, injury, and death. Real accountability in policing is long overdue.

Vera is committed to dismantling the current culture of policing and working toward solutions that defund police and shift power to communities. We need to support the outrage we're seeing in the streets, in our communities, and in the media while investing in long-term solutions. Now is the time to stop tinkering with police reform and to enact wholesale change.

We're building on this unique moment of public awareness, outrage, and calls to defund the police. We'll work to ensure systemic change by:

Black-led organizations are leading the call to action, supporting peaceful demonstrations across hundreds of cities. The [Black Visions Collective](#) and [Reclaim the Block](#) are fighting for safe communities and police accountability in Minneapolis, where George Floyd was killed. Local [Black Lives Matter](#) chapters in many cities and the national [Movement for Black Lives](#) led a week of action.

Many have donated to local community [bail funds](#) to pay bail for people arrested during the protests, but in recent days, after receiving millions of dollars in donations, the [National Bail Fund Network](#) and other bail funds have asked supporters to instead support local Black-led organizing against police brutality and to invest in people and organizations leading the way for systemic change.

Change is happening. In Minneapolis, the city council has committed to disband the current policing system and shift funding toward community-based strategies. In New York, lawmakers are working to repeal Section 50-A, which has allowed police departments to withhold officer disciplinary records from the public. More victories are on the horizon.

Cities and communities spend far more on policing than other services, such as welfare or housing. The problem of police violence is steeped in over-enforcement and the resources required to support this apparatus. Police department budgets remain at an all-time high. In this moment of austerity budgets, high unemployment rates, and fraying health care and public welfare systems, our communities deserve better.

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