

MINNEAPOLIS

In first Minneapolis police graduation of 2025, officials hail ‘turning point’ in department’s history

Applications are way up and pipeline of diverse new officers signals positive trajectory for police force following years of attrition.

By **Liz Sawyer**
The Minnesota Star Tribune
JANUARY 31, 2025 AT 1:24PM



Minneapolis Police recruit Mohamed S. Qasim took his oath alongside 18 others at Sabathani Community Center in Minneapolis, Minn., on Thursday, Jan. 30, 2025. (Richard Tsong-Taataril/The Minnesota Star Tribune)

ADVERTISEMENT



For his keynote address to Minneapolis’ newest crop of police officers, Spike Moss delivered a history lesson about the long, winding road to achieve minority representation on the force.

The [trailblazing civil rights activist](#) organized for decades to help break barriers in the overwhelmingly white Police Department, pushing not only to place Black people in uniform but to see them reach the highest echelons of leadership.

“I thought I was gonna lose my life just to get us in the door,” Moss told a standing-room-only crowd that had gathered Thursday night at Sabathani Community Center in south Minneapolis to celebrate the Police Academy graduates. But he said he lived long enough to witness that transformation.

“This is our vanguard, our front line of protection,” he said, looking at the 19 young men – Black, white, Latino and Asian – as they waited to have their badges pinned. “These people here don’t represent that past that I was fighting with.”



Civil rights leader Spike Moss was the keynote speaker at a Minneapolis Police Academy graduation at Sabathani Community Center on Thursday, Jan. 30, 2025. [Richard Tsong/Taarit/The Minnesota Star Tribune]

In a city that still bears the physical and emotional scars of George Floyd's murder in 2020 under the knee of a Minneapolis officer, Moss pointed to other signs of progress.

Police chiefs are now willing to fire problem officers, he said, and county attorneys are unafraid to charge them. Several officers accused of serious misconduct, including the four involved in Floyd's death, have been criminally convicted.

The all-male class is joining the department at a time of rapid change amid two court-mandated reform efforts seeking to rebuild public trust and replenish the depleted police ranks.

Many fresh recruits said they're not intimidated by the challenge.

"I felt like I had a golden ticket I couldn't say no to," said officer Mohamed Qasim, a 23-year-old Southwest High School graduate who jumped at the opportunity to patrol the city where he spent his childhood.

The idea of doing noble work, while representing the growing Somali-American population, made him beam with pride.

Mayor Jacob Frey and Chief Brian O'Hara hailed a "turning point" in their recruitment efforts following years of rapid decline.

For the first time since 2018, the department ended the calendar year with a net increase of officers, adding 36 sworn staff after a targeted marketing push and a historic pay increase.

"We're on a much stronger trajectory," said O'Hara, noting that 85 more people are in line to become cadets, community service officers or interns.

Applications jumped by 133% by the end of 2024, partly driven by an influx of lateral hires, legacy recruits and a monthslong “Imagine Yourself” campaign that flooded social media with ads aimed at rebranding modern policing.

When O'Hara was hired in 2022, the staffing shortage had become so dire advisers cautioned he may need to close a precinct. Veteran officers, plagued by low morale, strongly discouraged friends and family from joining the department.

“It was a really dark place,” O’Hara said, recalling the elevated levels of violent crime and sense of numbness in the community. “The odds were very, very stacked against us.”

 bias: Lean Left Bias split across 4 sources 25% 75% Other sources   

“They feel good about what they do again,” he said.

At least a dozen immediate relatives of current cops have also joined the force in recent months.

It’s a promising turnaround nearly five years after Floyd’s killing – and amid a [recent](#) consent decree with the U.S. Department of Justice over its findings the department engaged in a [pattern of racist policing practices](#).

That latest reform effort, the most sweeping to date, has yet to be signed by a federal judge. Its future remains in jeopardy, given that the Trump administration [froze all federal civil rights litigation](#) last week.

The city says it is committed to that work and will pursue the current terms of the agreement, regardless of the federal government’s involvement.

Share

✦ ABOUT THE WRITER

Liz Sawyer

REPORTER

Liz Sawyer covers Minneapolis crime and policing at the Star Tribune. Since joining the newspaper in 2014, she has reported extensively on Minnesota law enforcement, state prisons and the youth justice system.

See More >

More from Minneapolis

See More >

TWIN CITIES


Daily travel ticks up in Twin Cities, but remains below pre-pandemic levels



The average person makes 3.5 local trips a day, according to the Met Council’s latest Travel Behavior Inventory.


MINNEAPOLIS

Minneapolis touts progress in police reforms, but lags in closing out complaints and force reviews



MINNEAPOLIS

Inmate escaped as he awaited transfer from Hennepin County jail



Around the Web

Sponsored by REVCONTENT

LEAFILTER PARTNER

If You’re Over 65, Try This Instead of Gutter Cleaning (It’s Genius)

HOMEBUDDY

Here’s The Estimated Cost for a 1-day Walk-in Shower Upgrade

AMERICAN HARTFORD GOLD

Americans Doing This to Hedge Against Inflation

PRIMAL HEALTH

Neurologists Suggest Avoiding These Foods - Links to Dementia

AMERICAN HARTFORD GOLD

Possible Changes Coming to IRA/401k Accounts

GROUPON

 bias: **Lean Left** Bias split across 4 sources 25% 75% Other sources   

Body Massage

 PREMIUM DIGITAL ACCESS

GET IMMEDIATE ACCESS
TO EVERY STORY

Your subscription supports independent local journalism that goes beyond the two sides to bring you the whole story.

Start Now: [Subscribe Today](#)

Already a subscriber? [Log In](#)

COMPANY

- [About Us](#)
- [Work for Us](#)
- [Minnesota's Best](#)
- [Mobile and Tablet Apps](#)

ADVERTISE

- [Get in Touch](#)
- [Media Kit](#)
- [Public Notices](#)

BUY

- [Strib Store](#)
- [Full Page Archive: 150+ years](#)
- [Commercial Reprints](#)

SUPPORT

- [Help and Feedback](#)
- [Newspaper Subscriptions](#)
- [eEdition](#)

WEBSITE

- [Terms of Use](#)
- [Cookie Settings](#)
- [RSS](#)

- [Contact Us](#)
- [News in Education](#)
- [High School Sports Hubs](#)
- [Policies and Standards](#)

- [Advertising Opportunities](#)
- [Classifieds](#)
- [Obituaries](#)

- [Photo Reprints](#)
- [Back Copies](#)
- [Licensing](#)

- [Manage Your Account](#)
- [Digital Access](#)
- [Text to Speech](#)

- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Site Index](#)

 **The Minnesota Star Tribune**
© 2025 StarTribune. All rights reserved.

