

foreword:

What is occurring in the country with these protests are an assertion of abolitionist sentiments into the mainstream. The country's gross incompetency in handling COVID, allowing for mass unemployment and for disproportionate infection rates and deaths in Black and Brown communities has caused social unrest. While our healthcare workers and incarcerated community struggle to get PPE necessary to surviving the pandemic, our police forces receive millions of dollars from the state to brutalize our communities. All of this coupled with the highly publicized state-sanctioned murder of George Floyd has sparked protests all over the country calling for the devaluation of Black lives to cease. The government's massive failure to address the pandemic coupled with the highly publicized, state-sanctioned murder of George Floyd has sparked protests all over the country. Protestors are standing in solidarity with one-another, risking their lives, to demand the ceasing of the criminalization of Black life. Yes, a cop killed George Floyd but this was not due to the personal biases of one man. Rather, the police as an institution exist to protect property: Black people were once property, a form of property that allowed this country to amass and hoard an extravagant amount of wealth through a system of racial capitalism. There is a direct link between slave catchers/patrols and the police, as policing historically began as a system of slave patrolling. Thus, police do not serve and protect human life, they serve the ruling class and protect their wealth. The subjugation of Black people is ingrained into the fabric of this country and it is ingrained into the police force. Black people are frustrated, angry, sad, and all around OVER IT. Because of these reasons the protests occurring across the world are abolitionists. Chicago's began at Cook County with calls to #FreeThemAll. At a national scale we are seeing calls to defund the police and reinvest in Black communities. The tide is changing. The state is responding with a high level of militarization and brualization because they sense this change and know that together we have the numbers and the power to stop the brutalization of our people.



"James H. Cone spoke to America and said: I know that you are an exemplary death-dodging and death-ducking culture, sentimental and melodramatic. You come up with ingenious modes of denying and evading and avoiding the underside of things. But there is some suffering here; there is some sadness and sorrow and heartache and heartbreak. There is some grief here, there are some doings and some actions here with which you must come to terms because 1968 has reached the point now where the foundation of American civilization has begun to shake.

" After 212 uprisings on the night that the bullets went through the precious body of Martin Luther King, Jr., America can no longer deny the fact that either it comes to terms with the vicious legacy of white supremacy, or the curtain will fall on the precious experiment in democracy called America."

Cornel West, in his essay "Black Theology and Human Identity" which reflects upon Cone's book *Black Theology and Black Power*.

West goes on to say that "Cone is dealing not just with the death of Martin, nor just the death of so many freedom fighters of all colors, though disproportionately black. He is also dealing with the death of something in him; it is the death of the "Negro" and the birth of "blackness." It is the death of a certain kind of deferential disposition to white supremacy in the hearts and minds and souls of black people themselves and the birth of a certain kind of self-assertiveness- a courage to be."

Are we experiencing an awakening?

Timeline: George Floyd's Death and Impact

ABC News - June 3rd 2020

May

25th

● **George Floyd Dies in Police Custody**

-George Floyd, 46, is arrested shortly after 8 p.m. after allegedly using a fake \$20 bill at a local Cup Foods. He dies while in police custody. A disturbing cellphone video later posted to Facebook shows an officer pinning Floyd to the ground with his knee on Floyd's neck while a handcuffed Floyd repeats "I can't breathe." The video goes viral.

26th

● **Responding Officers are fired as Protests begin in Minneapolis**

27th

● **Protests begin in other cities, including Los Angeles and Memphis**

28th

● **Minnesota Governor Activates the National Guard**

29th

● **An officer, Derek Chauvin, is arrested and charged with third degree murder in Floyd's death**

June

1st

● **Results of an independent autopsy find that Floyd's death was due to asphyxiation** - this runs contrary to the police autopsy, which said the death was due to underlying health conditions Floyd had

2nd

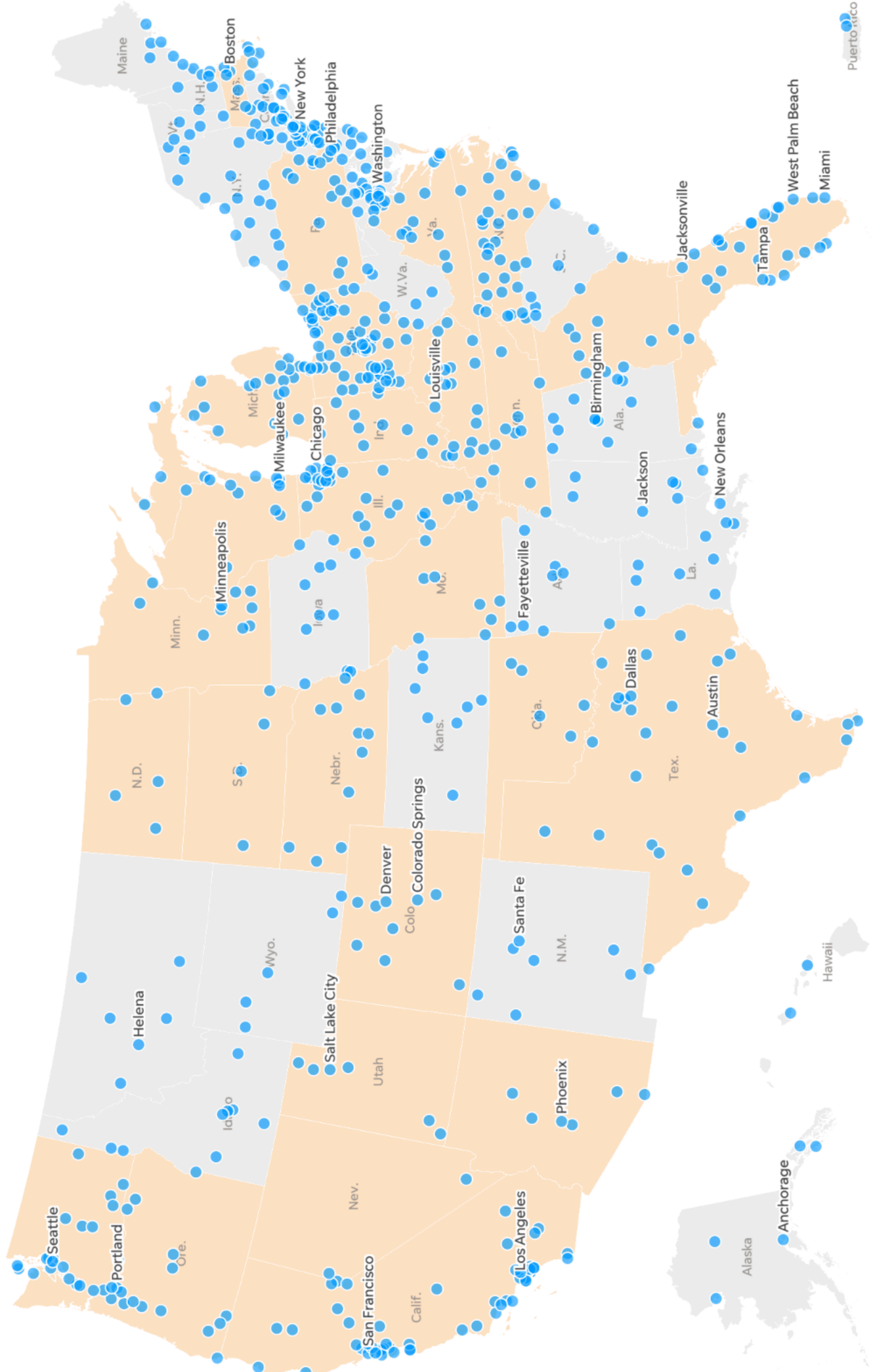
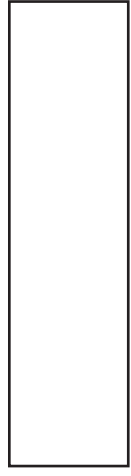
● **A Civil Rights Charge is filed against Minneapolis Police**

3rd

● **three more officers are charged** for aiding and abetting second degree murder. Chauvin's charge is adjusted to second degree murder

What's next? Demonstrators continue to battle white supremacy and police brutality. Groups call to defund, divest, and abolish police across the U.S. and abroad. Abolitionists continue to call for the Abolition of prisons.

Map showing the geographic distribution of protest sites across the United States, with a legend indicating that blue dots represent the 'Site of protest'.



Why The Small Protests In Small Towns Across America Matter by Anne Petersen

Dorian Miles arrived in Havre, Montana — a windy farm town, population 9,700, along what's known as Montana's Hi-Line — just five months ago, a young man from Georgia coming to play football for Montana State University–Northern. "I was nervous about walking around," he told the Havre Daily News. Like many small towns in Montana, Havre's population is aging and, generally, friendly. But Miles, who told the paper his uncle had been shot and killed by a police officer in Atlanta, knew that strolling its streets as a young black man with tattoos and dreadlocks could be risky.

On Sunday night, though, he said he felt safe. Over 100 people showed up to a rally in Havre, organized by Melody Bernard, a Chippewa Cree Tribal Member from the nearby Rocky Boy Reservation.

After the rally, Miles posted photos and a message to Facebook. "SPEAK AND YOU WILL BE HEARD!" he said. "Today we did what had to be done in Havre. A SMALL town of predominantly older white Americans stood with me to protest the wrongdoings at the hands of police EVERYWHERE.... Today we stood together for an injustice. Today people who don't look like me or relate to me showed love and support. I was overwhelmed to see the people I saw today marching in protest to the public lynchings that have been done by the only people whose job is to PROTECT and SERVE their community."

The movements and marches that convulse big cities don't usually (or ever) make it to Havre. Nor do they usually make it to hundreds of other small towns across the country. But the protests following the death of George Floyd, who was killed in police custody on May 25, are different.

All over the country, people are showing up — often for the first time in their lives — to protest police brutality and injustice. In tiny ag towns like Havre and Hermiston, Oregon, but also in midsize cities Topeka, Kansas, and Waco, Texas; on island hamlets (Friday Harbor, San Juan Island; Nantucket, Massachusetts; Bar Harbor, Maine); and in well-to-do suburbs (Lake Forest Park, Washington; Darien, Connecticut; Chagrin Falls, Ohio). They are showing up at the courthouse. They are kneeling and observing eight minutes of silence — a reference to how long Floyd was pinned to the ground in a knee chokehold by the Minneapolis police officer who was later charged with his murder. They are marching down interstates and waving signs on street corners. Sometimes, like in the town of Alton, New Hampshire (population 5,335), where one woman organized a protest just two months after being hospitalized with COVID-19, only seven people come. Sometimes, like in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, there are thousands. These protests are covered by local news outlets, but amid the deluge of national news — major protests in major cities, guard tanks and helicopters, tear gas and rubber bullets, looting and destruction in select cities, the president's reaction, massive economic anxiety and unemployment, all against the backdrop of the continued spread of COVID-19 — it's hard for these stories of smaller, even silent, protests to break through.

When, for example, the New York Times compiled a map, published on June 1, of where protests had happened over the weekend, it missed dozens of protests across rural, small-town, and midsize-town America. It's hard to fault them: My attempt to keep track has consumed the last three days of my life, with people flagging more every hour.

There have been protests in Belfast, Maine. In Farmington, New Mexico. In Tuscaloosa, Alabama. In Bentonville, Arkansas. In Lubbock, Texas. In Idaho Falls, Idaho. The biggest anyone can remember in Paducah, Kentucky, in Bozeman, Montana, in Pendleton, Oregon, in Frisco, Texas, and in Ogden, Utah. In Tacoma, Washington, pastors knelt in the rain, pleading with God. In Bowling Green, Kentucky, three rolling days of protests. In Owatonna, Minnesota, a student-led protest lasted for 10 hours. In Tulsa, Oklahoma, thousands gathered on the 99th anniversary of the Tulsa Massacre. In Myers Park, one of the wealthiest neighborhoods of Charlotte, North Carolina, where black people were prohibited from owning property for decades. And in Petal, Mississippi, where protesters have spent days calling for the resignation of Mayor Hal Marx, who tweeted last week that "If you can talk, you can breathe."

These protests cut across demographics and geographic spaces. They're happening in places with little in the way of a protest tradition, in places with majority white population and majority black, and at an unprecedented scale. People who've watched and participated in the Black Lives Matter movement since 2015 say that this time feels different. And the prevalence of these small protests is one of many reasons why.

Jordan Miller grew up in Carrollton, Ohio, a town of about 3200 people on the eastern side of the state. When he graduated from high school, he was one of just 75 in his graduating class. He's amassed a following of over 20,000 on Facebook covering news all over Ohio as local news outlets are gutted. In the past week, he's documented protests and interviewed participants all over the state. On May 31, he was in New Philadelphia, whose population is just over 17,000, and hundreds had assembled to march. The county sheriff, Orvis Campbell, and his deputies marched beside them.

"It was amazing," he told me. "To see a town that is predominantly white come out in flocks and march — they understood the importance. They can never understand the feeling of being black in America. But they did understand that they could use their privilege to get the importance of protests out there."

But he also went back to his hometown, where there were just two people protesting — and a mass of people with guns strapped to their hips, "guarding" the buildings against them. One of those men told Miller they were fine with him being there, because his family was "from" there. They just didn't want other black people, outsiders, around. That experience was disheartening, but only served to convince him how important these small-town protests are. "I'm black, and I know the only reason I'm treated with any respect is because of my platform," he said. "I've seen 'outside' black people treated differently than me. It's sad. I remember what it's like to be in their shoes."

Still, he explained, the fact that even two people were protesting in his hometown, along with so many others in nearby communities, makes everything feel "totally different." "People's thinking has evolved," he said. "They want change just as much as the black community does." Alliance, Ohio, population 21,616, is a 40-minute drive north from Carrollton. It's more than 80% white. Last week, Ande' Green and Essence Blue had been watching protests pop up in bigger cities nearby, but were wary of making the trip. Blue tweeted about potentially putting something together in Alliance, and they decided to give it a shot. They made a flyer announcing that they would gather at the post office downtown, then walk around it five times — once for each time that George Floyd pleaded for his life. They posted the information all over social media and texted everyone they knew.

"We didn't really know what to expect," Green said. "But over 300 people showed up!" "People didn't understand the point of us protesting in Alliance," she added. "But we wanted them to know that we are taking a stand for our nation. For those who look like us who lose their lives to police brutality."

Tyler, Texas, is a town of 105,000 out on the eastern edge of the state. It's quiet, conservative, and, according to Drew Steele, who works in auto detailing, a town of "quiet racists," with little tolerance for anything or anyone that deviates from the norm. His high school was named for Robert E. Lee. There's a brand-new building in town intended to commemorate plantation life. There's a long history of lynching. But on Monday night, Steele joined hundreds of others for the third night of protests in the city.

The protests in Tyler, he explained, are about so many things: institutional racism, but also unlivable wages, and just growing frustration and desire for change.

Steele thinks it's essential for these protests to happen in places like Tyler — and for other people to know about it. "Small towns tend to be old-fashioned," he said. "And racism is an old-fashioned way of controlling others." But others need to know that there's another path forward, and that it's okay to be different, in any number of ways. "That's why it's so important that so many people showed up," he said. "We won't be shoved under the rug."

Riverton, population 11,000, is surrounded by the Wind River Reservation in central Wyoming. Like a lot of towns that border Native American reservations — it can feel, as Steele put it, "old-fashioned." But on Monday, more than 150 people showed up to protest. Some were from

Riverton; others drove from the reservation and as far away as Lander. An older white woman had written “THIS WYOMING NATIVE KNOWS BLACK LIVES MATTER” on the back of her T-shirt.

In September 2019, a Riverton police officer shot and killed a Northern Arapaho man outside the local Walmart after he allegedly had attempted to stab the officer, giving new life to long-standing complaints about the mistreatment of tribal residents by off-reservation police. (Native Americans are killed by police at a higher rate than any other ethnic group in the United States.) In November, the city met with the Northern Arapaho tribal council to attempt to improve relations between the two. But as Layha Spoonhunter, who is Eastern Shoshone, Northern Arapaho, and Oglala Lakota, told me, there was significant skepticism and racism from people in town.

Spoonhunter decided to put together the event, along with Micah Lott, as a way to “bring to light issues that we experience as people of color,” he said. He said the overwhelming response from the city, where you still regularly see Confederate flags hung in windows and in trucks, was positive. “There were people who shouted, ‘Hope you get the ‘rona,’” he said. “But most people honked in support, or raised their fist, or if we shouted ‘black lives matter’ or ‘justice for Floyd,’ they would open their windows and yell it back.”

“As Indigenous people, we wanted to stand in solidarity with Black Lives,” Lott told me. “We put it on in Riverton, because of its older white conservative population and its prejudice toward Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.”

In other towns, too, they keep showing up. Last night alone, there were protests planned in Whitefish, Montana; in Gunnison, Colorado; in Pasco, Washington; in Brea, California; in Cranford, New Jersey; in Albany, Oregon; in Bethel, Vermont; in Fairfield, Connecticut; in Ketchum, Idaho; in Annapolis, Maryland; in Flagstaff, Arizona; and in dozens of other places, large and small.

It might not seem like people from outside care what happens in these places far from the national spotlight. But as Ande’ Green, one of the organizers of the protest in Alliance, Ohio, put it, “These small towns matter because it’s a lot of small towns. All of these small towns coming together, it’s what we need to make a change.”

Or, as Melody Bernard, who organized the protest in northern Montana, said, “Protests like these need to happen in places like Havre because racism and injustice happen in places like Havre. There’s complaints, maybe some meetings, and then it dies down. People forget it about it and then it happens again. But we can’t let it die down this time. We just have to keep pushing.”

June 4, 2020, at 10:42 a.m.

Correction: Riverton is surrounded by the Wind River Reservation in central Wyoming. Its relation to the reservation was misstated in a previous version of this post.

Who Will You Believe, de Blasio or Your Lying Eyes?

By Sarah Jones

Bill de Blasio didn't have a good morning, and that's fair, because neither did I or anyone else in his city. When he showed up as usual for Brian Lehrer's weekly "Ask The Mayor" segment, the venerable WNYC host asked him some thrilling questions. "I think there is one dominant topic for you this week," Lehrer said. "It seems, from a lot of reporting, that the city has a problem of the protests against too much police violence being met with too much police violence, or heavy-handed police tactics. Do you accept the premise?"

"No," the mayor said. People are deeply hurt, he added. There's anger. There's pain. There are problems in policing we all have to fix. But minus a few unfortunate incidents, he continued, "the police have shown a lot of restraint." Citing reality, Lehrer pushed back. Here's all the reporting, he told the mayor. But the mayor dug in. No, no, no. Not happening, not here.

De Blasio's New York, where the cops are good apples and looters and protesters are one and the same, is more than a fantasy. It's a lie. The real topography of this city is shaped by police violence. You can walk its streets and point out the primary features of note. Here's where the police killed Eric Garner. Here's where they killed Sean Bell, Anthony Baez, Ramarley Graham, Patrick Dorismond. Here is where Amadou Diallo's old building is; the police murdered him in front of it. Here's where they raped Anna Chambers in custody. In the week since protests over George Floyd's killing began, the police have added indelible new landmarks to our map. The mayor pretends not to see them.

Maybe he needs an itinerary. Load him into one of those double-decker tourist buses, let him sit up top, and haul him around. The cops broke a protester's arm here. On this street they shoved a young woman to the ground so hard she had a seizure. Or take him to the Strand. Great bookstore. A cop pulled a gun on unarmed protesters in front of it. Drive him to the corner of St. Marks and Flatbush. There, he can see the spot where the NYPD drove an SUV into a crowd. Escort him over the Manhattan Bridge. The other night, the police trapped thousands of people on it for hours.

He can come to my neighborhood if he wants. I'll show him around. A week ago I walked out of my apartment and up Tompkins Avenue and found myself in a protest. You can do that now, in New York. Walk to Walgreens, there's a protest. Walk up Eastern Parkway, protest. The mayor gets driven places so perhaps he doesn't see them. The protests are peaceful, and so was the local crowd last Friday. People had gathered in front of the 79th Precinct to be heard. They succeeded, for a while. Then, for no reason I could ascertain, the police flooded toward us from across the street. In front of them they held their batons, cross-body, ready to push. They pushed and shoved and hit even when we all tried to comply. After the pushing started a protester threw a water bottle at a cop's head, which seemed like a natural response to being threatened, and the cops got even angrier with those batons. Some of them were restrained but some of them enjoyed it and you could see it on their faces.

The next night, a Saturday, I went out again. The mayor was not present and did not see anything. But here's what I saw. For the second night in a row, the police turned a calm demonstration into dangerous mayhem. They charged a crowd in the streets near the Barclays Center. I don't know why. Once again there was no provocation that I witnessed. They rushed protesters down the street, spraying mace, wielding batons. I saw people on the ground. I heard my fiancé, who had come to march, scream my name from the sidewalk and that frightened me, because he's a former Marine and doesn't easily startle. He reached out and tried to pull me toward him. I'd turned my back to the cops, thinking I'd outrun them and the mace and the sticks. I had come to stand on a curb out of their way. But a cop approached from behind, baton raised, ready to push me down or shove me even further down the street. Not far from where we stood, the police had just arrested HuffPost reporter Chris Mathias.

I have since acquired a press badge. The item feels like a good-luck charm, its protective qualities a comforting fiction. The police don't care about the First Amendment, which protects protesters and reporters alike. Neither does de Blasio, who with his curfews intends to remove a peaceful protest movement from his streets. The impulse to restrict speech, to restrict movement and assembly, is antidemocratic to the core. So too are de Blasio's lies. In an ideological sense he may have no choice but to pretend. The alternative is to concede that he, a good liberal who thought he could be president, fosters violent authoritarianism at home.

But here's the truth, which will be the truth whether or not de Blasio admits it to Brian Lehrer. The police have arrested legal observers and journalists and peaceful protesters. They've beaten people savagely, almost killed a few with a car, and terrorized entire neighborhoods. They have incited violence where none flourished, and a few opportunistic looters don't substantively bolster the police commissioner's version of events. The police are brutalizing people, the way they always have, except now it's even harder for the comfortable among us to ignore. It's all on video, night after night. We see it. We won't forget it. We don't live in de Blasio's New York.

Police Covering Badge Numbers Amid Demonstrations

“Images and video circulating on social media show police officers who appear to have either taped over the name tags on their uniforms and badge star numbers or removed them entirely.

Concealing those elements of a uniform, or failing to correctly identify themselves, is specifically prohibited by at least two Chicago Police directives.

But the Reporter has obtained images and video that suggest multiple CPD officers may have been engaging in the inappropriate practice of hiding their names star numbers, which are the unique identifying numbers on an officer’s badge.”

-The Chicago Reporter, June 4th, 2020

“The practice of police obscuring their badge numbers — a form of identification that many jurisdictions require officers to make available to the public when interacting — has taken on a heightened significance amid the nationwide protests over the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police. The protests have been met with a show of force from officers, sometimes veering into brutality, leaving the risk that those without visible identification are acting with the very impunity to commit violence that spurred the protests in the first place.

Covering badge numbers, the National Lawyers Guild letter asserts, ‘serves to prevent aggrieved individuals from being able to identify the perpetrators of police misconduct or relevant witnesses to same, and the failure of the NYPD to stop this practice provides a sense of impunity to members of the service that they can violate demonstrators’ rights without consequence.’

Andy Izenon, president of the New York City chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, who signed the letter, told The Intercept that covering badge numbers was particularly troubling during a time of widespread protest when documented police violence is already a problem.

‘The trend of individual officers to sidestep what minimal accountability exists, in order to more effectively and with greater impunity brutalize protesters for pretextual reasons, is unacceptable,’ Izenon said. **‘Not only along legal standards, but for moral ones as well.’** The fact that the practice appears not only to be the individual act of specific cops, but an acknowledged pattern tolerated within the department, could make the city — and not just individual officers — answerable to a lawsuit, according to the National Lawyers Guild. ‘The failure to stop this activity also may subject the City to liability,’ Izenon wrote.

The police department’s Patrol Guide permits the wearing of black bands for short periods after an officer’s death, but forbids officers from using those bands to obscure their badge number.”

- The Intercept



The Truth about Non-Lethal Weapons



CIVIL UNREST IN the wake of George Floyd's death has spread around the world, and in some places, protesters are being met with tear gas, rubber bullets, stun guns, and other tactics intended to control crowds without taking lives.

Known as nonlethal or less-lethal weapons, many of these tactics were originally pitched as a way to make warfare more humane by incapacitating a person or encouraging them to flee. Law enforcement agencies later adopted these weapons from the military as an alternative to using firearms.

Yet people who study nonlethal weapons wonder if a reclassification is in order, as research continues to reveal their damaging ramifications on the body. When misused, these weapons break bones, burn the skin, and cause internal injuries that can be fatal.

CHEMICAL ATTACKS

During the coronavirus pandemic, the use of tear gas may be particularly disastrous. When victims are hit with the weapon, it causes fits of coughing and sneezing—a potentially potent recipe for spreading the virus.

The active agent in tear gas is an organic compound called CS, which binds to a pain receptor in our nerves named TRPA1. This pain sensor is located all over the body—eyes, skin, lungs, mouth—and is responsible for the zesty sensation triggered while eating wasabi or horseradish.

These chemical irritants are considered nonlethal in open environments and at low concentrations.

But in large doses—administered when they detonate next to someone or in a confined space—the chemicals can kill tissue in the airway and digestive system, fill the lungs with excess fluid, and cause internal bleeding.

In addition to risk from tear gas itself, there are the metal, aerosolized canisters it comes in. Balin Brake, a 21 year-old protester in Indiana, lost an eye during a protest over the weekend, where he says he was struck in the head by a tear gas canister. The disorientation and panic that comes with tear gas can also cause stampedes, as happened in a Venezuelan night club in 2018, where 17 people died.v

Like other chemical weapons, tear gas was banned in almost every country for use in warfare under the Chemical Weapons Convention treaty ratified in 1997, but it's still commonly used in many places to control crowds, and not only at protests. In 2018, civil rights groups condemned US Border Patrol agents for using tear gas on a group of unarmed migrants, including children.

Pepper spray, based on a compound called oleoresin capsicum (OC) that can also be used in grenades, behaves in a similar way, but is less likely than Tear gas to cause chemical burns.

RUBBER BULLETS

In 1970, the British army introduced rubber bullets as a tool to control riots in Northern Ireland. Made of rubber—and, in some cases, rubber-coated steel—these projectiles were designed to be less lethal than metal bullets. Their larger surface



areas slow their pace during flight, allowing them to administer blunt force to the body, rather than penetrate it.

Studies of their use in the conflict in Kashmir have shown that rubber bullets can cause fractures, nerve and tendon injuries, and infections. Other studies indicate that rubber bullets can cause internal organ damage leading to death or permanent disability. This week, a Sacramento teen was hit in the face with a rubber bullet that broke his jaw and left a gash across his cheek.

The United Nations Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement recommends only using rubber bullets when facing imminent threats—and aiming at the lower abdomen or legs, where they are more likely to cause bruises and lacerations.

But when shot at close range, rubber bullets cause damage on par with a car accident. The blunt force can break bones and crush or tear the blood vessels in the area of impact—which can cause bleeding in nearby organs, such as the kidneys, spleen, or liver.

Rubber bullets have been used to target the media as well. Freelance photographer Linda Tirado was shot in Minneapolis by what she believes was a rubber bullet, permanently blinding her in one eye. In Louisville, Kentucky, local reporter Kaitlin Rust shouted, “I’m getting shot! I’m getting shot!” on live television while a police officer targeted her and photojournalist James Dobson with what appeared to be rubber bullets or pepper balls, projectiles containing skin and eye irritants.

Weaponized Noise

Military helicopters hovered low over protesters in Washington, D.C., on Monday night, sending debris flying and leaving people covering their ears. Meanwhile, police forces across the country—including Seattle, Houston, Portland, and Denver—exploded flash-bangs, so called for the way they emit a loud bang and bright lights as they detonate.

Noise is a common tactic for clearing people out of an area, says Richard Neitzel, an associate professor at the University of Michigan School of Public Health who studies the effects of noise exposure. Aside from being irritating, noise can harm the body in two ways, both of which target the inner ear.

Brief, intense blasts emit high pressure waves that enter the ear and hit the eardrum. Like putting too much air in a balloon, this can rupture the eardrum and dislodge the tiny bones connecting it to the inner ear. The pressure can even shear off the hair cells lining the inner ear that are responsible for transforming vibrations into signals the brain interprets as sound.

Hovering helicopters might be as loud as an outdoor concert—95 decibels—enough to cause damage after about 50 minutes. But Neitzel says a few minutes' exposure brings no real risk of hearing loss. More concerning, he says, are the potential effects of flash-bang grenades. These emit sounds upward of 170 decibels, which can cause immediate ear injury to anyone standing nearby—a risk that increases with the number of explosions. Neitzel notes, though, that ear plugs will help mitigate some of these effects.

Stun Guns

Stun guns have been a method of quelling—and inciting—unrest since the 1960s, when law enforcement used rudimentary versions of the devices on civil rights activists. These guns deliver short blasts of electric current to the body and are designed to subdue assailants just long enough to restrain them. But they, too, can be lethal.

These weapons shoot two barbed darts sharp enough to penetrate the clothes and skin and embed themselves into the body's tissue. The darts connect to very fine wire that transmits five-second blasts of energy. To complete a circuit, the electricity travels from one dart to the other through body tissue. As it does so, it stimulates the skeletal muscles to twitch so fast, it's like having a seizure. If the darts hit the wrong parts of the body, these weapons can cause cardiac arrest.

Rohini J. Haar, an emergency medicine physician at the Kaiser Medical Center in Oakland and a lecturer at UC Berkeley's School of Public Health who has studied the use of crowd-control arms, says scrutinizing the weapons that police are using to control protesters shouldn't distract from why the demonstrations are happening in the first place. Excessive use of crowd-control weapons is ultimately a symptom of the very issue that has driven thousands into the streets: unaccountable police violence, especially toward black people. "The protesters are protesting police violence, and that's really the focus here," says Haar. "I hope that the attention stays on that."

~ Amy Mckeever of *Nat Geo* and

Louise Matsakis of *Wired*

Dozens of cities across the country are imposing curfews. Do they work? by Zeesham Aleem

These protests have grown in size and intensity leading officials in at least 39 cities and counties across 21 states to institute curfews. But some criminologists have reservations about curfews, particularly given the scarcity of research about their effectiveness — and warn the curfews currently being instituted could backfire.

In many cities — including Minneapolis, Salt Lake City, Reno, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles — protesters defied those curfews on Saturday, meaning protests, including some featuring violence on the part of police and agitators, continued. And that police made arrests not only for criminal acts like theft and arson, but also for violating curfew.

In some cities, those who stayed out were allowed to continue their protests; in others, however, defying curfews led to aggressive behavior from police, like in Minneapolis, where police fired rubber bullets at demonstrators and journalists. The fact that some of Saturday's curfews provoked this violent police response, and that other curfews were ignored, raises questions about the wisdom and efficacy of ordering a curfew in the first place.

It is unclear whether ordering emergency curfews — that is, telling people they must stay at home and avoid public areas after a certain time in the evening, and increasing public police presence to enforce it — is effective in reducing unrest. Criminologists note there doesn't appear to be an abundance of research on the matter. But some experts have raised concerns about the way curfews are likely to be enforced in communities of color and argue they could exacerbate the very dynamics that gave rise to the unrest in the first place: namely, that they will encourage confrontational policing at a time when people are demanding the opposite. "What we know is curfews increase opportunities for police interaction and police violence over time," Andrea Ritchie, a criminal justice researcher at the Barnard Center for Research on Women, told me.

The surge in curfews and increased deployment of law enforcement officers over the weekend — some of which extend through Monday morning — reflect an intensifying effort by government authorities to curb the protests that have rocked the country for days and have revived an ongoing discussion about racial discrimination in the American criminal justice system.

The curfews that most local officials have sought have been extremely short-term — some began on Saturday at 8 pm and ended at 6 am Sunday. But others resume on Sunday night and last until Monday morning. Should unrest continue in the coming days or weeks, it's possible a number of government officials will turn again to curfews — and some experts are concerned about how they could be enforced.

While there is a great deal of scholarship on the efficacy of extended juvenile curfews on reducing crime in the US, that same breadth of research does not exist on sweeping, short-term curfews, according to experts.

William Ruefle, a scholar of criminology at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg, told Time in 2015 that there's been very little research into the topic, and that does not appear to have changed in the past few years. Alex Vitale, a professor of sociology and the coordinator of the Policing and Social Justice Project at Brooklyn College, told me he "[doesn't] know that there is a lot of research on emergency curfews during rioting."

But Vitale did note that there are a number of widely held concerns about the effect curfews have on the public.

"Curfews are an extremely blunt tool that should only be used sparingly and as a last result. They give police tremendous power to intervene in the lives of all citizens," he said. "They pose a huge burden on people who work irregular hours, especially people of color in service professions who may need to travel through areas of social disturbance in order to get to and from work at night."

Vitale also noted curfews are often enforced by officers from multiple jurisdictions — like state police and the National Guard — who “may have no familiarity with these communities” they’re sent in to police, which could lead to unnecessary tensions or violence. They may, for example, not be attuned to the kinds of hours that people in a given area work or what normal patterns of public movement are like there — useful knowledge, since not everyone will get the memo that there is a curfew in effect. That in turn means police could arrest people who have no intention of defying a curfew.

Examples of the negative, even dangerous, interactions with law enforcement that curfews can create went viral Saturday night. In Minneapolis, critics have posted videos of police officers who appeared to be enforcing the curfew overzealously. Tanya Kerssen, who lives in the city, tweeted that the officers shot paint canisters at her while she was on her own porch, while shouting “light ‘em up.”

Ritchie, the Barnard researcher, is deeply skeptical of curfews — which put more police on the street and empower them to behave repressively in a tense situation — as an effective policing mechanism when animosity toward police is fueling the protests in the first place. “If the source of uprising and resistance is police brutality, then imposing a curfew that creates more opportunities for police brutality is definitely not the answer,” she said.

Ritchie pointed out that during the Detroit protests in the summer of 1967, which began after a police raid on an unlicensed bar, “alleged curfew violations were the basis of police killings and much police violence.” After protests end, events like this are remembered, and only increase friction between police and communities, particularly communities of color.

She also argued that in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, mass arrests under a sweeping curfew order represent an inappropriate kind of overreach that could exacerbate public health crises.

That is of particular concern as the US struggles to contain the coronavirus pandemic. Arrests could lead to extra financial burdens during a period of economic downturn and increase the risk of Covid-19 spread in jails and police stations. Not to mention that at least some arrested for curfew violations come from the black and Latino communities hardest hit by the pandemic.

And critics argue the haphazard way many government officials have been going about imposing the orders also has the potential to disproportionately harm the poor and people of color.

For example, Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot gave merely 35 minutes’ notice to the public when she announced a curfew on Saturday for 9 pm. Many — including the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois — pointed out that it was unfair to issue the order while public transportation was suspended, restricting Chicagoans’ ability to get home quickly. Lower-income people who can’t afford to call a ride-hailing service are particularly likely to be vulnerable to arrest in such situations.

Local government officials, on the other hand, see curfews as a tool for maintaining order when protests threaten to spiral out of control and create property damage or deaths.

When explaining her abruptly issued curfew, Lightfoot said the protest “situation has clearly devolved, and we’ve stepped in to make the necessary arrests.”

In some cases, the threat of arrest could work short-term in persuading certain protesters to get off the streets. But when curfews result in confrontations between police and the people — whether they’re out deliberately or caught by accident — it’s likely to cause long-term damage to community trust in police.

Videos show the police aren't neutral. They're counterprotesters.

Vox, June 2, 2020

By now, millions of Americans have seen the videos.

Police officers surrounding protesters, beating them with batons. An officer apparently spraying mace at a little girl. Police cars plowing into a crowd of people, knocking them to the ground.

To many watching, the lesson of such images was clear. As New York Times Magazine writer Carvell Wallace put it, at the protests around the country after the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers, police aren't a neutral party. They're counterprotesters.

As protests spread in the past few days, police have flocked to affected neighborhoods, often wearing riot gear and sometimes arriving hours before protesters. Their stated goal is to keep the peace. But it's become abundantly clear that many are far from neutral — instead, they are treating protesters like the enemy, lashing out violently, using disproportionate force, and attacking people who pose no threat to them.

"The tone that we felt from the police is: This is their rally," Dae Shik Kim Jr. told the New York Times. Kim had shared a video of his friend in Seattle who was repeatedly punched while being detained. "They are going to control it from the beginning. They are going to dictate what happens. It's a very offensive type of approach."

The thousands of protesters around the country are rising up against police violence as a whole — not just the death of an individual. In response, police appear to be taking the protests personally, and it could lead to a disproportionate amount of violence from officers determined to maintain the status quo.

Since the protests began in response to Floyd's killing last week, police officers have again and again been captured on video attacking protesters. These videos — many of them graphic and disturbing — often show police seeming to treat protesters like an opposing army, rather than like citizens they're sworn to protect.

[videos feature]

- Brooklyn cops yelling at demonstrators to "move back", protestors retreating with arms raised above their heads. A few people back into a bench on the sidewalk. Before they can continue to move backwards, a group of 10+ officers beat the protestors with clubs, not allowing them to get up and continue their retreat
- An NYPD SUV is parked in front of a metal barricade. Behind the barricade, protestors are yelling and throwing empty water bottles. The SUV suddenly jumps into motion and accelerates ten feet into the crowd, knocking over the barricade and many demonstrators.
- In Seattle, a nine year old girl who has been maced crying and holding tight to a man, presumably her father, yelling "help me! it burns" while a crowd of protestors come to her aid with eye rinse she continues to scream. Behind her, we see protestors yelling at cops: "She's a little girl, what is wrong with you"
- A crowd of protestors gather on a street in Dallas. They chant "No Justice, No Peace". Officers stand in a line ten feet away from the front of the crowd. An air-horn comes from the side of protestors, signaling dispersement. As protestors move away, an officer opens fire and launches tear gas canisters at the crowds as they move away.

The job of law enforcement officers, according to the authorities who have called on them in recent days, is to keep the public safe. South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster, for example, said in a press conference on Sunday that officers are "here

to protect people and property.”

But the police, in many situations, have appeared to actively work against public safety. It’s hard to imagine how macing a child, or driving a car into a crowd of people, could possibly be intended to keep anyone safe.

Instead, the police seem clearly to be treating protesters — members of the public — as adversaries. As Mara Gay writes at the New York Times, “an army of public servants entrusted to protect Americans treated them as an enemy instead.”

This seems to be happening not despite the fact that the protests are about police brutality, but because of it. Previous research shows that police are more likely to use force against protesters when the subject of the protest is police violence, Shaila Dewan and Mike Baker report at the Times. Police are also more likely to use violence against protesters of color than against white demonstrators.

Now “there’s deep resentment on the part of the police that so many people are angry at them, and they’re lashing out,” Alex Vitale, a sociologist at Brooklyn College, told the Times. “Look at what we saw — people sitting on their own stoops getting hit with pepper balls. Anyone who looks at them funny, they’re attacking them.” That’s why Wallace, the Times Magazine writer, and others have argued that in protests against police brutality, the police should be seen as counterprotesters. Their interests are fundamentally at odds with those of the protesters, who want to see them stripped of their power to harass, assault, and even kill people with impunity. And it’s clear from the events of recent days that police are willing to use more violence to defend that power.

Many have also compared the violent response to the current protests with police behavior during anti-lockdown protests by conservative groups this spring. At those protests, officers were largely peaceful and respectful toward the (mostly white) crowds. One image from Lansing, Michigan, in particular, went viral: officers stoically standing by as an unmasked white man screamed inches from their faces. Contrast that with the images we’ve seen from recent days, of police swarming and beating protesters or running them down from the safety of their vehicles.

At the time of the Michigan protests, Melanye Price, a political science professor at Prairie View A&M University, told Vox that the police response would be very different if the stay-at-home protesters were black. “Imagine 10 black men and rifles walking up to any state capitol in the United States,” Price said. “They would be shot before they ever made it up the steps.”

The protesters attacked on camera by police in recent days have been unarmed. They certainly haven’t been carrying rifles up the capitol steps. Yet the police have treated them not just like a threat but like an opponent.

CHICAGO

Bridgeporters Say Bat-Wielding Vigilantes Are Terrorizing Peaceful Protesters, Neighbors

BRIDGEPORT — Amid a week of unrest around the city, a group of mostly white men flooded a Bridgeport street corner Wednesday night wielding baseball bats, lead pipes and two-by-fours.

It was a scene that alarmed many residents and drew a rebuke from Mayor Lori Lightfoot, who said Chicago cannot tolerate vigilantes.

“It is absolutely not appropriate for people to take up arms, bats, pipes, whatever in ... patrolling neighborhoods,” the mayor said when asked about the scene in Bridgeport.

“We’re not about to allow that practice here in Chicago. If there’s an issue, call 911. I absolutely support neighbors being vigilant as to what’s going on in their streets, on their blocks, but taking up arms — that leads to chaos. We’re not supporting vigilantism.”

Over the last several days, looting, fires and violence erupted in neighborhoods across the city, and some have taken to the streets to enforce vigilante justice. In Little Village, there have been several instances of Black drivers attacked by Latin King gang members wielding bats for coming into the neighborhood.

On Wednesday night in Bridgeport, there were no reports of attacks by the self-appointed guardians at 31st Street and Princeton Avenue, but several people say they were illegally harassed and intimidated by men with weapons while the Chicago Police did nothing about it.

Tanya Rosin, an attorney who lives on the border of McKinley and Brighton Park, said she was driving home from a peaceful protest in Bronzeville with Black Lives Matter signs on her car when she was cut off by a BMW with lights on the top and forced to pull over at 26th Street and Shields Avenue.

“Two of them got out and blocked our path forward with their bodies. One stood only a few inches away from the front of my car while screaming at us to turn around and leave and the other one stood a couple of yards away from the driver side of the car,” Rosin said.

“I told them we were just trying to get home and they screamed at me that I didn’t live here. Their actions made it very difficult to turn around as there were vehicles behind us,” she said.

When Rosin turned her car around, she tried to go south on Shields but was blocked by a silver pickup truck flying the Chicago flag. A white man with brown hair and wearing a hat was driving, she said.

“We finally managed to start going the opposite direction on 26th and were able to turn south on Canal and get home safely. As we we turned around we saw a police squad a few cars behind where we had been,” Rosin said. “They did nothing to intervene.”

Asked about the incident, Chicago Police spokesperson Kellie Bartoli said “there was no report made or arrests from this incident and further police service was not necessary.”



In response to the allegations some officers were working with gangs in Little Village, the department said “the Chicago Police Department does not condone any type of violence.”

“There is no truth to the rumors that the Department is coordinating with gang members, who terrorize their neighborhoods daily, in an effort to somehow safeguard communities,” the statement read. “Gang members need to put their guns down. We do not and will never tolerate attacks against anyone.”

Whitney Rosier, an art therapist who lives in Bridgeport, said she and her husband attempted to walk to a peaceful protest in Bronzeville but were blocked from crossing under the Dan Ryan Expressway by Chicago Police, who had most streets barricaded. The couple tried to cross further north when they saw men with bats and were followed by a car full of men, she said.

“Just so you know, my husband is Black and I am white,” Rosier said. “So, a car came up behind us but we kept walking and they stopped because it was on a street with a cul-de-sac. By the time we got to 31st and Princeton there was a massive crowd of white men, most of them had bats. Some had pipes. I’ve never seen anything like it. The police were there and wouldn’t let us cross and this was all to stop the quote-unquote ‘riots’ but there was nothing going on,” Rosier said.

Although the men did not say anything to her and her husband, Rosier said she burst into tears.

“It was overwhelming to see how segregated it was. Bronzeville is mostly Black, Bridgeport is mostly white. There’s a huge police barricade, we’re on one side and we can’t cross over. There’s a large crowd of white men carrying weapons and the police are there like, ‘no problem,’” Rosier said. She added that they met another woman from the neighborhood who walked her and her husband home without incident.

-Bob Chiarito of Block Club Chicago

White Supremacist Infiltration of US Police Forces

An investigation published in 2019 by the Center for Investigative Reporting found that hundreds of active-duty and retired law enforcement officers are members of Confederate-sympathizing, anti-Islam, or anti-government militia groups on Facebook. Within these private groups, members often are openly racist.

The Plain View Project, a database of public Facebook comments made by nearly 2,900 current and former police officers in eight cities, suggested that nearly 1 in 5 of the current officers identified in the study made public posts or comments that appear “to endorse violence, racism and bigotry,” as reported by BuzzFeed News and Injustice Watch in a study of the database. For example, there are 1269 identified problematic posts from active duty Philadelphia police officers on the site. Of the 1073 Philadelphia police officers identified by the Plain View Project, 327 of them posted public content endorsing violence, racism and bigotry. Of those 327, at least 64 hold leadership roles within the force, serving as corporals, sergeants, lieutenants, captains, or inspectors.

-Danielle Schulkin of JustSecurity.org

Forget “Looting.” Capitalism Is the Real Robbery. by William C Anderson

This morning the president of the United States threatened state-sanctioned murder in response to “looting,” laying bare the way in which white supremacy, capitalism and the state work together to violently repress people who defend Black life.

But Trump’s angry outburst is not the only blatantly racist response we should be interrogating. We also must confront the way in which both conservatives and liberals have responded to the Minneapolis uprisings by condemning “looting.”

Protesters in Minneapolis and around the country are rising up against a lynching and state violence. How should we respond to a lynching? Should our goal simply be to publicize it, in the hope that such publicity will generate condemnation and prevent future lynchings? This logic is flawed, in part, because lynchings thrive off of spectatorship. For white supremacists, the act of killing is also an act of fellowship and opportunity for indoctrination.

Simply spreading images of racist killings and asking the state to stop killing us is not going to stop them. (In fact, while it’s important to publicize the fact that these killings are occurring, sometimes the spread of such images also galvanizes white supremacists.)

And so, for some who oppose racist killings, watching the videos, waiting to vote, and marching in protest feels like enough. But for others, more intervention is needed. The murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police comes on the heels of the killings of Ahmaud Arbery in Brunswick, Georgia, and Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky. These killings were committed by current and former law enforcement. Understandably, outrage is growing.

We should expect uprisings. We should expect property to be damaged, as people rise up against the racist systems complicit with racist violence. Many of the people taking part in these revolts have decided that respecting property is not more important than respecting Black life. There is an awareness that if the law doesn’t respect Black life, then the law itself cannot be relied on for protection or given undeserving respect. So, as protesters are being accused of “looting” and “rioting” in Minneapolis or anywhere else, this time demands that we reflect on the systematic robbery of Black America.

Corporations in the United States, again, have walked away with an unprecedented and astronomical amount of money in 2020. With no accountability in sight, there was little to no opposition to their monumental robbery. They were handed trillions. Politicians working in service to the corporate elite — and afraid of appearing opposed to a deal that would largely benefit Wall Street — pushed it through. Of course, the deal left many vulnerable people in the dust. No changes were made after the unresolved debt crisis of 2008 that brutalized people around the world with the starvation we know as austerity. Cuts to social needs have fallen on the public undeterred while the rich continuously grow richer than they’ve ever been.

Now, protests breaking out throughout the nation in response to police brutality foreshadow what’s to come. People are likely to take, break and fight because conditions remain miserable. It should not be surprising. Still, the “looting” by the oppressed will always be condemned more than the structural robbery that’s long taken place under capitalism.

There’s this idea that the perpetrators of crises, rather than their victims, deserve our sympathy when their profits decrease. After at least 100,000 people in the U.S. — disproportionately Black, Native and Latinx people — have died from a merciless pandemic, this absurdity is still being

trafficked through the media. The corporations that do not pay people a living wage and who are benefiting from skyrocketing prices amid disaster are not deserving of pity. For those of us whose stability is much more uncertain, one missed paycheck could mean eviction, imprisonment or hunger. These circumstances are increasingly common as unemployment reaches levels not seen since the Great Depression. At least 40 million people in this country are out of work, and people in need are being effectively robbed by the rich. As they lose their jobs, people are also being robbed of health care — a vulnerability that will kill people and their family members. People have also been robbed of a safe place to live free from state violence, where they can breathe clean air. People have watched the tax money they paid be given away, time and time again, after being told it would come back to workers, but it never does. For Black America, there are more than enough prison beds, but not nearly enough hospital beds for a population that's being disproportionately crushed by institutional oppression. So, of course, with little to no real infrastructure to protect people who the government has long neglected and abandoned, there will be uprisings and people will take things. They will take because of what's been taken from them: safety, security, housing, education, food and even their ability to vote. And, of course, protesters are being robbed of the right to express their anger.

This conversation about “looting” always repeats itself. During virtually every Black uprising that has taken place and shaped this country in the last century, the narrative has remained the same. White supremacist assaults on the Black community were dubbed “race riots,” and Black protesters' self-defense has been framed as senseless violence. People lament the destruction of property because they've bought into the idea that it's another wrong being committed on top of any given white supremacist violence that caused it all. But stealing because you're being sucked dry by a system that has rendered you disposable is not the same as the ritualistic racist murders of Black people by white supremacists. Decades of “looting” stores during uprisings can't measure up to what Wall Street has looted through the financial crises it creates.

They are certainly aware of their crimes. Hedge fund capitalists who amass endless amounts of money through slush funds and financial manipulation have many avenues to escape accountability. As the U.S. military prepares for “civil disturbances” and buys riot gear, it's clear they know that not all people will accept atrocity. In a nation that has never gotten past the civil war it fought over a wealthy class not giving up slavery profits, defending the wealthy is a tradition. The same people who created and currently benefit from the current crisis are intentionally mismanaging plenty of other parts of our existence.

Those interested in liberation should not condemn protesters' so-called “rioting” and “looting.” Rather, we should be doing all we can to free the imprisoned protesters in Minnesota and wherever else uprisings occur. The robbery we should concern ourselves with is the theft perpetrated by a system that creates desperation where people in need have to go and take for themselves what should be a guaranteed right. Capitalism encourages thievery from the top down. Writing about the Haitian Revolution, the great writer C.L.R. James once said, “The rich are only defeated when running for their lives.” It has certainly been the case time and time again throughout Black history: People have overcome insurmountable odds to claim victories. How should we answer the question, “What do we do in response to a lynching?” We must make the very system that enables it run for its life.

Donations to businesses destroyed by looters and rioters on Minneapolis' Lake Street surpass \$2.5M

by Tim Harlow

Donors have given more than \$2.5 million to help small businesses on Lake Street rebuild in the aftermath of last week's riots that caused widespread destruction.

By Monday afternoon, just four days after the fundraiser launched by the Lake Street Council went live, more than 32,000 people had given money, with donations coming in furiously from the metro area and from across the country, said Matt Kazinka, senior strategic initiatives manager for the nonprofit, which advocates for hundreds of small businesses and organizations along the busy south Minneapolis corridor.

"It's incredible to see how much care about Lake Street and a community like ours," said Kazinka, noting that a majority of businesses are owned by immigrants and people of color. "These businesses serve so many people and are home for so many people. It's not just the goods and services they provide, but they are community centers."

The council said it will take millions of dollars to rebuild the scores of businesses damaged during the riots of the past few days, which erupted after the death of George Floyd, the 46-year-old black man who died May 25 after he was restrained during an arrest.

Kazinka said the council will be drawing up guidelines in the coming weeks to determine how to disburse the money.

To recognize the generosity, the council said it will use its own general operating funds to make a "significant gift" to Floyd's family. All donations that come in will be allocated to businesses to help them rebuild storefronts and reopen, the council said. Many businesses had already been struggling economically in the wake of COVID-19 closures. Then the riots hit and delivered more devastation. But thousands are stepping up, Kazinka said.

"I can't believe it," he said. "I'm thrilled about what this means for our community."

Donations can be made on the council's website or at givemn.org.

Checks can be mailed to the council's office at 919 E. Lake St., Minneapolis, MN, 55407. But the council warns it may not receive them for "some time" because mail delivery in the area has been temporarily halted.

In a separate fundraiser for the Lake Street Business Association, Edina-based Inclusivi-Tee will hold an online auction June 25-28. "Artists Who Share" will feature work from more than 40 established and new artists from the United States, as well as from Colombia, Kenya, the Netherlands, Argentina and England.

Social Media Missteps and #BlackLivesMatter

- Social Media has been a powerful source of communication for organizers and protesters. In recent actions, it's been used to document police brutality, share safety information for demonstrators, and spread information about organizations people can donate to from home
- Multiple social media trends have sparked as the Black Lives Matter movement has begun to take action, some more helpful than others.
- "Ten Accounts Trend" - in which a person tagged ten people on their Instagram story, calling for them to "share" that Black Lives Mattered, and tag ten more accounts to do the same
- "Blackout Tuesday" on June 2nd began as a push from the music industry, calling on musicians who profit from black lives and culture to take a day off from self-promotion and educate themselves on police brutality and other race issues. The trend was created to increase attention for black artists and stories, but was quickly co-opted by those wanting to perform their "support" - drowning out important information being spread by organizers of actions by posting thousands of black squares on their Instagram feeds.

"Every little thing helps. Sitting behind a phone screen and tagging 10 accounts in the name of activism doesn't. If you are in a position of privilege, use it to help others. If you are a public figure or a celebrity, publicly demonstrate actual tangible support — make donations, sign and circulate petitions." -Affinity Magazine

Misinformation and Rumors: Debunked

New York Times - June 2, 2020

Untruths, conspiracy theories and other false information are running rampant online as the furor over Mr. Floyd, an African-American man who was killed last week in police custody in Minneapolis, has built. The misinformation has surged as the protests have dominated conversation.

At its peak on Friday, Mr. Floyd and the protests around his death were mentioned 8.8 million times, said Signal Labs, which analyzed global television broadcasts and social media. In contrast, news of the Hong Kong protests reached 1.5 million mentions a day and the Yellow Vest movement 941,000.

The collision of racial tensions and political polarization during the coronavirus pandemic has supersized the misinformation, researchers said. Much of it is being shared by the conspiracy group QAnon and far-right commentators as well as by those on the left, Mr. Brookie said...

Mistruths and their sources

- "George Floyd is alive" -The YouTube conspiracy channel JonXArmy shared a 22-minute video that falsely asserted Mr. Floyd's death had been faked. The video was shared nearly 100 times on Facebook, mostly in groups run by QAnon, reaching 1.3 million people, according to data from a Facebook-owned tool that analyzes interactions across social media
- "Antifa involvement" - The unsubstantiated theory that antifa activists are responsible for the riots and looting was the biggest piece of protest misinformation tracked by Signal Labs, which looked at certain categories of falsehoods. Of 873,000 pieces of misinformation linked to the protests, 575,800 were mentions of antifa.

Minneapolis Park Board votes to end relationship with Minneapolis police, differentiate uniforms
Other organizations cutting ties with MPD after George Floyd killing.

By Miguel Otárola and Paul Walsh

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board voted Wednesday night to sever its longtime relationship with the Minneapolis Police Department, adding to the list of organizations that have cut ties with the local police following the death of George Floyd at the hands of its officers.

The University of Minnesota, Minneapolis Public Schools, museums and venues have also chosen to limit or end their collaboration with the Police Department in the wake of Floyd's death May 25, which resulted in the firings and arrests of four officers.

The Park Board's unanimous vote directs Superintendent Al Bangoura to immediately stop using Minneapolis police officers to staff park-sanctioned events, and block park police officers from responding to nonviolent Minneapolis police calls.

"Recent actions by the Minneapolis Police Department in the alleged murder of George Floyd while in police custody have severely undermined community trust in, and sense of safety around, Minneapolis Police," the resolution read. "This ... does not support the mission of the [Park Board] and has no place in our parks."

Earlier Wednesday, Bangoura expressed little confidence that park and city police would resume their working relationship anytime soon.

The Minneapolis Police Department "has a long road ahead of them," he said. "We can't judge an entire department by the few, [but] there is a lot that is going to have to change."

The Park Board's police force is made up of 33 officers, 91% of whom live outside the city, according to the board. Roughly 18% of the city of Minneapolis is Park Board land.

During the meeting, Chief Jason Ohotto of the park police said only 2% of serious violent crimes occur on parkland.

The Minneapolis Police Department assists the park police when there are multiple calls at a time, something which is common during the summer, Ohotto said. Its officers also answer calls in parks in the early mornings.

Ohotto added he could not speak for the Minneapolis police if they would continue to provide that emergency assistance following Wednesday's vote.

Bangoura said the Park Board's police would need to search for new partners to cover nearly 2,000 employee hours it needs each year for events large and small. Those agencies could be the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office, the State Patrol, Metro Transit police and University of Minnesota police.

The vote was held after Park Board employees read an hour's worth of e-mails sent by residents, most of them supporting the resolution to cut ties with Minneapolis police.

A visibly shaken Bangoura, who is black, said during the meeting he was "angered, devastated and heartbroken" to see the video of Floyd's arrest.

“I stand in solidarity with those seeking justice, as does the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board,” he said. “We denounce racism in all forms and we support and promote justice.”

The board also voted to create a safety plan that would address policing in the city’s parks by June 17.

“We still have our park police. They will be focusing on our parks spaces,” Park Board President Jono Cowgill said. “This gives us a chance to step back and really have those discussions on what policing looks like in our parks system.”

Other local organizations also announced they were cutting ties with the Minneapolis Police Department on Wednesday.

The Walker Art Center announced it would no longer contract with city police for security “for special events until the MPD implements meaningful change to by demilitarizing training programs, holding officers accountable for the use of excessive force, and treating communities of color with dignity and respect.”

The Minneapolis Institute of Art and First Avenue said they would not hire off-duty Minneapolis police officers for their events. In a Twitter post, First Avenue said it would “instead work with local organizations who represent our community, and who will protect and affirm Black and Brown lives.”

In recent days, Minneapolis Public Schools officials said they would no longer have city police act as school resource officers, terminating a \$1.15 million annual contract with the city. University of Minnesota President Joan Gabel said her school also was cutting some ties with city police, including contracting off-duty security for football games, concerts and ceremonies.

A park police squad car is visible in the viral video of Floyd’s arrest, stationed in front of the Cup Foods while he was pinned to the pavement. Bangoura and Ohotto said Wednesday that the officer was responding to a request for backup, that he was across the street monitoring a vehicle and that he could not see what was happening to Floyd.

The park police was subject to its own public outcry in 2018 after a video showed its officers handcuffing four Somali-American teens at Minnehaha Regional Park, yelling and pointing a handgun at them. The Park Board paid \$170,000 in recent months to settle claims filed on behalf of the teens.

Commissioners and Ohotto on Wednesday decried the death of Floyd and the actions of the Minneapolis police. Some said the Park Board now needs to focus on reforming its own force.

“The Park Board has a small enough police force that we can actually make some real change,” said Commissioner Londel French, who is black. “If we don’t do it the right way, our communities burn.”

MINNEAPOLIS CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS ANNOUNCE INTENT TO DISBAND THE POLICE DEPARTMENT, INVEST IN PROVEN COMMUNITY-LED PUBLIC SAFETY

by Jay Willis in The Appeal, June 7th

On Sunday afternoon, a veto-proof majority of Minneapolis City Council members will announce their commitment to disbanding the city's embattled police department, which has endured relentless criticism in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man, on May 25.

"We're here because we hear you. We are here today because George Floyd was killed by the Minneapolis Police. We are here because here in Minneapolis and in cities across the United States it is clear that our existing system of policing and public safety is not keeping our communities safe," Minneapolis City Council President Lisa Bender said Sunday. "Our efforts at incremental reform have failed. Period."

The City Council's decision follows those of several other high-profile partners, including Minneapolis Public Schools, and the University of Minnesota, and Minneapolis Parks and Recreation, to sever longstanding ties with the MPD.

"We are going to dismantle the Minneapolis Police Department," tweeted Council Member Jeremiah Ellison on June 4, pledging to "dramatically rethink" the city's approach to emergency response. In a *TIME* op-ed published the next day, Council Member Steve Fletcher cited the MPD's lengthy track record of misconduct and "decades-long history of violence and discrimination"—all of which are subjects of an ongoing Minnesota Department of Human Rights investigation—as compelling justifications for the department's disbandment. "We can resolve confusion over a \$20 grocery transaction without drawing a weapon or pulling out handcuffs," Fletcher wrote. ...

For years, activists have argued that MPD has failed to actually keep the city safe, and City Councilmembers echoed that sentiment today during their announcement. MPD's record for solving serious crimes in the city is consistently low. For example, in 2019, Minneapolis police only cleared 56 percent of cases in which a person was killed. For rapes, the police department's solve rate is abysmally low. In 2018, their clearance rate for rape was just 22 percent. In other words, four out of every five rapes go unsolved in Minneapolis. Further casting doubt on the department's commitment to solving sexual assaults, MPD announced last year the discovery of 1,700 untested rape kits spanning 30 years, which officials said had been misplaced.

The Council's move is consistent with rapidly-shifting public opinion regarding the urgency of overhauling the American model of law enforce-

ment. Since Floyd's killing and the protests that ensued, officials in Los Angeles and New York City have called for making deep cuts to swollen police budgets and reallocating those funds for education, affordable housing, and other social services. Law enforcement officers are not equipped to be experts in responding to mental health crises, often leading to tragic results—nationally, about half of police killings involve someone living with mental illness or disability. As a result, public health experts have long advocated for dispatching medical professionals and/or social workers, not armed police, to respond to calls related to substance use and mental health. Polling from Data for Progress indicates that more than two-thirds of voters—68 percent—support the creation of such programs, versions of which are already in place in other cities such as, Eugene, Oregon; Austin, Texas; and Denver, Colorado.

"Our commitment is to do what is necessary to keep every single member of our community safe and to tell the truth that the Minneapolis Police are not doing that," Bender said Sunday. "Our commitment is to end our city's toxic relationship with the Minneapolis Police Department, to end policing as we know it, and to recreate systems of public safety that actually keep us safe."

Minneapolis Board of Education votes to kick
police out of public schools over George Floyd's
death by Valerie Strauss

The Minneapolis Board of Education, reacting to the killing of George Floyd in police custody, is terminating its longtime contract with the city's police department to provide security in school buildings.

The panel voted unanimously late Tuesday to end its relationship with the department, which is now the subject of an investigation by the Minnesota state government that Gov. Tim Walz (D) said is designed to root out "systemic racism that is generations deep."

The city's school board held a special virtual business meeting Tuesday solely to discuss its contract with the police in reaction killing of Floyd, a 46-year-old black man who died while handcuffed and being held down on the ground by officers, with a knee pushed down on his neck.

"I firmly believe that it is completely unnatural to have police in schools," Kimberly Caprini, treasurer of the board, said during the discussion. She added that schools that have close relationships with their school resource officers who are officers could continue them with after-school activities, "but not to the degree" that has existed for years.

Police officials did not respond Wednesday to queries about the board's decision, but Deputy Chief Erick Fors said in a Tuesday statement quoted by Minneapolis media outlets: "The Minneapolis Police Department appreciated the opportunity to

provide years of service to the Minneapolis Public Schools through the School Resource Officer (SRO) program. The relationships that were built were impactful not only for the students and staff, but for the officers who had a calling to work with our youth through mentorship and engagement. We will continue to work in cooperation with the Minneapolis Public Schools regarding safety and security issues."

School District Superintendent Ed Graff said on social media that he would engage with students, staff and families over the summer to get input for a new security arrangement for the next school year.

During the meeting, Nathaniel Genene, the student representative on the Board of Education, said he had solicited the opinions of students about their priorities for when school reopens, and he said they want to see, among other things, increased access to mental-health care, restorative justice practices and the hiring of more nurses, social workers and teachers of color.

"While actions taken tonight by the board will not in any way directly result in justice for George Floyd and his family," he said, "it will show that real ... change is possible."

Police “Reforms” You Should Always Oppose by Mariame Kaba @prisonculture

I read today that President Obama has offered some measures for ‘reforming’ the police.

Here is a simple guide for evaluating any suggested ‘reforms’ of U.S. policing in this historical moment.

1. Are the proposed reforms allocating more money to the police? If yes, then you should oppose them.
2. Are the proposed reforms advocating for MORE police and policing (under euphemistic terms like ‘community policing’ run out of regular police districts)? If yes, then you should oppose them.
3. Are the proposed reforms primarily technology-focused? If yes, then you should oppose them because:
 - a. It means more money to the police.
 - b. Said technology is more likely to be turned against the public than it is to be used against cops.
 - c. Police violence won’t end through technological advances (no matter what someone is selling you).
4. Are the proposed ‘reforms’ focused on individual dialogues with individual cops? And will these ‘dialogues’ be funded with tax dollars? I am never against dialogue. It’s good to talk with people. These conversations, however, should not be funded by tax payer money. That money is better spent elsewhere. Additionally, violence is endemic to U.S. policing itself. There are some nice individual people who work in police departments. I’ve met some of them. But individual dialogue projects reinforce the “bad apples” theory of oppressive policing. This is not a problem of individually terrible officers rather it is a problem of a corrupt and oppressive policing system built on controlling & managing the marginalized while protecting property. What ‘reforms’ should you support (in the interim) then?

1. Proposals and legislation to offer reparations to victims of police violence and their families.
2. Proposals and legislation to require police officers to carry personal liability insurance to cover costs of brutality or death claims.
3. Proposals and legislation to decrease and re-direct policing and prison funds to other social goods.
4. Proposals and legislation for (elected) independent civilian police accountability boards with power to investigate, discipline, fire police officers and administrators.
5. Proposals and legislation to disarm the police.
6. Proposals to simplify the process of dissolving existing police departments.
7. Proposals and legislation for data transparency (stops, arrests, budgeting, weapons, etc...)

Ultimately, the only way that we will address oppressive policing is to abolish the police. Therefore all of the ‘reforms’ that focus on strengthening the police or “morphing” policing into something more invisible but still as deadly should be opposed.

I want you and everyone else to remain safe. Remember, this pandemic is not over.

I want to stress that we must take this time to think about what we want instead of policing. People are upset, in a rage, and tearing shit up. But as abolitionists, we know that the real work is about building things up. Anyone can tear shit up. But how many can build something worthwhile and lasting? That is our task. We need to engage with folks and start talking about what we want instead of the cops. How can we make the police obsolete? What do we need to build in order to make them obsolete?

We need to go into communities and talk about what we, meaning the people in these communities, want. We should listen. The government isn't. We understand the pain and frustration. But we have to make this moment a movement. That means we have to work to build connections. Real safety is achieved through good relations. Relationships, good ones, make people feel safe. Let's work to build relationships with people. Let's listen and discover what is already there that we can build from. Let's get connected. Let's encourage people to connect with each other, to show up for one another. Let's talk about how to solve conflict and address harms without the cops. Some of that is already happening. Let's find out what those things are and amplify them.

This is our task. We must build. That's what abolition is about: a presence, not just an absence.

Always,

Stevie
@agitateorganize

