

# Detroit Coalition for Police Transparency and Accountability (DCPTA) Holds Press Conference on Continuing Law Enforcement Misconduct

Department of Justice refuses to respond to ongoing concerns related to harassment, beating and killings in Detroit

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*St. Peter's Episcopal Church was the scene of an extended press conference held by the **Detroit Coalition for Police Transparency and Accountability (DCPTA)** on July 24.*

The DCPTA was founded in July 2020 amid the mass demonstrations and rebellions around the United States and the world in the aftermath of the police executions of **George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Hakim Littleton**, among others.

In a memorandum sent to **Kristen Clarke**, Assistant Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice on April 23, the DCPTA once again requested a DOJ investigation of the Detroit Police Department for its use of excessive force, killings, racial discrimination, misconduct and the ineffective oversight by the Detroit Board of Police Commissioners. In earlier years, the Department of Justice conducted a widespread investigation into the DPD between 2000-2003 which resulted in the imposition of two federal consent decrees aimed at reforms related to the use of deadly force and the horrendous conditions then in existence at the police lockups.

The consent decrees were in force during the period of 2003 to 2014. The federal judicial consent judgment which enacted the decrees was lifted during the illegally declared bankruptcy in Detroit during 2013-2014.

Several federally appointed monitors failed to ensure that the measures mandated by the consent decrees were implemented by the DPD. The abuse by police has continued past the era of the consent decrees until the present period.



DCPTA press conference audience

The press conference on July 24 was chaired by Yvonne Jones of the DCPTA. A broad range of speakers detailed their experiences and observations regarding police misconduct in the city over the last four years.

These speakers included representatives from the DCPTA, Detroit Will Breath (DWB), residents of the southwest side of Detroit which is predominantly Latin American, religious leaders and the National Lawyers Guild (NLG). The incidents of abuse and police killings have not led to a renewed intervention by the DOJ despite repeated pleas from DCPTA.

A similar press conference was held two years ago outside the Cass Commons in Midtown where the first memorandum was submitted to the DOJ. At the 2022 press conference, DCPTA members warned that the incidents of brutality and killings would continue if the federal and local authorities did not take immediate action.

Image: DCPTA press conference with Nakia Renee-Wallace



At the July 24 press conference, **Nakia-Rene Wallace**, a co-founder of Detroit Will Breath, spoke to the role of the police in Black and Brown communities in Detroit and around the country. Wallace emphasized that the purpose of the police was to suppress the political and cultural activities of people of color. She cited the violent destruction of the Wayne State University Palestine solidarity encampment which lasted for one week before it was ordered removed by WSU President Espy.

The destruction of the encampment, named by students as the Free University of Gaza, followed a national pattern of repression which could have only been coordinated by the White House and its DOJ. Over 3,000 students, faculty and community activists were arrested during the winter and spring as many were charged with misdemeanors and felonies. Many students were expelled from their campuses, evicted from campus housing and denied their degrees.

**Bill Wylie-Kellerman**, the retired pastor of St. Peter's Episcopal Church where the press conference was held, read a letter to WSU President Kimberly Andrews Espy, Provost Laurie M. Lauzon Clabo and the Board of Governors which was signed by 70 clergy and religious leaders on June 26. The letter condemned the actions of the WSU administration for their refusal to negotiate with the Students for Justice in Palestine and other organizations which demanded the full disclosure and divestment from the State of Israel and entities conducting business with the apartheid state.

The letter read in part that:

"We understand the demands of the students—the divestment from war and weapons manufacturing—to be a good and just pursuit for which you should take pride as university leadership. Instead, you authorized the deployment of riot police and the use of brutal force against members of our communities, including the violent removal of a woman's hijab, a grave violation of the Islamic faith."

This letter went on to say:

"We write to express our deep disappointment in the decisions that you made as leaders and to ask the following of you:

1. Take meaningful steps toward reconciliation with the students and community members you have harmed, beginning with formal apologies to each.
2. Commit to meeting with members of Students for Justice in Palestine to truly listen to their concerns and hopes for a more just and equitable world.
3. Give a promise to your university community and communities across Southeast Michigan that you will refrain from militarized use of force against students in the future.

Violence against students and community members who peacefully advocate for their belief runs counter to each of our faith traditions, and to the basic tenets of human dignity. As an interfaith group of leaders, we urge the university to uphold the principles of justice, equity, and respect for all individuals."

## Other Recent Incidents of Police Misconduct

On the southwest side of Detroit, police broke up the annual Cinco de Mayo celebrations which have been held for decades. Community members and small businesses were physically attacked and ticketed in early May.

A young woman talked about her abuse at the hands of the police. She was injured on her arms and ticketed by officers. The citation had no charges listed with no court date set for a hearing. Another young person addressed the police harassment of cultural workers preparing for the annual event called "Southwest Fest".

In the April 23 updated memorandum from the DCPTA to the DOJ it documented additional incidents of misconduct at the hand of the Detroit police. Some of these incidents which occurred during 2023 remain unresolved by the Board of Police Commissioners and the local courts.

These incidents documented include:

"Daryl Vance, 71, on September 1, 2023, was punched in the face by Officer Juwan Brown, causing the victim to hit his head on the concrete, resulting in his death. (Later the courts refused to hold the officer over for a trial on murder charges). Just two days earlier, officers assaulted a young man in front of his home which was caught on a body worn camera and home camera. The Assistant Chief reported to the media that it was a traffic stop, then later a different Assistant Chief told the Board of Police Commissioners that it was a pedestrian stop. On July 29 and 30, 2023, two officers were charged in two separate incidents—one for criminal sexual conduct and the other for brandishing a firearm in a road rage. An assaultive rant utilizing profanity was carried out in a city residential home. This officer was placed on administrative duty and returned to full duty on the streets while the investigation remained in progress. The officer was only returned to administrative duty after the Office of the Chief Investigator brought the matter to the Board of Police Commissioners and to the public's attention in a meeting. A vehicle was illegally searched on May 4, 2023, as efforts were made to obscure the video capture by positioning the subjects of the search. On January 2 of the same year, police shot an animal without cause."

The officers involved in these incidents have not been properly disciplined by the Board of Police Commissioners or the courts. Consequently, the DCPTA has criticized the failure of the Commission to exercise its authority mandated by the City of Detroit Charter.

Detroit has a long and sordid history of police misconduct. A research project at the University of Michigan Department of History has compiled thousands of pages of files documenting the excesses of the police dating back to 1957. (See [this](#))

These problems related to police misconduct are rooted within the racist capitalist system in the U.S. In order to abolish this process, there must be a frontal assault on the institutions which govern the country aimed at its eradication and complete social transformation.

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Featured image: DCPTA press conference chair Yvonne Jones (All images in this article are from the author)

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