

Nationwide Uprisings Against Failed States Triggered by Police Killings

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*The nationwide uprising sparked by the murder of **George Floyd** and other recent racially-motivated events is a response to the bi-partisan failed state in which we live. It comes in the midst of the COVID19 pandemic and the largest economic collapse in the US in more than a century. These three crises have disproportionately impacted people of color and added to longterm racial inequality and injustice.*

Black Lives Matter erupted six years ago when a police officer shot and killed **Mike Brown** in Ferguson, MO. Since that time, [police have murdered approximately 1,100 people every year](#). The response of the government at all levels to the crisis of police killings has been virtually nonexistent. While people seek to avenge the death of George Floyd, the problems are much deeper and the changes needed are much broader.

The Root Of The Problem Is A Failed State

During the COVID19 pandemic, millionaires and billionaires have been bailed out by the government with [trillions of dollars](#) while working people were given a pittance of \$1,200 per person and a short term increase in unemployment benefits for the more than 40 million people who have lost their jobs. Many workers who provide essential services have had to continue to work putting themselves and their communities at risk.

Urgently needed healthcare is out of reach for millions with no or skimpy health insurance resulting in people dying at home or not going to the hospital until their illness became serious. For this and other reasons, COVID19 is [disproportionately impacting](#) communities of color.

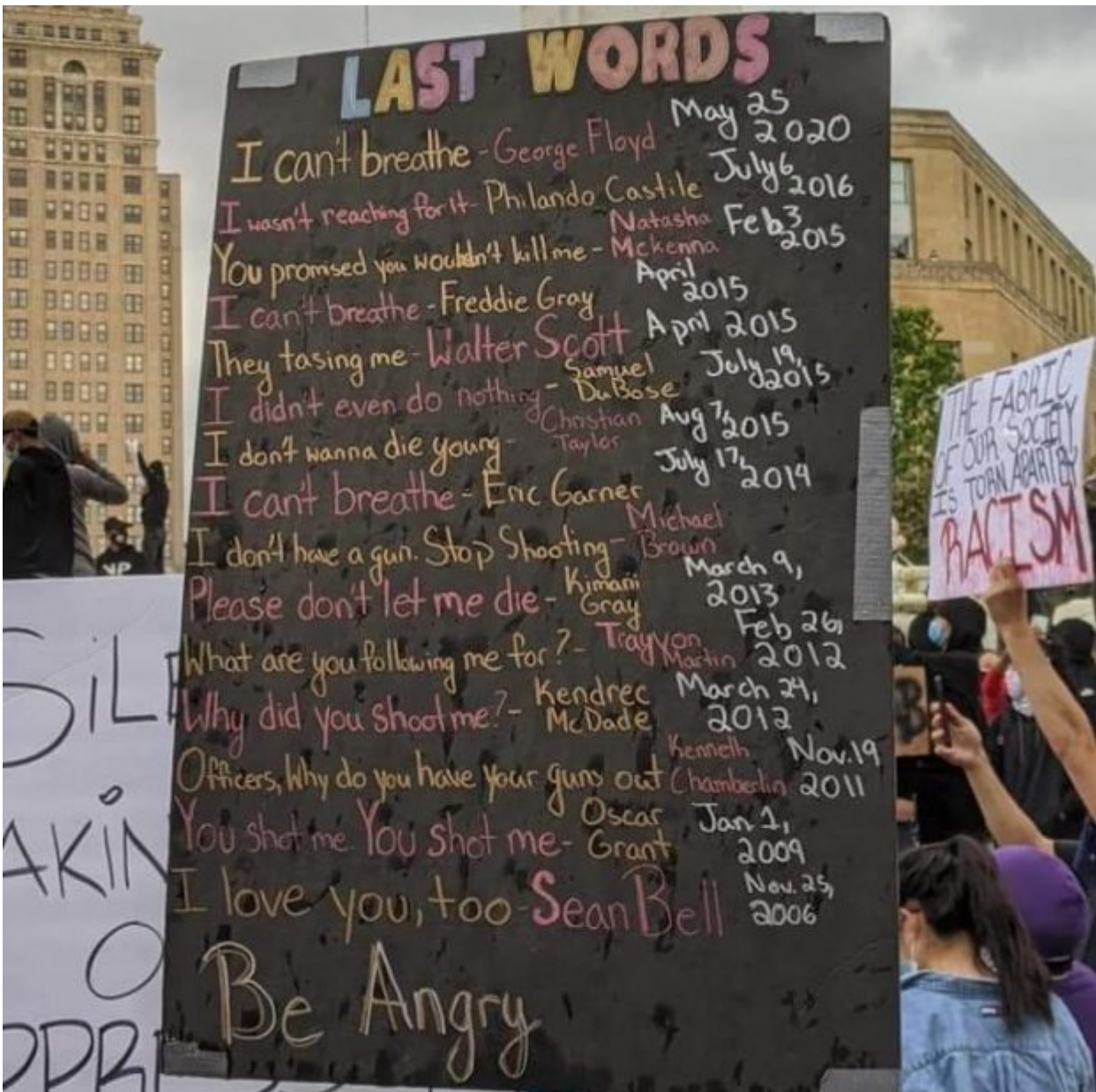
Glen Ford of Black Agenda Report [puts the mass revolt](#) in the context of the long history of white supremacy that has existed since Africans were brought to the United States. Chattel slavery was enforced by [the earliest form of policing](#), with the first formal slave patrol created in the Carolina colonies in 1704. After the Civil War and a brief period of Reconstruction where African people could participate in civic life, Jim Crow followed with white racists, often allied with Southern police, inflicting terrorism against the Black population through lynchings and other means. Black people were arrested for laws like vagrancy and then punished by being forced to work picking cotton or other jobs. This new form of slavery continues as inmates are forced to work for virtually no pay in prisons, are leased out to dangerous jobs like meat processing, or are [used as scabs](#).

George Floyd's murder enraged people who have seen too many deaths as a result of police violence. The murder in broad daylight with cameras filming and scores of witnesses

showed the impunity of police who are used to not being held accountable for their violence. During the uprising, police have used extreme violence and targeted people with cameras and the media even saying they were the problem.

The root of the problem is a failed state that does not represent the people and has a deep history of racism and inequality that are being magnified by the current crises. The failure to respond to these crises is resulting in an ungovernable country as the social contract has been broken.

Lawlessness among the wealth class, corruption of politicians by campaigns financed by the wealthiest with payoffs to their children and relatives has set the stage for no respect for the law. [As one protester exclaimed](#), "Don't talk to us about looting, you are the looters. You have been looting from black people. You looted from the Native Americans. Don't talk to us about violence, you taught us violence."



Last Words of people killed by police from Twitter, Washington, DC May 30, 2020

The Failed State Cannot Reform Itself

George Floyd's final words, "I can't breathe," echoed the same words of Eric Garner, who was killed six years ago by a New York police officer. Although there were protests then, not much has changed. The system failed to respond.

Failure starts at the top. There have been years of inaction at all levels of government. The [New York Times reports](#) "The administration has largely dismantled police oversight efforts, curbing the use of federal consent decrees to overhaul local police departments. Mr. Barr has said that communities that criticize law enforcement may not deserve police protection, and Mr. Trump has encouraged officers not to be 'too nice' in handling suspects."

Trump poured gasoline on the current fire with incendiary rhetoric promising 'looting leads to shooting' echoing racists of the past and promising to send in the US military if Democrats can't stop the uprising. [Trump has put the military on alert](#) to deploy to civilian protests. He maintains power by dividing people praising armed protesters who demanded reopening the economy despite the pandemic and calling unarmed protesters against police violence "thugs".

On Friday, the White House locked down on security alert because of protests. Trump responded by calling for MAGA protesters to come to the White House. They did not come but [protests at the White House](#) have continued to increase.

Both Republicans and Democrats are responsible for the current rebellion. Joe Biden has described himself as a '[law and order](#)' Democrat from the beginning of his career. He was the primary [architect of the federal mass incarceration](#) of Black people and helped add hundreds of thousands of police with militarized equipment to urban communities. He courts police unions that defend killer cops. And Biden [opposed the integration of schools](#).

The failure of leadership continues at the state and local levels with politicians closely tied to the Fraternal Order of Police, which aggressively defends police who kill civilians. Every city can point to a series of police killings with no prosecutions or acquittals and few convictions. Minneapolis is a city with a long history of race-based police violence. Indeed, [violence against Indigenous peoples](#) led to the formation of the American Indian Movement. [The Intercept](#) summarizes some of the cases:

- In 2015, the police killed Jamar Clark a 24-year-old black man. Protests lasted two weeks but led to no prosecution.
- In 2016, Philando Castile, a 32-year-old black motorist, [was killed](#) in a Minneapolis suburb. More than two weeks of protest followed and two years later the officer was acquitted.
- In 2017, Justine Ruszczyk, a 40-year-old white woman, approached a Minneapolis police car to report a sexual assault. The police officer, Mohamed Noor, who shot and killed her was [sentenced to 12 years in prison](#), and her family was awarded a record \$20 million settlement.
- In 2018, body camera footage showed Minneapolis police chasing Thurman Blevins, a 31-year-old black man, and shooting him to death. Prosecutors refused to file charges against the officers who killed Blevins.

Protests have led to some changes but they haven't solved the problem. Money has been spent on body cameras, which have rarely had any impact. Similarly, training on de-escalation and racial sensitivity has made little difference.

Over the last six years, cities have increased funding for police departments at the expense of health, education, and other underfunded urban programs. Rather than providing people with necessities, the government has relied on controlling neglected communities with an occupying police force. Some of the police are even trained by the Israeli occupiers.

Even in the midst of a pandemic and economic collapse, the government cannot give people access to healthcare, protect their jobs, suspend their rents or control food prices. As Rosa Miriam Elizalde [writes](#) in her comparison of the United States to Cuba, the difference is a matter of values. The United States government spends more than 60 percent of the discretionary budget on weapons and war. It should be no surprise that the government acted more quickly to suppress people with militarized police, thousands of National Guard troops, and curfews than it did to protect their lives when the pandemic and recession started.

Reform Is Not Enough: Defund The Police, Give Communities Control, Build Alternatives To Police

The country must look more deeply at policing. Retired police major, **Neill Franklin**, the executive director of the Law Enforcement Action Partnership [told the Intercept](#), “We need a new paradigm of policing in the United States. It needs to be completely dismantled and reconstructed, not changing a policy here or there.”

The Minneapolis group, Reclaim the Block, [wrote a statement](#) calling on the city council to defund the police department. Last week, they made four demands of their city council:

1. Never again vote to increase police funding.
2. Propose and vote for a \$45 million cut from MPD’s budget as the city responds to projected COVID19 shortfalls.
3. Protect and expand current investment in community-led health and safety strategies.
4. Do everything in their power to compel MPD and all law enforcement agencies to immediately cease enacting violence on community members.

This is an agenda that makes sense for cities across the country. A [growing movement](#) demands the defunding of police departments. It is evident that the way to reduce police violence is to fund alternative non-law enforcement approaches to conflict resolution, safety strategies, and mental health as well as investing in neglected communities.

Another growing movement calls for [democratic community control of the police](#) where communities elect a [Civilian Police Accountability Council](#) (CPAC). The critical difference between this and Civilian Police Boards is that the Accountability Council is democratically elected not appointed by the police chief or politicians who are allied with the police. Neill Franklin urges a national database of officers terminated for misconduct so they will not be hired by other police departments.

[The New York Times reports](#) that “in 2012, the civilian board in Minneapolis was replaced by an agency called the Office of Police Conduct Review. Since then, more than 2,600 misconduct complaints have been filed by members of the public, but only 12 have resulted in an officer being disciplined.” The most severe censure was only a 40-hour suspension. Derek Chauvin, who killed George Floyd, has at least 17 misconduct complaints, none of

which derailed his career, in nearly two decades with the Minneapolis Police Department.

Chauvin was involved in the fatal shooting in October 2006 when Senator [Klobuchar](#) was Minneapolis' district attorney. Rather than prosecuting Chauvin, she sent the case to a grand jury that declined to indict Chauvin. In 2011, Chauvin was involved in a high-profile shooting of a Native American. He was placed on administrative leave but was reinstated to the force when no charges were brought. If democratic community control of the police were in place, it is highly likely Chauvin would have been removed as a police officer and George Floyd would still be alive.

Support for change is growing. Bus drivers refused to transport arrested protesters for the police in Minneapolis and New York. [Payday Report wrote](#) transit union leaders nationwide are instructing members not to cooperate with police in arresting protesters. And Universities are dropping their contracts with the Minneapolis Police Department.

Protests continue nationwide. Thus far escalating police violence and the use of the National Guard has failed to stop them. The government may use the military, although by law there are restrictions on that. There will be efforts to pacify the protests by political leaders and non-profits who will try to take over the leadership. These must be rejected.

To achieve the changes we need, people must stay in the streets and connect the problems we face to the demand for systemic changes. We will need to support each other as many are doing by distributing food and providing medical care, jail support and legal representation. We urge people to meet in assemblies to discuss what their goals are, their vision of how communities could be organized differently and what actions they can take. We need to build confidence in each other that we can work together for the future we want. That is how we will get there.

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