

THE TIME HAS COME TO DEFUND THE POLICE.



For much of U.S. history, law enforcement meant implementing laws that were explicitly designed to subjugate Black people and enforce white supremacy. That's why Black Lives Matter Lansing, along with hundreds of thousands of others, are calling for city, state, and federal governments to abolish policing as we currently understand it. We must divest from excessive, brutal, and discriminatory policing and invest in a vision of community safety that works for everyone, not just an elite few.

We know the safest communities in America are places that don't center the police. What we're looking for already exists, and we already know it works. We need look no further than neighborhoods where the wealthy, well-connected, and well-off live, or anywhere there is easy access to living wages, healthcare, quality public education, and freedom from police terror.

*We can't stand by while our city, state, and federal governments continue to fund an excessive, brutal, and discriminatory system of policing. We will no longer be told that what we deserve is not politically viable or logistically possible. We will no longer be deprived of what others have long enjoyed in this country: **basic rights, safety, and freedom.***

*When we talk about defunding the police, we're talking about making a major pivot in local priorities. We need to see a shift from massive spending on police that don't keep us safe to a massive investment in a shared vision of community safety that actually works. We know this won't happen overnight. We're tired of quick fixes and piecemeal reforms. Ending police violence will require a thoughtful, deliberate, and participatory approach that has already begun. Join us for the founding **Lansing People's Assembly on July 18 at 2pm.***

The exploding COVID-19 pandemic and disparate impacts on our Black community have shown us what happens when the government underfunds public health while overfunding police and military budgets. It's clear that millions of people now know what Black communities have long understood: We must reverse centuries of disinvestment in Black communities to invest in a future where we can all be connected, represented, and free.

We've already taken a bold first step as a region with the resolution passed unanimously by the **Ingham County Board of Commissioners declaring [Racism a Public Health Emergency](#)**. It is our goal that this resolution serves as a guide to communities across Michigan as well as the State of Michigan. The reimagination of public safety is a chief solution for improving the health and well-being of Black residents.

TOUGH QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q. If we defund the police, what's an example of an alternative?

A. One example is a mental-health crisis: All of us may have friends and family impacted by mental-health issues, and because of that, we understand that care is complicated. If you have a friend or family member going through an episode, would you want the police to respond, knowing that the police might end up killing that friend or family member in the process? Or would you want someone who understands mental health; someone who has been there; someone who is trained to address the situation safely? In Austin, Texas, 911 calls are answered by operators who direct callers to police/fire departments/mental-health services. We should be asking ourselves why we've made police involvement the default when these jobs could be done more safely by other people.

Q. If we defund/disband the police, who's going to keep people safe?

A. Defunding the police doesn't mean an immediate elimination of all law enforcement, nor does it mean immediately zeroing out police-department budgets. We know that peacekeeping is an essential service. But a transition from over-reliance on excessive, brutal, and discriminatory policing to right-sized, reorganized, and demilitarized safety strategies is the right way to go. We can innovate new approaches to security and accountability that better serve the needs of the people without creating massive gaps in service. We learn from global partners non-militarized ways of preserving safety and enforcing laws.

Q: Don't we need the police to prevent violent crime?

A. More policing doesn't automatically mean less violent crime, and expanded police budgets doesn't mean less violent crime. The United States spends more on policing than it ever has before, but we aren't any safer. Devoting large percentages of our local budgets to police has created an environment for more police violence. In fact, the data shows that reducing the numbers of police officers and the size of police departments could actually reduce crime. Back in 2014, the NYPD staged a halt of aggressive police tactics as part of a protest. But the effect wasn't what they expected: Crime actually went down when cops took a more passive role, in the same way that the protests today escalate to violence when police decide to get violent.

Q. My friend/family member is a police officer; what happens to them if we defund the police? Are you talking about my loved one losing their job?

A. No. We're talking about a deliberate, thoughtful process to understand our community's needs and concerns, so that we can reinvest in a shared vision of community safety. Defunding the police doesn't mean that jobs disappear overnight. This work is urgent right now, but it will also involve the reshaping of public safety over time.

Q. Why do we have to defund/disband police departments entirely? If police departments are the problem, why can't we focus on specific reforms?

A. Specific reforms are insufficient and too narrow in scope to make a meaningful difference; if piecemeal reforms worked, they would have worked by now. Current forms of policing are outdated and dangerous. Our only hope for the system we need is to reinvest in a shared vision of community safety, infrastructure, and recovery that does not rely on the police.