

## Processing Abolition

By Markelle Evans

There is attention and rapid sharing of information regarding police brutality and [murder](#), specific [targeting of Black Americans](#) throughout the nation by police and White Supremacists, use of weapons on protesters (even resulting in several deaths like [Sarah Grossman, 22](#)), and more coming in every day.

In addition to these waves of terror and distress, there is also a movement to share information and resources on how to take action. This could be the action of unlearning racist biases for many non-Black individuals, signing petitions, contacting legislature, the action of picking a book by a Black author or a movie by a Black filmmaker, attending a protest, or donating your extra unemployment money to another family who lost someone because they were born Black instead of White. Educative tools on antifascist, antiracist, and abolition are being shared as well.

With the strong flow of all this information, all the social media responses, and all these new terms, it can be easy to get lost in the current.

Learning is a process that is ongoing. You are never done being a student.

That being said, one of the best ways to understand what you're learning is to discuss it with someone else. This aids in retention and helps brainstorm ways to apply your learning to the real world and see it through another's perspective. All of this creates extra neural pathways in the brain connecting to the same subject matter, hence allowing more ways for the brain to access this information.

That's exactly what I'm going to attempt in this piece. **I'm going to walkthrough police abolition: what it is, what it could look like, and why it's needed.** Keep in mind that I'm still learning and this is more for me than you.

Abolition refers to the act of ending or stopping a system, practice, or institution. Most of us know the term from learning about slavery abolitionists leading up to the 13th Amendment's passing. Just like those abolitionists opposed slavery, police abolitionists oppose police systems, and often they oppose prison systems too.

In order to understand why someone would oppose police as a whole, instead of reforming current practices, you have to understand what policing really looks like in the United States for many people.

Current policing looks like this:

**Black men and women are almost three times as likely as white people to be killed by police.** In 2015, that went up to being [five times](#) more likely.

**Black Americans can be killed whether or not they comply with police directions.** In the case of Philando Castile, the officer asked Castile to present his license and registration. Castile, with his hands on the wheel and his family in the car, let the officer know that he had a firearm and a weapon's permit in the vehicle. Castile then told the officer that he was going to reach and get the registration from the glovebox. Upon Castile reaching for the glovebox, the officer fired several shots into the vehicle, killing Castile in front of his girlfriend and small child, who was sitting in the backseat. These events were recorded by Castile's girlfriend and this remains one of the most heart wrenching instances of police violence to me.

**Black Americans are targets of harsh force tactics because to police, Black people are more violent, commit more crimes, and are more threatening.** Imagine throwing your training on de-escalation, being a public servant, and unarmed arrest just because you see a Black face. Police often turn to harsher methods of arrest and submission for Black people they suspect of committing a crime, resulting in the dangerous use of chokeholds (Eric Garner), unnecessary and cruel restraints (George Floyd, Freddie Gray), and over-the-top and botched raid attempts, like the case of police breaking into Breonna Taylor's apartment and open firing. They killed her in her sleep. They also had the wrong house. Police don't seem to need these methods to bring in white offenders, from drug dealers to Dylan Roof. Severity and danger are not what is causing police to use lethal tactics, it is black skin.

Abolishing the police:

**What would it look like with no police?** Well, to start, we would have a lot less death, less community policing of low-income and Black neighborhoods, and more funding allocated to community resources like schools, employment, the arts, and recreational facilities.

**Wouldn't we have more crime?** No, not necessarily. Crime is reported because a police officer makes a report or arrest, right? If a neighborhood or area is patrolled more often by police, police will make more arrests in that area. That area, by default, will have a higher report of crime. And if police choose to patrol more Black or low-income communities, they will report more crimes by Black people and arrest more Black people. Crime reporting is often skewed because of this, and that's where many get the idea of "Black people committing more crime" or "Black on Black violence" being of any importance. We are being presented these curated crime reports as fact when they're not.

**Who will we call for emergencies?** When you have an emergency that requires immediate medical assistance or transport, you call a paramedic or EMT. When you have a fire-related emergency or are trapped in a building, a firefighter responds. Both of these teams are highly trained, responsive, and can accurately address your issues without the use of firearms or force.

This is where the brainstorming comes in. Ideally, for emergencies that our current officers should be trained for, a better and unarmed option will be available. I envision a fast-acting team of individuals trained in social work, de-escalation tactics, and empathy that can intervene in an intense situation, separate the individual that needs to receive intensive care or counsel, and get a violent or dangerous individual to a place of holding. If mass shooters can often be brought into holding without being killed, I think a highly-trained team can be effective even if they don't have firearms.

**What about sexual assaults and domestic violence?** [80% of people who called the police because of a domestic violence dispute stated they would not call the police again.](#) Overall, they felt that it did not help their situation, and for some, the police made the situation worse. They were afraid that the police would not respond with more than a slap on the wrist for their abuser. That's not a hard stretch, considering that it is reported that [40% of police officers commit acts of domestic violence.](#) In terms of police intervention in violence against women, many officers don't even care enough to even [bring rape kits to the lab to be tested](#), meaning that not only would victims be left waiting for assistance, but rapists are unidentified and probably still assaulting. Who is being protected? Who is being served?

Again, I think we can brainstorm a service or team that can respond to these emergencies as a firefighter or an EMT would, but without the violence, weapons, and bias that comes with our police force.

Police abolition and defunding the police pave a way for us to envision a system that runs on providing care for our people. Responding to emergencies with care and empathy instead of fear and irrational decision making will result in a more safe world with less crime. I could see thriving neighborhoods with parks, playgrounds, functioning bus lines, and opportunity for everyone there because they are no longer being stopped by police for riding a bike, being in their own house, or looking similar to someone described on a police radio. Places with more resources and less patrolling report less crime, and if you think about most White neighborhoods around you, that's not so wild a statement. In White suburbs, White children and teens don't have to worry about police the way Black children and teens do. Should we want that comfort for everyone?

I'm still reading and learning, but I would say we have a strong chance. Feel free to engage in discussion on this or share what you're learning with me.