

English 4 Honors

### The Movement to Defund the Police

In 1868, with the ratification of the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution, it seemed as if the country was leaving behind a century of racism and bigotry towards minority groups such as African Americans. Guaranteeing “equal protection under the law”, the amendment sought to conclude the divisive events of the Civil War, promising never again to allow the nation to turn against itself (“14th Amendment” 1).

Following the recent murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and countless other African Americans by the police force, one begins to wonder why the U.S. is still plagued by those same issues that sparked a war over a century ago. Even after promising legislation and Supreme Court rulings, those who dedicate themselves to enforcing our supposedly open-minded laws, namely the police department, seem to be doing the exact opposite.

Current police brutality parallels past periods in American history, including the Civil War in the 19th century and Civil Rights Movement just last century, where loopholes around anti-discrimination laws caused certain groups to be targeted, oppressed and marginalized in society. Today, a new solution has taken center stage: defunding the police. Those in support of this movement, which calls for the reallocation of funds away from the police force and towards other government agencies funded by local municipalities, argue police organizations are at the center of engendering crime and therefore end up hurting society (Rubenstein 1). The opposition, conversely, believes this solution is counter-productive. Instead, they support the increase in

funding for police departments to equalize and strengthen training and education of police workers.

Yet both these sides fail to recognize the root of the problem at hand. As will be discussed later, I propose a solution to police brutality, racism and discrimination: the abolishment of diversity.

The recent murders of innocent American people—mainly those of color—by police forces has gained extensive media attention which has increased backing for this movement; these supporters argue defunding the police would both diminish crime and lead to a healthier society socially and economically. Aggressive policing, they claim, is the main cause of criminal behavior and, therefore, its elimination would help to reduce crime (Ray 1). In 2014 and 2015, the New York Police Department (NYPD) put in place a slowdown, altering its activity to meet only its most essential duties by cutting back on proactive policing. While crime was expected to rise during this period, the opposite turned out to be true. In *Nature Human Behaviour*, criminologists Christopher Sullivan and Zachary O’Keeffe discuss the reasons behind this trend. They argue that aggressive policing over minor offenses can cause social discontent as well as “disrupt communal life, which can drain social control of group-level violence” (Sullivan, O’Keeffe 1). Thus, when police laid back on their enforcement, the effect was a calming and subduing of the community that led to less incidents of criminal behavior (1).

From the ethical point of view, every human life is precious and deserving of protection, nurturing and health; one should not have to suffer from a personal trait, physical or not, that they simply cannot control. Advocates Phillip and Thenjiwe McHarris reason that the only solution to police violence is the redistribution of police funding to social services, such as health

care, employment, and education programs that can do a better job of keeping communities safe. The McHarris's write, "We need to reimagine public safety in ways that shrink and eventually abolish police and prisons while prioritizing education, housing, economic security, mental health and alternatives to conflict and violence" (McHarris 1). In 2017, the U.S. spent a record high of \$115 billion on police alone ("Criminal Justice Expenditures" 1). Realizing this overspending and the need for funding in other areas, Los Angeles mayor and supporter of the movement to defund the police Eric Garcetti helped redistribute \$150 million from the police budget to spend on other local programmes (Horton 1). This budget revamping, further, would improve taxpayers' approval of the government as their income would go towards a cause that may actually benefit them.

The wide exposure of the movement to defund the police has, naturally, sparked the creation of an equally supported opposition that defends the police force as necessary for maintaining safety, especially in less economically developed regions of the U.S. Proponents of this group reason that defunding this sector would not solve police brutality and high crime rates. Instead, all police departments across the country should be equalized to ensure that all workers are adequately paid, trained and educated. The variance in police funding across the country illustrates the disparities between individual police departments; budgets range from around \$100 million a year in Virginia Beach to \$5 billion a year in New York City (Sullivan and Baranauckas 1). President Biden, for instance, has shown his support of this reform proposition: "We don't have to defund the police departments. We have to make sure they meet minimum basic standards of decency" (Biden and Horton 1). This can be achieved by establishing national police training and safety frameworks to both diminish racist, sexist and classist behavior and

hold officers accountable if they perform their jobs in an aggressive or discriminatory manner (Johnson and Gagliano 1).

Second, it is argued that defunding the police would exacerbate the disparity between communities of different socio-economic statuses. Poorer communities and minority groups need the police for safety. They simply can't afford private security or self-protection tools that could substitute the police department, as is the case in other wealthier areas. Consider the following: a recent Gallup poll revealed that 81% of African Americans were against the prospect of diminishing police activity in their neighborhoods, a statistic that illustrates the importance of these officers in ensuring safety for minority groups (Blain 1). Former president of the U.S. Donald J. Trump has repeatedly voiced his disapproval of this movement: "We won't be dismantling our police. We won't be disbanding our police. We won't be ending our police force in a city. I guess you might have some cities that want to try, but it's going to be a very, very sad situation if they did, because people aren't going to be protected" (Haslett 1). According to the opposition, police are reducing the disparity between neighborhoods of different affluence and defunding will only widen the gap between the rich and the poor. Considering current class stratification in the U.S., this may not be the wisest course of action.

Discrimination on the basis of diversity, particularly concerning race, has been at the heart of police brutality and systemic injustice since the ratification of the Constitution in 1788. According to research by Frank Edwards, an assistant professor at Rutgers University, black men are about 2.5 times more likely to be killed by police than white men (Edwards et al. 1). Yet the existence of this glaring problem for over two centuries suggests that diversity, instead of systemic racism, may be the root of all evil. It's our differences that lead to disagreements,

controversies, crime and thus police brutality. Clearly, the racism implanted into this country is insuperable, so the only logical solution is the complete elimination of race.

A number of techniques could be employed to achieve a homogenous society; that is, one where physical diversity between individuals is minimized. Regarding physical traits, our plastic surgery industry has undergone unprecedented advancement in recent years and could greatly facilitate the transformation of the citizens of the U.S. Lifts, pins, reshapings, replacements and implants could all be applied to equalize the bodily structures of all individuals (“Cosmetic Procedures” 1). Of course, we live in a democracy, so the desired archetype must be voted on by the people themselves. After all, it will be them who will adopt it. Details of this archetype must be decided precisely and be abided by without fail. I suggest agreeing on traits such as desired eye shape, hair color, height, nose shape and the like to make the transformation process easiest and most straight-forward for our diligent plastic surgeons.

Even with such extensive planning, I anticipate the inability to adequately transform some unfortunate citizens due to their significant deviations from the chosen archetype. Therefore, they can simply be exported to neighboring nations, such as Canada or Mexico, to achieve the goal of a homogenous U.S.

The solution proposed has a myriad of potential benefits. First, the controversy over the defunding of the police would be eliminated as police brutality would be almost completely resolved. It is known that many instances of police killings or mistreatments occur as a result of racist or xenophobic intentions and a monotone society would prevent such tragedies. Further, interactions between citizens would be less hostile and divisive, creating safer communities. As such, less police would be needed and the reduction in police budget could be used to fund the

physical transformation of the population. Finally, a sense of unity would manifest itself in the U.S., allowing the country to work together and flourish socially, economically and politically.

In the wake of the killings of several African Americans by the police, the push to defund this department has gained unprecedented traction yet, at the same time, has been met with fierce opposition. On the one hand, supporters of the movement argue it could potentially lead to less crime while allowing for increased funding for more important social services. The opposition, in contrast, deems the police force as a necessary protector of the law that should be equalized in training and funding across the nation.

Numerous conflicts have sprung up over the course of history due to the problem of diversity, including the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement. It is prudent to realize that the elimination of this societal characteristic is essential to the survival of the nation through this current turmoil of police brutality and well into the future. A homogenous society may just be the single solution that the country has so desperately been searching for since its creation in the late 18th century.

## Works Cited

- “14th Amendment.” *History.com*, A&E Television Networks, 9 Nov. 2009,  
[www.history.com/topics/black-history/fourteenth-amendment#section\\_4](http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/fourteenth-amendment#section_4).
- Blain, Charles. “Reform, Not Defunding.” *City Journal*, Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, 28 Aug. 2020,  
[www.city-journal.org/defunding-police-would-harm-minority-communities](http://www.city-journal.org/defunding-police-would-harm-minority-communities).
- “Cosmetic Procedures.” *American Society of Plastic Surgeons*, American Society of Plastic Surgeons, [www.plasticsurgery.org/cosmetic-procedures](http://www.plasticsurgery.org/cosmetic-procedures).
- “Criminal Justice Expenditures: Police, Corrections, and Courts.” *Urban Institute*, Urban Institute, 3 Dec. 2020,  
[www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/state-and-local-finance-initiative/state-and-local-backgrounders/criminal-justice-police-corrections-courts-expenditures#:~:text=From%201977%20to%202017%2C%20state,2017%20inflation%2Dadjusted%20dollars](http://www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/state-and-local-finance-initiative/state-and-local-backgrounders/criminal-justice-police-corrections-courts-expenditures#:~:text=From%201977%20to%202017%2C%20state,2017%20inflation%2Dadjusted%20dollars)).
- Edwards, Frank, et al. “Risk of Being Killed by Police Use of Force in the United States by Age, Race–Ethnicity, and Sex.” *PNAS*, National Academy of Sciences, 20 Aug. 2019,  
[www.pnas.org/content/116/34/16793](http://www.pnas.org/content/116/34/16793).
- Haslett, Cheyenne. “Fact Check: Both Biden and Trump Say Their Rival Wants to Defund the Police.” *ABC News*, ABC News Network, 24 Aug. 2020,  
[abcnews.go.com/Politics/fact-check-biden-trump-rival-defund-police/story?id=72554629](https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/fact-check-biden-trump-rival-defund-police/story?id=72554629)

- Horton, Jake. "US 2020 Election: Does Joe Biden Support Defunding the Police?" *BBC News*, BBC, 7 Sept. 2020, [www.bbc.com/news/election-us-2020-53997196](http://www.bbc.com/news/election-us-2020-53997196).
- Johnson, Jason C, and James A Gagliano. "Defunding the Police Isn't the Answer." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 9 June 2020, [edition.cnn.com/2020/06/09/opinions/defunding-police-is-not-the-answer-johnson-gagliano/index.html](http://edition.cnn.com/2020/06/09/opinions/defunding-police-is-not-the-answer-johnson-gagliano/index.html).
- Levin, Sam. "What Does 'Defund the Police' Mean? The Rallying Cry Sweeping the US – Explained." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 6 June 2020, [www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jun/05/defunding-the-police-us-what-does-it-mean](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jun/05/defunding-the-police-us-what-does-it-mean).
- McHarris, Philip V, and Thenjiwe McHarris. "No More Money for the Police." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 30 May 2020, [www.nytimes.com/2020/05/30/opinion/george-floyd-police-funding.html?referringSource=articleShare](http://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/30/opinion/george-floyd-police-funding.html?referringSource=articleShare).
- Ray, Rashawn. "What Does 'Defund the Police' Mean and Does It Have Merit?" *Brookings*, Brookings, 19 June 2020, [www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2020/06/19/what-does-defund-the-police-mean-and-does-it-have-merit/](http://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2020/06/19/what-does-defund-the-police-mean-and-does-it-have-merit/).
- Sullivan, Christopher M, and Zachary P O’Keeffe. "Evidence That Curtailing Proactive Policing Can Reduce Major Crime." *Nature News*, Nature Publishing Group, 25 Sept. 2017, [www.nature.com/articles/s41562-017-0211-5](http://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-017-0211-5).



Sullivan, Carl, and Carla Baranauckas. "Here's How Much Money Goes to Police Departments in Largest Cities across the U.S." *USA Today*, Gannett Satellite Information Network, 26 June 2020,  
[eu.usatoday.com/story/money/2020/06/26/how-much-money-goes-to-police-departments-in-americas-largest-cities/112004904/](https://eu.usatoday.com/story/money/2020/06/26/how-much-money-goes-to-police-departments-in-americas-largest-cities/112004904/).