

THE WHY OF “DEFUND THE POLICE” [UPDATE]

[Update at the bottom of this post. /~Rayne]

Apart from the purely economic rationale that a function which has so repeatedly failed should not continue to be funded, there are ample reasons why policing as we know it in this country needs to be deconstructed and replaced – in shorthand, defund the police.

Last night on HBO, John Oliver did an amazing job of discussing the problems with policing in America. It's so good I can't add anything. It's a primer from which we should start.

Yet Oliver's work was tremendous not just because it examined the history of this country's failure to reform policing, but because the end of his program gave a black voice a platform long overdue (31:56).

I want to reverse what he did by insisting you listen to author Kimberley Jones first, her entire comment and not just the excerpt Oliver shared. This is a powerful statement you should not miss:

And then watch John Oliver's program last night. In this order you can see that everything about policing in America has been constructed on lies.

You'll hear and read puzzlement about calls to defund the police.

What does it mean? asked because their privilege has never forced them to look carefully at how fucked up policing is in the U.S. (note carefully the person and context surrounding them when they ask).

What do they want instead? as if “they” are a separate group, disclosing the bias at the root of the problem.

Why can't we just fix it? again, privilege blinds those who ask to how fatally flawed policing has been from the start. Some who have internalized this country's systemic oppression will also ask this same question.

The wealth of this country was built on economic theft, and American policing has been constructed to preserve this massive looting of hundreds of years of black lives.

What Kimberley Jones doesn't point out is that the looting didn't stop with black lives. The ground Americans stand on was stolen from yet more brown people who were eradicated, and then farmed and developed by stolen people under whips and chains and at gun point. The theft continues apace under a legal system which ensures the gap of wealth remains uncrossable, that power likewise remains solely in the hands of those with wealth.

There is no fixing a police system designed to protect capital created from ongoing crime.

Defund the police, by which it means see with clear eyes the original sin of placing preservation of property rights over human rights, the original sin of treating some humans as less worthy than others.

Defund the police, by which it means to re-prioritize our spending with those same clear, open eyes with an aim to realize reasonable distributive justice, developing and preserving human lives.

UPDATE – 09-JUN-2020 11:15 AM ET –

Because there's a lot of complaining about the unofficial slogan, "Defund the Police," I think these couple of tweets are worth consideration.

“Defund the police? Impossible!” they cried as they defunded education, healthcare, social security, welfare,

planned parenthood, public transit..

– Andrew *is tired of this* Nguyen
(@batwingdings) June 7, 2020

A criminologist told me if you want to
imagine a world with no police presence,
just know that we already have that.
It's called the suburbs.

– Touré (@Toure) June 8, 2020

Quit complaining. Focus: we need to change how
we ensure public safety. What are you doing
about it?

Start attending your local
county/city/town/village council meetings.
Research your local law enforcement entity's
performance. Are municipalities measuring
complaints against law enforcement along with
use of force? What has your locality done to
ensure there is adequate access to mental health
care, addiction, housing, and domestic crisis
intervention, all of which affect the number of
calls to police?

You can also do other research right now before
you attend a local meeting.

Citizens Police Data Project –

<https://www.CPDP.co>

CPDP takes records of police interactions
with the public – records that would
otherwise be buried in internal databases –
and opens them up to make the data useful
to the public, creating a permanent record
for every CPD police officer. Examine this
as a model for tracking your local law
enforcement's performance.

Mapping Police Violence –

<https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/nationaltrends>

A research collaborative collecting

comprehensive data on police killings nationwide to quantify the impact of police violence in communities. Check your state against others for trends in death by cops.

Police Use of Force Project –

<http://useofforceproject.org/>

This Campaign ZERO project investigates the ways in which police use of force policies help to enable police violence in our communities. Read their report examining 100 communities.

Police Union Contract Project –

<https://www.checkthepolice.org/>

This Campaign ZERO project reviewed police union contracts and police bill of rights legislation to examine how they make it more difficult to hold police accountable. Read their summary report of 81 cities in 15 states.

The Open Policing Project –

<https://openpolicing.stanford.edu/>

This project at Stanford University aims to help researchers, journalists, and policymakers investigate and improve interactions between police and the public by collecting and analysing data from police traffic stops across the country. Read their findings.

Policing Project –

<https://www.policingproject.org/>

This NYU School of Law project works to ensure accountability and democratic participation on the front end, before police violence requires ineffective back-end accountability. Read their work to date.

National Police Accountability Project –

<https://www.nlg-npap.org/>

A National Lawyers Guild project dedicated to holding law enforcement accountable for

misconduct. If you're a lawyer, check for one of their online webinars.

This is NOT an open thread. Please stick to this topic in this thread.