



NAPD STATEMENT

April 21, 2021 — This week, the trial of Derek Chauvin ended with a conviction. During the trial, the violence against Black and Brown people by the police did not stop or slow. Since the first witness in the trial took the stand, more than 32 people of color, including Daunte Wright, Adam Toledo, and Ma’Khia Bryant have been killed by the police. Countless more have been subjected to harassment, abuse, and violence and the hands of those who are supposed to protect and serve.

As public defenders, we bear witness to this injustice every day. We see the physical harm on our clients’ bodies, the emotional trauma in their lives, and the intergenerational impact of these realities. While the cries for accountability are understandable, we know that police violence against BIPOC people will not stop because Derek Chauvin was convicted. The criminal legal system has never been, and will never be, the answer to deep-seeded social problems. Nor will the violence end with more body cameras and anti-bias training. We have tried those approaches and yet the problem continues unabated. If we are serious about addressing police violence, then the only answer is to radically reduce contact between the police and BIPOC people, create new systems for addressing social issues, and invest in impacted communities.

To reduce the contact between the police and BIPOC communities, jurisdictions across the country should follow the lead of places like Oakland, California and throughout the state of Michigan, jurisdictions which are transitioning to shift traffic enforcement to civil agencies. Jurisdictions should also ensure that their system for addressing failures to appear in court do not result in unnecessary contact with the police. Counties should also replicate Oregon’s CAHOOTS program and support non-police responses to people experiencing a drug or mental health crisis. Finally, the savings from drastically smaller police forces must be reinvesting in low-income communities of color.

How many more headlines do we have to read, how many more videos do we have to see, how many more times do we have to take to the streets before those in positions of power are willing to do what is necessary to end this pandemic of police violence? Enough is enough. The time to act is now.

Submitted by the NAPD Executive Committee:

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