

DEFUND DISARM DISBAN

Abolish the racist police



Revolt against racist police

Why we say abolish

by John Bell

In Buffalo, New York, a militarized SWAT team assaulted and injured an elderly man. Police claimed he fell on his own. Only when video surfaced on the internet, showing two cops pushing the peaceful individual down, were the cops suspended and charged with assault. They have entered a plea of “not guilty”.

Two bad apples? When they were disciplined all 57 of their colleagues quit the SWAT team—but not, unfortunately, the police force. That’s a whole rotten barrel.

In Raleigh, North Carolina, army vet Tim Lemuel, owner of an LGBT+ bar called Ruby Deluxe set up a first aid station in his parking lot. He provided water for protesters to rinse tear gas out of their eyes. After several hours he and his helpers were attacked by riot police firing gas and rubber bullets, even though he was on his own property.

A police spokesperson said the attack was justified “for riot-related crime control”.

In San Jose, California, a Black community activist named Derrick Sanderlin saw police firing rubber bullets and flash bang grenades at peaceful marchers, Sanderlin tried to approach the police to deescalate the situation, walking slowly with his hands raised.

He was shot point blank with a rubber bullet and seriously injured.

For three years Sanderlin had been conducting sensitivity training, anti-racism and procedural justice to police recruits. So much for sensitivity.

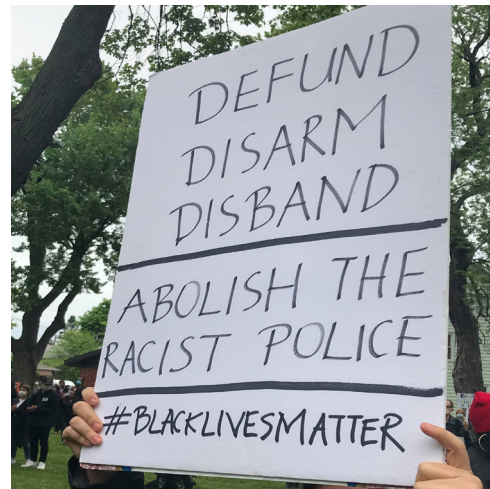
I could fill pages with anecdotes and incidents of how police, far from their stated mandate “to serve and protect”, are provoking peaceful protests with vicious, militarized violence.

They are egged on by the unhinged rants of Donald Trump, who is determined to meet legal and justified protests and marches with calls for

police and the military to “dominate the streets”.

The police are using vicious brutality to quell protests against police brutality and the whole world is witness thanks to citizens armed with cell phone cameras.

White people ask, what kind of shit did they get away with before cell phones. Black people, Indigenous people, people of colour know the answer.



It is in this context that a call is being raised to defund the police. A demand that would have been considered absurdly utopian only months ago is being seriously debated.

A couple of points need to be made here.

First, racism and police violence are not problems unique to the USA. In the last week three Canadians have died when police were called to look after their welfare. Two were Black, one was Indigenous.

In Toronto Regis Korchinski-Paquet fell, or was pushed from her high rise balcony when police were called by the woman’s mother, concerned about her emotional state. The incident is being investigated by the police in-house Special Investigation Unit. Her family have

grave misgivings about the impartiality of cops investigating themselves—and the SIU track record gives them good reason—and are mobilizing community support to demand justice.

In London, a 26-year-old Black man fell or was pushed from his high rise balcony after his family called to say he was in distress. The incident is being investigated by the SIU.

In Edmundston, New Brunswick 26-year-old Chantel Moore was shot and killed by police. Police had been called to check on her safety because she was being stalked and harassed. She answered her door holding a knife and was shot five times.

Moore, originally from BC, is the fourth Indigenous person shot and killed by Canadian police in the last two months.

As far as police violence used against peaceful protests, readers should recall the 2010 Toronto G20 summit policing where tactics of kettling protesters, violating civil rights, illegal arrests and using police agents in disguise to provoke violence were all used. The results: the biggest mass arrest in Canadian history, followed by virtually no convictions and numerous law suits over police violence against protesters, observers and journalists.

The man in charge of this egregious violation of human rights was Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair. Today Blair is Justin Trudeau’s Minister of Public Safety.

When it comes to racist police violence, Canada is no exception.

Second general point: calls to defund the police come at a time when capitalism’s monstrous nature, prioritizing profits and a privileged few over the health and wellbeing of all, is being exposed by the COVID-19 crisis and the wretched response by governments of all stripes. The “economy” must revive, we are told, and if that requires human sacrifices, well so be it.

We are just “human capital stock”, in the words of one Trump economic advisor, raw materials for their machine. When they talk about “herd immunity”, remember that we are the herd. Note that the first workplaces forced to reopen despite danger to underpaid workers were slaughterhouses.

Police have become militarized forces. Every town is equipped with tanks, machine guns, tasers and a full array of gases and spays to use against us if we get out of line. A cop attending a peaceful protest is arrayed in full body armour and an arsenal of lethal and slightly less than lethal weapons. Meanwhile medical personnel risking their lives in the pandemic face shortages and rationing of PPE.

Police budgets are always prioritized, not because they are effective in dealing with social violence and crime, but because the status quo requires a private army to protect private property.

The cities of Calgary and Edmonton together spend \$750 million per year on cops. Calgary wants to replace its two police helicopters? Hell, let’s get three. What Edmonton spends just on new cop cars each year comes to 70% of the city’s budget for housing hand homelessness.

Toronto police got \$1.026 billion in 2019. While all other programs and social services



were being slashed, the cops got a \$30 million raise. And now they want a 4% raise for 2020.

Pivot Legal Services is an organization that tries to do what Canadian governments refuse to do: track and analyze police violence. “Police authorities in Canada have the capacity to collect and release this critical data to the public on an ongoing basis, but they choose not to.”

Their numbers show as police budgets increase, so do deaths resulting from police violence. When cops get new, lethal toys they look for reasons to use them.

Out of 460 killings over 18 years, only three have resulted in criminal charges against cops, all second-degree murder. While

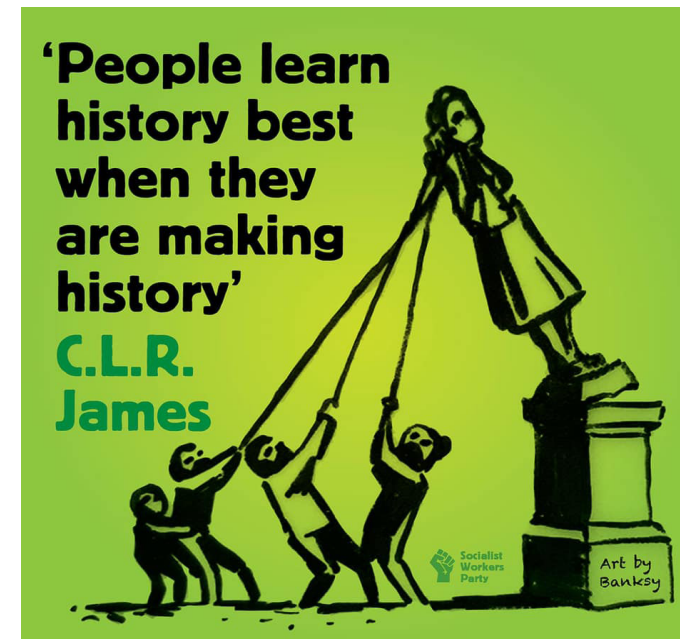
the majority of victims are white, the numbers of Indigenous and Black people killed by police are disproportionate to their percentage of the population. Indigenous people make up 4.8% of the population but account for 15% of deaths at the hands of police. Black people account for just 3.4% of the population but 9% of cop killings.

Study after study has shown that increasing funds and availability of social services and community resources reduce violence. Good jobs and secure housing mean less crime. Yet every year the budgets for those things are cut and squeezed so the cops can get their raise.

The reason is not public safety or crime solving, those markers actually get worse as police budgets climb. So the reason the cops get a blank

cheque every year lies elsewhere. The multiple crises tearing at the fabric of capitalism in 2020—COVID-19, economic collapse and rebellion of the most oppressed and exploited who are expected to take the brunt of the punishment—reveal the true nature of the police.

Police are, as Vladimir Lenin described them, “special bodies of armed men” at the service of the State, and the State apparatus serves the capitalist class. Violence is not a police failure, it is a revelation of their essential purpose. Racism is not failure of police, it is a true reflection of capitalism’s need to divide and conquer us.



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