

FANTASY WORLD PRESENTS...

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO DEFUND THE POLICE?

Significantly reducing police and prison budgets.

For years, community groups have advocated for defunding law enforcement - taking money away from police and prisons - and reinvesting those funds in services. The basic principle is that government budgets and "public safety" spending should prioritize housing, employment, community health, education and other vital programs, instead of police officers. Advocates argue that defunding is the best way forward since attempts to reform police practices over the last five years have failed, as evidenced by the murder of George Floyd. Groups have a range of demands, with some seeking modest reductions and others viewing full defunding as a step toward abolishing contemporary police services.

Re-investing funds into community-based services.

America's policing budget has almost tripled since 1977 to \$115 billion annually. That steady increase comes as crime has been consistently declining. In most cities, spending on police is significantly greater than spending on services and other departments. By defunding the police department, resources can be allocated to fund other non-police institutions such as community-based drug and mental health treatment, education, and other social institutions that can make communities safer while improving life outcomes for all. The goal is finding non-police solutions for matters that do not require law enforcement intervention.

Engaging with the community and redefining community safety.

An increased police presence does not equate to increased safety. Ask the communities that are most affected by excessive law enforcement and violence to determine what neighborhood security means on their own terms and change community budgets appropriately. Budgets are often formulated by agencies that are disconnected from the communities where services are most needed and budgeting processes are often too complex and intimidating for most people to meaningfully engage in. Demand that public officials collaborate with their communities in regards to how budgets are planned and enacted. More participatory budgeting would allow community members to talk about relative priorities of different projects and participate in a closer-to-the-street level.

Monitoring and fighting the rise of private police forces.

With the income gap growing across the US, some public institutions, corporations and wealthy individuals have sought out protection from private police forces. These security forces operate outside of governmental regulation and require less training than public police forces. The number of private security guards - nearly 1.1 million - dwarfs the 640,000 public police officers, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Many of these private officers are former police officers but have either retired or have been removed from the force. With the defunding and eventual abolition of the public police, we must be vigilant in monitoring the growth of private forces.

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