

Philosophical Forum on Racial Justice:
Re-imagining Public Safety,
So That Black Lives Matter

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Preliminaries

- I do not speak for or represent BLM or POC communities
- I invite you to think about what public safety in 21st century should look like
- Trigger warning: I will be talking about violence
- Discussions of racism can trigger strong emotions
 - Please notice how you feel, and think about why you feel this way

Plan

- Black Lives Matter Movement as response to police brutality
- Death statistics of people killed by police
- Defund the police
- Reform the police
- Abolish the police
- Re-imagining public safety

Black Lives Matter!



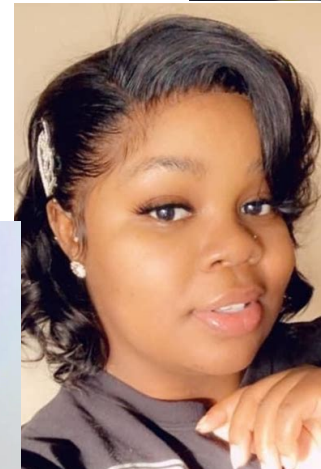
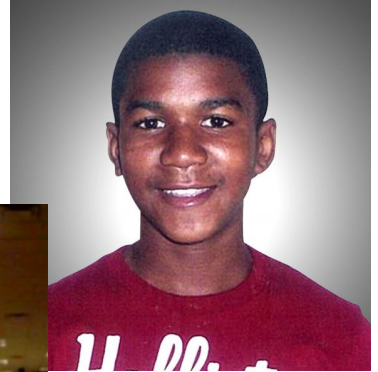
Patrisse Cullors

Alicia Garza

Opal Tometi

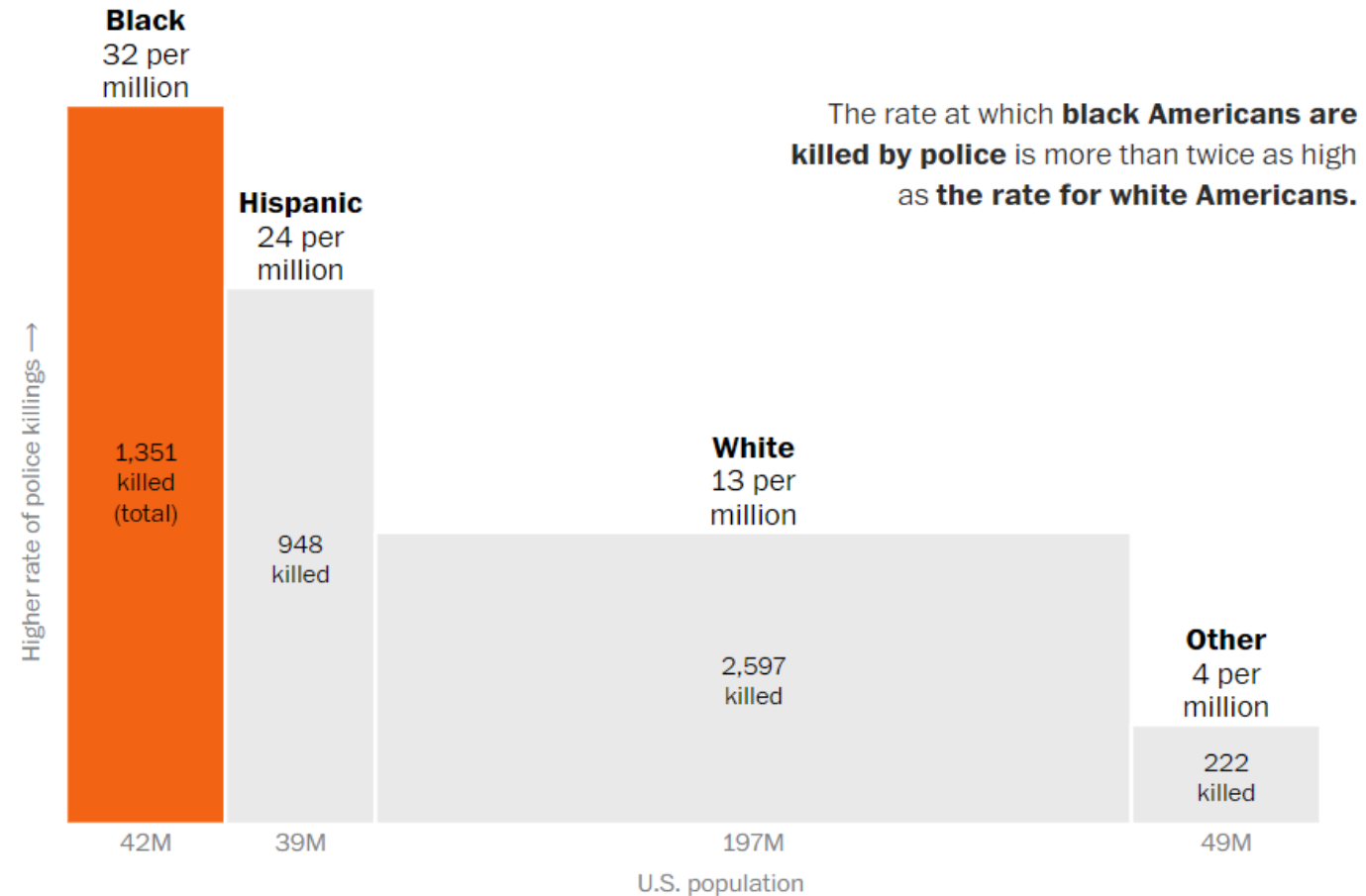
#BlackLivesMatter: A response to police brutality and racially motivated violence

- 2013: the acquittal of a man who murdered Trayvon Martin (17), Sanford, FL
- 2014: Michael Brown (18), Ferguson, MO; Eric Garner (44), NYC...
- 2020: Breonna Taylor (26), Louisville, KN; George Floyd (46), Minneapolis, MN...
- 10/26/20 Walter Wallace Jr. (27) Philadelphia, PA



Police Brutality and POC Communities

- Black Americans are 13% of the U.S. population.
- Hispanic Americans (16.7%) are also killed by police at a disproportionate rate.



Why? Racism as Explanation

- Systemic Racism – embedded in the structure of society
 - Lack of access to adequate housing, lending, education, health, power
 - School-to-prison pipeline, 3 strikes, Zero tolerance, Stop-and-frisk...
- Overt Racism – explicit racist attitudes
 - Slave patrols (1704), KKK and other militia groups “aiding police”
- Implicit Bias – pre-reflective attribution of negative qualities to member of racialized groups
 - Internalized racial stereotypes (by everyone)
 - Racial profiling
- Feedback loop

BLM: Defund the Police

- Redirect large proportion of police budgets to other community services
 - public health, education, mental health, job opportunities, etc.
- De-task police from dealing with mental health, homelessness, drug use/overdose, traffic
 - divest from lethal force in dealing with crime
 - demilitarize the police (SWAT, tanks, etc.)
- As a step towards abolishing



Reform the Police?

- Policing does reduce violent crimes ([Klick & Tabarrok, 2005](#))
- But police brutality ↑, 911 calls ↓ ([Desmond, Papachristos, & Kirk, 2016](#))
- [Task Force on 21st Century Policing Report](#)
 - 59 recommendations: avoid violence, profiling, discrimination; prioritize deescalation and nonviolent intervention
- **Problem:**
 - After banning chokeholds, shooting at moving vehicles, mandating body cameras, etc., no real change in police behavior
 - Little repercussions for police violations

Abolish the Police

- As long-term goal of defunding the police
- The police institution is rooted in colonialism & slavery, cannot be reformed
- Police is not a solution for crime
 - Providing for basic human needs is
 - Non-carceral interventions for violations
 - Crime as a public health problem



Angela Davis
Are Prisons Obsolete?
2003

Does it work?

- Make Violence A Health Issue Movement
- Public health anti-violence project
 - developed by epidemiologist, Gary Slutkin
 - CeaseFire in Chicago (2000) – shootings ↓67%
 - Treat spread of violence in communities by using strategies of disease control:
 - Detect & interrupt conflicts, identify & treat the highest risk individuals, change social attitudes
 - Trained volunteers from community



Re-imagining Public Safety

- Important moment in history - NOW
- How can we *all* feel safe in America?
- Recognize and respect the value of Black lives
- End carceral state: police, prisons, courts
 - Decriminalize behavior
 - De-task police
- Address roots of crime
 - Trust over force: invest in communities

Some Useful Sources

- Angela Davis *Are Prisons Obsolete?*
- Alex Vitale *The End of Policing*
- Ibram Kendi *How to Be an Anti-racist*
- Alicia Garza *The Purpose of Power*
- Patrisse Cullors *When They Call You a Terrorist*
- CDC Public Health Approach to Violence Prevention
- *Showing Up for Racial Justice*, [“Community Safety for All: Congregational Action Toolkit To Stop Relying on Police,”](#) 2020