

Date: 2020.07.17

To: CT Legislative Judiciary Committee

We are

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Police reform is needed to begin a process to end illegal violence done to people of color by the police. But police reform alone will not end the government-created violence in our communities. Police-initiated violence reflects a society historically dominated by white supremacy and a society increasingly militarized, a country that spends trillions of dollars for the slaughter of war and continually initiates military aggression on nations populated largely by people of color. We urge you to take steps to limit unacceptable police violence, but also to expand your purview to the broader questions.

Police reforms are being considered around the United States at this time because so many of us have seen numerous videos and heard and read of credible stories of illegal and immoral police summary executions of African American residents. Armed police are acting beyond their authority as prosecutor, judge, jury and executioner also targeting Native Americans, Latinx Americans and poor and minority communities. And we who are not African American are being educated, expressing our moral outrage and joining our African American brothers and sisters in protesting publicly throughout the rainbow communities of this country and abroad, demanding justice, demanding fundamental change.

It is blind, however, to ignore that these murders rage within the context of widespread white supremacy in the territory of the United States since 1619 and in the Americas since 1492. White supremacy provides rationale for super exploitation and enormous profits at the expense of the targeted groups.

It is blind, also, to ignore the fact that policing in the United States has become militarized, as police departments obtain military equipment from the Department of Defense and increasingly consider themselves not as part of the community where they work but as an occupying army. Police are receiving training abroad from occupying armies such as that of Israel.

And it is deaf to ignore the words of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., who spoke in 1967, a year before his assassination, of the triple evils of racism, militarism and poverty. King made the connection between the slaughter of people in Vietnam by the U.S. military and its mercenary forces and the violence expressed in the ghettos of this country's cities:

As I have walked among the desperate, rejected, and angry young men, I have told them that Molotov cocktails and rifles would not solve their problems. I have tried to offer them my deepest compassion while maintaining my conviction that social change comes most meaningfully through non-violent action; for they ask and write me, "So what about Vietnam?" They ask if our nation wasn't using massive doses of violence to solve its problems to bring about the changes it wanted. Their questions hit home, and I knew that I could

never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without first having spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today: my own government.

The police are far more responsible for violence than are the angry young men to whom King refers. The war on Vietnam ended to be replaced by wars on Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Grenada, Panama, Iraq, Serbia, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, Libya, Syria, Yemen - among many others. You will notice that these countries are largely populated by people with pigmented skin. White supremacy is not restricted to our national borders.

It is blind and deaf to ignore that the United States of America spends in the neighborhood of one trillion dollars every year on weapons and war, the industrialized killing and slaughter of people around the world. It is blind and deaf not to realize that 60% or more of the federal government's discretionary budget is for killing and oppression. It is blind and deaf to imagine that a system that promotes killing abroad will encourage killing at home. As Dr. King said in the same speech:

A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.

The United States government has chosen spiritual death over moral respect. That choice permeates our whole society.

The police do not act outside the boundaries of white supremacy, but are the "legal" enforcement arm of white supremacy. Formal police departments were initially created and armed to ensure the capture and discipline of enslaved people in this country. The Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was enacted to ensure that enslaved humans did not escape their servitude. Police are employed by demands of corporate leaders to break strikes by workers. Police are employed to break up peaceful protests. Police are used to remove people from their housing. Police protect corporations that destroy our environment.

Illegal and legalized police violence against the targeted groups partners with judicial violence. It partners with the violence of the incarceration system, banking system, real estate system, education system, low-wage no benefit jobs system, system of career possibilities and advancement, tourist system, transportation system, entertainment system - all in all the total social-economic system of capitalism in the United States. White supremacy reigns to one degree or another in all of these.

The famous Broadway play, "South Pacific," includes a song: "You Have to Be Taught to Hate." Babies are not born as white supremacists, born hating. They get taught while growing up by cues throughout their environment. Encouraging hate is how the wealthy power structure of our country retains power. Encouraging hate is the means by which the ruling elites use skin color, national origin, religion, political choice, gender identity, to divide people, whose interests are otherwise significantly overlapping, from working together to seek justice. Banking on hate, the United States of America became "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today."

Police reform must be undertaken, but like desegregation of our public schools, it is likely to fail unless all other components of white supremacy are jointly attacked head on. We support efforts by the Connecticut State Legislature to prevent police violence. We urge the Legislature to take steps beyond disciplining and reforming the police to address the other aspects of white supremacy in this state.

Sincerely,

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