

AN INTRODUCTION TO POLICE WORK

**abcs** of **ACAB**

**No Such Press** · Salt Lake City · 2024

Free & non-commercial · 29 entries

Read online at [abcsofacab.org](http://abcsofacab.org)

# The alphabet

<b>A</b> Abolition	<b>B</b> Broken windows	<b>B</b> Bodycam
<b>C</b> Crime rates	<b>D</b> Deadly shootings	<b>E</b> Evictions
<b>F</b> Fraternal order of police	<b>G</b> Gangs	<b>H</b> Homan square
<b>H</b> Handcuffs	<b>I</b> Insular police	<b>I</b> Ice
<b>J</b> Jail	<b>K</b> K9	<b>L</b> Lying
<b>M</b> Militarization	<b>N</b> N.h.i.	<b>O</b> Oversight
<b>P</b> Predpol	<b>Q</b> Quotas	<b>R</b> Rough ride
<b>S</b> Stonewall	<b>T</b> Taser	<b>U</b> Unarmed
<b>V</b> Violence worker	<b>W</b> Warren vs. the district of columbia	<b>X</b> Xenophobia
<b>Y</b> Yassin mohamed	<b>Z</b> Zoo animals	



**“These things happen, in all our Harlems, every single day.” — James Baldwin, Report from Occupied Territory**



A IS FOR

## Abolition

---

**Police work serves the state in two overlapping ways: enforcing the state monopoly on violence, and protecting the controlled movement of capital. This is why they are sometimes called violence workers; as workers of the state, violence is their core function.**

---

In the south they began as white supremacist "slave catchers," organized to protect southern capital in the form of enslaved Black people. In the north they were xenophobic strike-breakers, organized to protect northern capital from the demands of international labor. Today there are nearly 790,000 state and local officers alone—and more than 920,000 when federal agencies are included.<sup>66</sup> If they were an army, they would be among the largest in the world.

States and localities now spend nearly \$179 billion a year on police,<sup>72</sup> yet meta-analyses find hiring more officers does not meaningfully reduce crime.<sup>71</sup> After 150 years of reform—more money, more weapons, more legal protections—the killing continues. We must evaluate our relationship with violence work in the 21st century, especially as housing, food, and healthcare se-

Independent counts find U.S. police kill about one of us every seven hours.<sup>65</sup>

We have a right to ask what the social role of violence work is today. Police apologists advocate for something called "police reform," but police reform is an oxymoron. The history of reform is the history of the police—150 years of the police getting more money, more guns, and more legal protections. The reforms of the 1940s did not prevent the beating of Marquette Frye, the reforms of the 1960s did not prevent the beating of Rodney King, the reforms of the 00s did not prevent the murder of George Floyd.

curity remain unmet for millions.  
The police protect capital from us.  
And in protecting capital they produce violence.

***Reform is impossible. Abolish the police.***



B IS FOR

## Broken windows

---

**"Broken windows theory" is a late 20th century theory popularized by superstar police commissioner William Bratton and "America's mayor," Rudy Giuliani. According to the theory allowing minor disorder to exist—defined as petty property damage—leads to increasingly violent crime, necessitating a zero-tolerance approach of "community policing" that consists, most famously, of illegal stop-and-frisk operations (over 5 million in NYC alone).<sup>1</sup>**


---

It is a "law and order" ideology that believes the only thing standing between society and its collapse is continuous and aggressive police violence, so far in advance of actual crime it veers on predictive policing. Bratton, the primary architect, shopped his brainchild around the country as the police chief of Boston, Los Angeles, and New York, heading the country's largest departments. Decades later, "broken windows" is still lauded as an example of New York City's millennial turnaround.

It has also been thoroughly debunked.<sup>2</sup>

Can policing disorder reduce crime? Meta-analyses suggest not. There is no evidence that widespread civil rights violations in the name of protecting private property actually leads to elevated community well-being. The very idea of disorder containing an intrinsic link to crime—linking lack of order with criminality—exists outside of scientific consensus. It is a principle of escalation in which even "minor violations of rules and regulations" necessitate armed intervention.<sup>3</sup> The NYPD's own records show what zero tolerance actually yields: of the nearly 5 million stops recorded between 2003 and 2013, 88% were of people who had done nothing unlawful, and frisks turned up a weapon just

2% of the time.<sup>1</sup> The only objective outcomes of decades of "broken windows" are millions of civil rights violations and soaring police budgets.



***William Bratton currently serves as the chairman of the Homeland Security Advisory Council.***



B IS FOR

Bodycam

---

**After Ferguson, body-worn cameras were sold to the public as a reform—a technological fix that would restrain police violence by recording it. Congress and the Obama administration pledged tens of millions of dollars to put cameras on officers nationwide. The premise was simple: if police know they are being watched, they will behave.**

---

The evidence does not support the premise. A Campbell systematic review of body-worn camera research found insufficient evidence that cameras reduce officer use of force—a pooled estimate of  $-6.8\%$ , with a confidence interval ranging from  $-19.5\%$  to  $+7.9\%$ , meaning the true effect could be a substantial increase.<sup>91</sup> Cameras did not consistently change arrest rates, self-initiated stops, or assaults on officers either.<sup>91</sup>

Even when footage exists, it is not neutral. Stanford researchers analyzing Oakland Police Department body-camera audio found officers spoke with consistently less respect to Black community members than to white community members, and that the disparity held after controlling for arrest rates, crime rates, and officer and neighborhood demographics.<sup>64</sup> The camera records the

What cameras do change is harder to interpret. The same review found complaints against officers fell about  $17\%$ —but researchers could not determine whether that reflected better behavior, worse behavior caught on tape, or simply a change in who bothers to file a complaint when footage exists.<sup>91</sup> Officers themselves report that they do not expect cameras to change how they work.<sup>91</sup>

The problem is discretion. When officers choose when to turn cameras on and off, use of force can actually rise. A multi-site randomized trial found that in departments where officers controlled activation, use of force was  $71\%$  higher than in control conditions; only when activation was mandatory and supervised did force fall—by  $37\%$ .<sup>92</sup> In Los Angeles, an inspector general review of 53 serious force cases found  $22\%$  of in-

violence. It does not prevent it—and it documents racial hierarchy in real time.

Body cameras are accountability theater: expensive equipment that produces footage departments control, officers can disable, and prosecutors selectively release. Salt Lake City body-camera video later showed officers firing more than 20 times at a fleeing man.<sup>59</sup> The camera did not stop the shooting. It preserved it for the news cycle. Transparency without power is surveillance.

Involved officers failed to activate body cameras promptly or at all; a quarter of recordings lacked the required pre-incident buffer because officers had powered their cameras off.<sup>95</sup> In Denver's pilot program, body cameras captured less than half of use-of-force incidents involving officers who were assigned and on duty.<sup>96</sup>



C IS FOR

## Crime rates

---

### **If police prevent crime, then why do communities with the lowest crime rates also have the fewest police? Meta-analyses of decades of research find that simply adding more officers has no statistically significant effect on crime.<sup>71</sup>**

---

Crime rates map police action against a community—the targets officers choose, the neighborhoods they saturate, the charges they file.

Crime rates are the first step in a data-driven feedback loop that determines where policing occurs, how aggressive it is, and how much we pay for it. Police create the crime rates, which in turn lead to more funding for more police to continue targeting criminalized communities.

As Correia and Wall put it in *Police: A Field Guide*, "Crime is a measure of social control rather than a description of deviance, and the crime rate measures the intensity of that control in a given place on a given population."

The NCVS finds barely half of violent victimizations are ever reported to police (48% in 2024)—<sup>70</sup> so most harm never reaches a detective's desk. Of what is reported, most is never cleared. States and localities spent nearly \$179 billion on police

Statistically speaking, "crime rates" is a misnomer. It should be called "policing rates," as that is what it actually maps. 94% of arrests for weed in NYC were Black and Latino men,<sup>4</sup> despite almost a quarter of white New Yorkers smoking (compared to an eighth of Black and Latino New Yorkers). In this case NYC crime rates do not report who is smoking weed, but who the police are targeting for smoking weed.

And as a function of police action rather than criminal action, crime rates can be illustrative of police in-action. Whatever police actually do, it is not "solve crimes;" in 2024 police cleared about 61% of murders, 44% of violent crimes, and 16% of property crimes nationwide—meaning 56% of reported violent crimes went unsolved.<sup>5</sup> Sacramento police spend less than 4% of their time responding to violent crime and less than .1% on homicides.<sup>6</sup> The majority of their time is spent on "unas-

in 2024 alone.<sup>72</sup> That is a lot of money for a system that neither hears about most violence nor resolves most of what it does hear.

signed duties"—lunch, paperwork, and, as the mayor of New York recently complained, playing on their phone.<sup>7</sup>



D IS FOR

## Deadly shootings

---

### **Police in the United States shoot more civilians in 24 hours than British police shoot in 12 months.**

---

The Washington Post logged more than 1,000 fatal police shootings in each of the last several years, reaching a decade high in 2024, before discontinuing its tracker on January 1, 2025.<sup>8</sup> Independent counts find U.S. police killed at least 1,314 people in 2025—about one every seven hours.<sup>65</sup> Between the time you go to sleep and the time you wake up, the police will have shot another citizen to death. The count also excludes taser assaults, rough rides, asphyxiation, and every other way people die in custody.

Following the police's example, the media calls these killings "officer-involved shootings," the ultimate form of passive voice. Far from objectively and efficiently communicating that an officer shot someone (active voice), "a suspect died early Tuesday morning in an officer-involved shooting"<sup>10</sup> almost makes it sound like the victim did the shooting.

Complicit District Attorneys ensure that over 98% of these shooters get

Federal pattern-or-practice investigations have found unconstitutional policing in department after department—in Ferguson, Baltimore, Chicago, Minneapolis, Memphis, Louisville, and Phoenix, among others.<sup>65</sup> The findings repeat: excessive force, racial bias, retaliation against witnesses, and a culture that protects its own.

For comparison, the UK data peaks at 6 a year, with some years seeing no deaths at all.<sup>9</sup> While apologists like to point out that the UK citizenry is not armed, Canadian citizens still have about .25 as many guns as US citizens, and only about .03 as many "officer-involved" fatal shootings (30 per year)—over 8 times as many shootings on a gun-owner-adjusted basis. And if it's true that deadly shootings are justified in an armed society, and an armed society is one in which any given citizen may be armed, then we are saying that police are justified in shooting any given citizen.

away with it. Researchers find fewer than 2% of on-duty fatal shootings result in murder or manslaughter charges; from 2005 through 2024, 204 officers were charged and only 64 convicted.<sup>11</sup>



E IS FOR

## Evictions

---

**Imagine that you, like nearly half of Americans (49% in a late-2025 national survey),<sup>12</sup> are struggling to make rent.**

---

Rather than help you, your community sends an armed sheriff to your doorstep to force you out at gunpoint. While you're arguing outside the state sends movers in to steal your possessions and lock them in a distant city warehouse at exorbitant daily rates. The judge doesn't like your attitude and adds punitive fees to your debt, which means you're on the streets and in debt where, if you linger too long in any one place without contributing to the controlled movement of capital, your local police will abduct you and put you in jail for a few nights, where, for the cost of a La Quinta suite, they will keep you in a steel cage and steal your labor.

Evictions, like foreclosures, exist as part of a pipeline that benefits the concentration of capital at firms like Wells Fargo at the direct expense of communities, which see reduced property values, diminished tax bases, crowded jails, separated families, and predatory loan business. And they could not be done without, when push comes to literal

Every year millions of people are forcibly displaced from their homes at the behest of big banks and private capital, which calls on the violence workers of the state to perform these displacements; landlords filed over one million eviction cases in 2024 in the jurisdictions the Eviction Lab tracks—roughly in line with pre-pandemic levels.<sup>13</sup> Generally speaking evictions are a negative utility proposition for a community, maximizing suffering and damaging local economies. The National Institutes of Health calls them a "public health concern."<sup>14</sup> The mechanisms involved are not designed to meet needs of people, but rather make it increasingly difficult to meet those needs themselves.

shove, the battering ram of the violence worker.



F IS FOR

## Fraternal order of police

---

**The Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) is the largest police interest in the country, a pseudo-union/super-PAC/lobby group representing over 346,000 police across 2,100 local lodges (about half of all police).**

---

FOP leadership frequently says things like "act like a thug, you'll get treated like a thug," or comparing Black people to "packs of wild animals." In 1991 they urged the public to put Rodney King's assault "in the proper perspective." They called the impeachment proceedings against President Trump a "violation of due process," the same president that told a crowd of cheering Academy graduates to "rough people up more."

They fought on behalf of Darren Wilson, the officer who shot a young Michael Brown in Ferguson, and they fought on behalf of Baltimore's rogue Gun Trace Task Force. They advocate for privatizing Social Security. They fought on behalf of Homan Square's Jon Burge, who was found guilty of torturing at least 118 people in Chicago.<sup>15</sup>

To be sure, true labor unions are required to provide legal defense for their members. But the FOP is Schrödinger's Union, either a true union or not depending on which FOP spokesman you're asking, and how the answer might best benefit the police at the time. Generally speaking, they are not. Founded as anti-union in 1915, its founders forbade strikes of any kind and rejected offers of allyship from actual labor unions.<sup>16</sup> And in the case of the Utah State Fraternal Order of Police, the answer is a hard no: "the UFOP is not a traditional labor union, we

are an organization of cops, from the top down."<sup>17</sup>



G IS FOR

## Gangs

---

**The Lynwood Vikings. The Jump Out Boys. The Regulators. The Posse. The Grim Reaper. The 3000 Boys. Rampart CRASH. SOS. Thirsty Bird. Nannery's Raiders. An American flag defaced by a "thin blue line."**

---

The police are both a gang writ large—an organized group of criminals linked by symbols that control territory with the threat and execution of violence—and comprised of individual gangs, like the ones identified above. And as a gang the police are unparalleled in both reach of control and scope of danger they pose to the public.

And L.A. isn't the only county with a gang problem. Chicago's Special Operations Section, charged by Mayor Daley with fighting "gangs, guns, and drugs," was also robbing citizens and selling murder-for-hire.<sup>19</sup> The Fraternal Order of Police has locked virtually all of Baltimore in a "stranglehold."<sup>20</sup> "The God Squad" shook down suburban New Jersey,<sup>21</sup> and in 2024 six white officers calling themselves "The Goon Squad" tortured two Black men nearly to death outside of Jackson, Mississippi.<sup>22</sup>

A commission found that by controlling sheriff department stations (Compton, East L.A., South L.A., Century, Lancaster and Palmdale), these so-called "deputy gangs" are able influence the assignments, schedule, and promotions of their members, and can reassign non-gang members to other stations.<sup>18</sup> With near-absolute legal impunity they can murder ("officer-involved shooting"), rob ("asset forfeiture"), and sexually assault ("cavity search").

The bill for this behavior goes to the public. Los Angeles County has paid roughly \$55 million in settlements since 1990 in cases involving deputies alleged to belong to these gangs—\$21 million of it in the last decade alone—and Loyola Law School researchers have identified at least 17 such gangs operating within the department.<sup>73</sup> A county-commissioned RAND study con-

firmed in 2021 that the gangs were still actively recruiting.<sup>74</sup>



H IS FOR

## Homan square

---

**Between 2004 and 2015 the city of Chicago disappeared and interrogated more than 7,000 Black and Latino men in a CIA-style "black site" at a West Side warehouse in Homan Square. A South Side police commander named Jon Burge—acquitted in the 80s of torture charges going back to the 70s—personally participated in or approved the torture of at least 118 people in order to force false confessions.**

---

The majority of arrestees (that the public knows of) were brought in from over 2.5 miles away—i.e., the entire city—and held anywhere from several hours to several days. Nearly 6,000 were Black, only 68 of which were allowed access to their attorneys. No contemporaneous public records of anyone's presence exists—no booking records, no means for attorneys to reach their clients. There are no official records whatsoever (including coroner's report) concerning the death of 44-year-old John Hubbard in an interview room.

Chicago and Cook County have paid roughly \$100 million in Burge-related settlements and verdicts. In 2015 the city passed the first municipal reparations ordinance for police violence in U.S. history, paying \$5.5 million to 57 surviving torture victims.<sup>75</sup>

And the result of those 7,000+ disappearances? 5,386 charges for drug possession, mostly marijuana and heroin.<sup>23</sup>

In 2015 Mayor Rahm Emanuel (currently serving as Ambassador to Japan) lied in defense of the torture, denying the reporting on Homan Square as "not true. We follow all the rules... Everything's done by the books."<sup>24</sup>

And while the initial reporting on Homan Square as a "CIA-style black site" is accurate, that does not mean Homan Square should be considered unique, neither an isolated nor an extreme example of city-wide violence "as routine as traffic lights."<sup>25</sup>



H IS FOR

## Handcuffs

---

**Handcuffs are the first tool of custody—the moment a police encounter becomes an arrest, and the moment a civilian loses the use of their hands. They are marketed as safety equipment: a way to restrain a dangerous person without shooting them. In practice, handcuffs are often the beginning of the killing, not an alternative to it.**

---

An Associated Press investigation documented 1,036 deaths from 2012 through 2021 after police used force that was not supposed to be lethal. At least 740 of those deaths involved prone restraint—holding someone face-down, often with body weight, frequently after handcuffs were already applied. In about half of those cases, officers failed to turn the person over promptly after cuffing, or did so only after they stopped responding.<sup>93,94</sup>

Handcuffs do not stop the violence—they enable the next stage of it. George Floyd was already cuffed when Derek Chauvin knelt on his neck for more than nine minutes; Floyd said "I can't breathe" at least 27 times before he died.<sup>85</sup> Freddie Gray was shackled at the wrists and ankles and thrown into a police van without a seatbelt; he died of a spinal injury after a "rough ride."<sup>82</sup>

The danger is not mysterious. Medical examiners and coroners cited prone restraint, positional asphyxia, or asphyxia due to restraint as a cause or contributing factor in dozens of cases AP identified—and training to avoid it has existed for decades.<sup>93</sup> In roughly 440 deaths, officers violated multiple safety guidelines at once.<sup>94</sup> The restraint position police use every day becomes lethal when combined with body weight, stress, drugs, obesity, or simply the panic of being pinned with your face in the pavement and your hands behind your back.

Federal data on arrest-related deaths routinely undercount what happens after cuffs go on. The Death in Custody Reporting Act requires states to report deaths during arrest and detention, but reporting is uneven and prone restraint is not tracked as its own category—deaths

Kathryn Johnston was handcuffed by Atlanta police as she lay dying from 39 gunshot wounds in a no-knock raid on the wrong house.<sup>58</sup>

are lumped under homicide, accident, or "natural causes" depending on who writes the report.<sup>96</sup> What we know from independent investigations is enough: the tool sold as a humane alternative to the gun is, very often, the last thing a person feels before they cannot breathe.



I IS FOR

## Insular police

---

**The London Metropolitan Police was modeled after England's experience occupying colonial Ireland. The US followed the same template, transferring systems developed in the occupation of the Philippines for use in the first state police in Pennsylvania (which was itself designed to use violence against striking miners that the local police were unwilling to do).**

---

In occupied Puerto Rico a marine named Frank Thacher organized the Insular Police to protect US sugar interests, a famously harsh crop to work. Concerned about the harsh working conditions of his countrymen, a Harvard Law graduate named Pedro Albizu Campos returned to Puerto Rico to advocate for self-determination via national independence, and, following involvement in an island-wide sugar strike (that more than tripled cane workers' daily wages), attracted the attention of the FBI.

Finally, on October 30, 1950, Albizu Campos led the Nationalist Party in revolution against the occupying US. Independent republics were declared, precincts burned down, and the Insular Police bombed two towns to ruins. Albizu Campos was arrested and allegedly tortured to

The US installed a new governor, Blanton Winship, and put Albizu Campos under 30 years of surveillance. Slaughter ensued.

In 1935 the Insular Police massacred a student rally (the Rio Peidra Massacre), Chief of Police E. Francis Riggs warning Albizu Campos that if he didn't stop, "there will be war to the death against all Puerto Ricans." Albizu Campos was arrested for conspiracy to overthrow the US government in 1936 and sentenced to 10 years in prison.

Then again on Palm Sunday, 1937, while marching in Albizu Campos' home city of Ponce to protest his arrest (as well as commemorate the abolition of slavery), 19 protestors were killed and 235 wounded when the Insular Police, unprovoked, opened fire with a machine gun. They shot fleeing protestors in the

death with experimental radiation poisoning in the infamous pits of La Princesa, in San Juan.<sup>26</sup>

Governor Winship went on to serve in World War II, where he developed the military tribunals responsible for prosecuting Nazis. Fluctuating between around 8,000 members and 17,000 members, the Puerto Rico Police Department is one of the largest in the US.

back and executed men in alleys, lied in court about who shot first despite photographic evidence, and faced no charges.

"Uncle Sam Watches as the Goddess of Liberty heralds the day of Freedom for Cuba, Porto Rico and the Philippines."  
(1898)



I IS FOR

**Ice**

---

**Immigration and Customs Enforcement is violence work at the border of citizenship. Like the police, ICE does not exist to keep anyone safe; it exists to enforce the state monopoly on movement and to protect the controlled flow of labor and capital across a line drawn on a map. The people it targets are overwhelmingly workers.**

---

ICE is a young agency. It was created in 2003 and folded into the newly formed Department of Homeland Security after September 11th—a reorganization that recast immigration as national security. Its Enforcement and Removal Operations arm has since carried out millions of deportations,<sup>50</sup> separating children from families in facilities where members of Congress have been denied entry.<sup>52</sup>

The cruelty is policy, not accident. The July 2025 budget reconciliation bill handed ICE \$45 billion for new detention capacity—larger than the entire federal prison system budget—plus \$29.9 billion more for enforcement and deportation operations.<sup>84</sup> Detention has surged past 56,000 people, the highest on record, including tent cities and converted warehouses; Florida's Everglades facility cycled 22,000

Detention is the business model. Taxpayers spend about \$133 per person per night in a traditional ICE facility; holding children in emergency tent cities in the desert costs about \$775 per child per night.<sup>54</sup> The beds are operated by private contractors who bill by the head—the same perverse incentive that drives mass incarceration everywhere. Intercept reporting documented hundreds of allegations of sexual abuse in ICE detention;<sup>51,55</sup> in Arizona, DHS opened investigations into abuse at migrant detention centers while senators were turned away at the door.<sup>53</sup>

Street-level enforcement has followed. In January 2026, ICE agent Jonathan Ross shot and killed Renee Good, a 37-year-old Minneapolis mother of three, during an immigration sweep—captured on bystander and agent phone footage.

people through at up to \$860 per detainee per day before it closed in June 2026.<sup>90</sup>

ICE is what the police look like when the "community" they answer to is the nation-state and the "disorder" they are sent to correct is a human being who crossed a line to work. Abolish ICE. Abolish the police.

DHS called it self-defense and labeled her a "domestic terrorist"; county prosecutors opened an independent investigation.<sup>89</sup> Children have died in custody. Adults have died in custody. The agency responds the way every police force does: passive voice, internal review, no charges.



J IS FOR

Jail

---

**Jailing people constitutes a significant aspect of violence work, and one of its most expensive. It costs Californians about \$290 a night to incarcerate someone. Most of that is labor cost, and that's after offloading most of the labor (cooking, laundry, cleaning, maintenance) to the incarcerated themselves—at compensation of 8-37 cents per hour.<sup>27</sup>**

---

The costs are steep. Every person in jail is someone who can't work or provide for a family. They're forced to spend what money they have access to on commissary junk food and JPay email "stamps," and then some of them are forced to pay jail itself; in 2013 Utah's Davis County collected almost \$370,000 from prisoners through its "pay-to-stay" policy, and waived another \$858,000 in exchange for prisoner labor (at the rate of \$10 per day, representing 85,800 hours of labor).<sup>28</sup>

Gregory Edwards was arrested for a PTSD-related episode in a Wal-Mart. He was taken in by 7 deputies, beaten, sprayed with a chemical agent, strapped into a restraint chair with a "spit hood" on, and left unconscious; he died within 24 hours. A Naperville, Illinois-native named Sandra Bland was arrested from her

It is no wonder, then, that incarceration itself is criminogenic: the more time people spend in jail, the more likely they are to offend again.<sup>29</sup> Yet at midyear 2024, 69% of people in jail had not been convicted—nor were awaiting sentence on a conviction—and the majority of charges are for non-violent, drug-related offenses.<sup>69</sup>

And that's if you survive the experience.

Many don't. There were 1,200 deaths in local jails in 2019 alone. Suicide has been the leading single cause of jail deaths every year since 2000, and of the more than 6,200 people who died by suicide in a jail cell between 2000 and 2019, more than three-quarters had never been convicted of the charge they were held on.<sup>76</sup>

car in Texas and found dead in a Waller County jail cell three days later. The state claims it was a suicide, but family maintains suspicions that she was killed.

***In either case, it was jail that killed her.***



K IS FOR

K9

---

**Though culturally connected to the Cuban Bloodhounds trained by slavers in the antebellum US to pursue escaping enslaved people, the police dog as we know it today is a 20th-century phenomenon, tested for the first time around 1900 in New York City and widely popularized during the Civil Rights movement, such as with the use of "Canine Corps" against Martin Luther King, Jr. in Birmingham.**

---

In addition to being psychologically traumatizing, dog attacks are nearly impossible to control, deeply painful, and often disfiguring. In the "use-of-force continuum" they're considered an "impact weapon," like a club, and, despite the fact that once the handler releases them it's almost impossible to stop a canine from killing a target should it choose to do so, courts have determined that intent of the handler is more important than what actually occurs—and therefore canines are not deadly weapons.

American police dogs send an estimated 3,661 people to emergency rooms every year, and medical studies find K9 bites are categorically worse than ordinary dog bites—multiple wounds, more operations, longer hospital stays.<sup>77</sup> The training works as designed. When Los

"Bite and hold" training teaches canines to attack the closest human being they can get hold of other than their handler, from women taking out the garbage in St. Paul to toddlers in cars in Nevada to fellow deputies in Georgia (in which case the dog gets shot, too). And it's not typically easy to convert a domesticated animal into an impact weapon; it takes prong collars, choke chains, and what's known as "testicular submission." Police have been caught on camera strangling and whipping dogs with their own leashes, and they routinely shoot their four-legged "partners" in the so-called line of duty.

K9 units are abuses of both animal and human rights. They are also effective police propaganda; a company called Hero Industries, proudly affiliated with the FOP, sells depart-

Angeles was forced to switch from "find and bite" to "bark and hold" in 1992, bites dropped from 639 in the preceding four years to 66 in the following four.<sup>78</sup>

mental-customized "Hero K9" dolls for departments to give to children. Meanwhile, 25-500 family dogs (estimates vary—no one really knows) are shot to death by police every day.



L IS FOR

## Lying

---

**The police are professional liars. They're trained in the art of "investigative lies" to say whatever it takes to make an arrest and extract a confession, with the full backing of the courts. Police would lose a majority of cases if they were not.**

---

They don't have to tell you if they're police. They don't have to follow up on any promises they might make, nor even admit later on that they ever made any. They can lie about having your fingerprints. They can steal your DNA. They can administer fake polygraph/chemical tests and lie about the results. They can lie about having witnesses, they can lie about recording you, and they can lie about having confessions. They can lie about consequences, they can lie about helping you, and they can ignore your request for a lawyer under false pretenses.<sup>30</sup>

And those are just the over-the-table, by-the-book, court-enshrined laws.

They will also lie to the court. There is the famous "blue wall of silence," the lies of perjury and omission told by police to protect other police under investigation. But they also famously lie on their reports, which then become the media's reports. When Ahmaud Arbery was arrested in a park, his entire body standing clearly outside of his car, the police reported that he "did not take his hands out of the vehicle." The report on Elijah Tufono's beating-by-police in Sacramento never mentioned any beating. The incident report for the murder of Breonna Taylor, shot at least 8 times in her bed, lists her injuries as "none."<sup>31</sup>

***Of course if you "provide false information or documentation" to the police, you will be arrested.***



M IS FOR

## Militarization

---

**"Militarization" is a misleading term because it suggests a distinction between the police and the military that was never tangible in the first place. Early state police were directly modeled after the counter-revolutionary Philippine Constabulary. Two of its most influential architects, August Vollmer and O. W. Wilson, were both military, and today every fifth officer is a veteran. They wore blue uniforms because they inherited postwar Union Army surplus.**

---

As a domestic military, America's 920,000+ police outnumber the standing armies of Brazil 2:1, Germany 4:1, and Canada 11:1. They've used chemical weapons and armored war machines on civilians since tear gas was developed in 1919, but the trend has accelerated. The 1981 Military Cooperation with Civilian Law Enforcement Agencies Act gave police access to military bases and equipment; four years later police dropped a bomb on a neighborhood in West Philadelphia.<sup>32</sup> 1997's National Defense Authorization Act created the "1033 program," transferring over \$8.4 billion in surplus aircraft, watercraft, armored vehicles, grenade launchers, bayonets, and other armaments to at least 8,000 agencies (out of about 18,000 total).<sup>67</sup> The Department of

If there is a significant difference between the actual military and the local police, it is that, between the two, the police have the loosest "rules of engagement." And unlike police, soldiers have neither qualified immunity nor an FOP to protect them.

Homeland Security has been equipping local police with LRADs—sound cannons—for almost 20 years.



N IS FOR

N.h.i.

---

**After eight officers were caught assaulting Rodney King on handheld camera in 1991 (and were subsequently acquitted by a mostly white jury), it came to light that the Los Angeles justice system routinely used the acronym N.H.I. to refer to cases involving Black men: "No Humans Involved."<sup>33</sup>**

---

The term was also used—like "misdemeanor murder"—to refer to the murder of sex workers.

"Shoot him twice for me," said another. "Everybody you kill in the line of duty becomes a slave in the afterlife."<sup>34</sup>

And the result of this dehumanization is violence. As Sylvia Wynter writes: "The social effects to which this acronym, and its placing outside the 'sanctified universe of obligation,' of the category of young Black males to which it refers, leads, whilst not overtly genocidal, are clearly having genocidal effects with the incarceration and elimination of young Black males by ostensibly normal, and everyday means."

"I haven't beat anyone this bad in a long time," joked police over official channels. "I'm sure the lizard didn't deserve it... HAHA."

The dehumanizing language of police work is not limited to individual police. It is not even limited to policing's role in the criminal justice system. Prosecutors for death-penalty cases against Black defendants in Georgia labeled prospective white jurors as "W" and prospective Black jurors as "N," describing the latter as "slow," "fat," "con-artist," etc. in order to stack the jury.<sup>35</sup> In 1989 the New York Times called the Central Park Five, falsely imprisoned for assaulting a woman, a "roving wolf pack." New York City settled with the five men for \$41 million in 2014—roughly a million dollars per year of wrongful imprisonment—while admitting no wrongdoing.<sup>79</sup>



O IS FOR

## Oversight

---

### **No community-based oversight committee in the United States has the authority to terminate or even discipline a police officer; reformist groups like Campaign Zero don't even call for it.**

---

Oversight as-is doesn't start until a citizen initiates a formal complaint, in a system controlled by the police—and designed to be as frictive and intimidating as possible.

CBS4 in South Florida was unable to get hold of a complaint form whatsoever, and their lead investigator was repeatedly harassed, arrested, and even hospitalized. "Might not be a legitimate complaint," police will say. "Do you have an ID on you? Are you on any medications?"

And that's if you can identify the police in the first place, who are often less eager to disclose their identities than citizens are—a safety vest innocently covering a name badge, sunglasses on top of a face mask.

Both the apparent need for oversight and the failure to actually practice it demonstrate a fundamental dysfunction of police work.

When civil advocates in Minneapolis tested the complaint system they were told untruths like you must file in the precinct the incident occurred in (you don't) or the printer was out of ink (it wasn't).

To file a complaint in Chicago you need a signed affidavit, you need to disclose your full identity, and you need to disclose yourself to the officer involved before they can be questioned; about half of all allegations of misconduct are thrown away. City contracts literally prevent departments from promoting or otherwise recognizing officers who report misconduct of other officers.

What does the absence of real oversight cost? The Washington Post documented nearly 40,000 misconduct payments at just 25 of the nation's largest departments between 2010 and 2020—more than \$3.2 billion, paid by taxpayers. Nearly half of that money (\$1.5 billion) went to claims involving the more than

7,600 officers who had been the subject of multiple payouts; over 1,200 officers had been the subject of at least five.<sup>80</sup>



P IS FOR

Predpol

---

**One would be forgiven for thinking PredPol was short for "predatory policing," for it means almost the same thing: predictive policing.**

---

Constitutionally, policing must be reactionary. This is a limitation of the system, similar to the logic of a high noon duel: if you draw first, you're the aggressor. Shoot first, but draw second. Police consider this constitutional limitation to be a bug, not a feature. Companies like the CIA-backed Geolitica—formerly called PredPol—promise to find a way around it. Operating under the belief that criminal activity follows the same natural patterns as both seismic activity (a series of crimes and smaller "aftercrimes") and epidemiology (crime is a "virus" whose "contagion" can be mapped), Geolitica sells "location-based proactive policing" technology to triangulate crime type, location, and time into so-called "hot spots," red grids on an interactive mobile map—the visible infection of potential future-crimes, to which police are supposed to devote 6 minutes an hour physically occupying.<sup>36</sup>

Yet we know this data is corrupted. Chicago's predictive policing technology, in use since at least 2012, has been shown to use data "sullied by years of unconstitutional and racially biased stops, searches, and arrests" to determine the distribution of police resources. An unconstitutional stop-and-frisk policy creates a dataset targeting Black men for marijuana at 5x the rate white men are targeted, even though usage rates are the same for both groups. A third-party black-box software extrapolates these arrests into a geographical "contagion" map that redistributes and concentrates police forces to arrest more Black men for weed while white people are left off the map entirely, literally magnifying racism. Lifetime likelihood of incarceration for Black men born in 2001: 1 in 3.

And it doesn't even work. When The Markup analyzed 23,631 Geolitica predictions generated for Plainfield, New Jersey in 2018, fewer than 100 lined up with a reported crime—a

success rate under half a percent. Burglary predictions succeeded 0.1% of the time.<sup>81</sup> "I don't believe we really used it that often, if at all," the department's captain admitted. "That's why we ended up getting rid of it."



Q IS FOR

## Quotas

---

**Quotas will always exist. "It just means we can't put a definite number," explains one police. "But it doesn't mean we can't tell them to write more."<sup>37</sup>**

---

These quotas define crime rates, which in turn define future policing, which in turn defines crime rates. Career success depends on it. Police who refuse to fill these unofficial quotas are given undesirable posts, see their overtime hours cut, and are passed over for promotions. The result is a chain of negative utility for the citizens subjected to these systems.

1. New Yorkers spend more than \$1,500 a day to incarcerate him<sup>38</sup>

As a result, it is true, ticket writing coincides with departmental targets, seeing surges at certain times of the month.<sup>40</sup>

Consider the following chain of events:

1. A Black man rides a bicycle without a helmet in New York City
2. He receives a "broken windows" civil summons to help a police reach their number
3. He can't afford to pay it immediately and his license is suspended
4. He drives to work anyway and is arrested for driving on a suspended license

Who benefits?

Small town police departments have added financial incentives. Fines and forfeitures account for over 10% of general fund revenues for nearly 600 jurisdictions. 51% of Palmer, Texas' \$1.2 million budget comes from ticket and fine revenue. Buckholts, a town of 520 people, levied \$182,569 (73% of the town's budget) in fines in 2018, or about \$350 per resident. The town of Estelline collected a stunning

\$3,580 per resident, or enough to buy every resident a hot tub.<sup>39</sup>



R IS FOR

## Rough ride

---

**25-year-old Freddie Gray was walking through Baltimore one morning when an officer conducting "enhanced drug enforcement" caught his eye. Gray turned around and the officer chased, slamming his face into the asphalt and tying him up in a painful hold known as a "leg lace." Witnesses report that he had already stopped moving by the time Officer Caesar Goodson, a "good officer, a gentle man, a nice guy," dragged Gray face-first into the back of a white van.**

---

During the ensuing 44-minute van ride the police blew through stop signs, took turns wide enough to cross lane boundaries, and repeatedly slammed their brakes. They made several stops, including at a grocery store and to take on a second victim, and by the time they arrived at the West District station Gray was in a coma, his spine severed from a "high-energy" impact (akin to diving in a shallow pool). He was charged with possessing an illegal switchblade (he wasn't) and, a week later, pronounced dead. Six officers were charged in his death; six officers were acquitted.<sup>41</sup>

Baltimore paid Gray's family \$6.4 million—more than the city had paid for all 102 police misconduct judgments and settlements combined over the preceding four years.<sup>82</sup>

In Baltimore it's known as a "rough ride." Philadelphia police call it a "nickel ride," as cheap as a 5-cent carnival ticket. Saskatchewan has the brutal "starlight tour," where Indigenous men are left to freeze in the hostile Canadian winter at night. "Screen tests" refer to slamming the victim against the metal barriers inside the van. Or, as the Mollen Commission described it, a police "bonding ritual." It happened to Christine Abbott in 2012. Dondi Johnson Sr. became quadriplegic after he was picked up for urinating in public in 2005. James McKenna broke his neck in Philadelphia in 2011, where the Philadelphia Inquirer documented 20 related injuries.



S IS FOR

## Stonewall

---

**New York used to call gay bars "disorderly houses" (linking, like William Bratton, disorder with crime), allowing police to raid them. In 1966 a Genovese mobster named Fat Tony bought a failing straight bar called the Stonewall Inn and converted it into the hottest "disorderly house" in Greenwich Village.**

---

Fat Tony made more money black-mailing closeted Wall Street financiers for negotiable bonds than he did selling drinks—enough money to pay the NYPD's Sixth Precinct \$1,200 a month to look the other way. But maybe he missed a payment, or maybe the police simply went back on their word, because at 1:20 a.m. on a Saturday in 1969's "Summer of Love" seven police barred the doors of the club and announced: "Police! We're taking the place!"

The 3-hour anti-police insurgency that followed—led by queer and transgender people of color, like the famous Marsha P. Johnson—was not the first violent confrontation between the queer community and the police (see Cooper's Donut Riots in 1959, Compton's Cafeteria Riot in 1966, or the Black Cat Riot of 1967), but it was the Black Panther-inspired methods of the Stonewall siege—trash can fires, overturned cars, power chants—that decidedly positioned gay rights as a national issue, giving rise to the gay rights movement.

*The history of the Stonewall Uprising is one of the reasons why police have no place at Pride; Pride was a riot.*



T IS FOR

## Taser

---

**On June 12, 2020, after stealing an already-spent Taser and trying to flee, Rayshard Brooks was shot twice in the back in a Wendy's parking lot. Police apologists argue that the shooting was justified because Brooks, by pointing the spent Taser at an officer, tried to use "deadly force." Is that accurate?**

---

If yes, then the initial officer should never have drawn and discharged their Taser on Brooks in the first place.

Declared a tool of torture by the UN in 2007, Tasers are favored in the US as "less-lethal," a category of wordplay contingent on additional wordplay. Reuters documented at least 1,081 U.S. deaths following police Taser use through 2018—in nine of every ten cases the person was unarmed, and a quarter were in mental health crisis.<sup>83</sup> When people die from being tased the police will attribute the death to a pre-existing syndrome called "Excited Delirium Syndrome." Essentially, the only people who die from being tased are people who have the condition of dying from being tased.

If no, then the officer should never have drawn their guns and shot Brooks in the back.

Physicist Jack Cover invented the Taser following the Watts Rebellion of 1965. It's an acronym for "Thomas A. Swift Electric Rifle," after a sci-fi novel where a boy named Tom Swift rampages through Africa with an electric gun. Tasers are capable of delivering 50,000 volts of electricity from about 10 feet away, about as much power as a high-tension transmission line. Nicknamed "cattle prods," that's exactly what they replace: the police have been electrocuting citizens with cattle prods since at least the 1940s, from civil rights protests in Alabama to Jon Burge's interrogations at Homan Square.

19-year-old Jaylin Hughes was caught smoking pot in his Georgia apartment complex and, like most white teenagers caught in the same

situation, decided to make a run for it. The police, unrepentant and dangerous predators, chased him into a corner, and when they caught him jumping a tall fence they shot him with a Taser and, losing control of his body, he severed his spinal cord when he fell back to the ground. He was charged with obstruction of justice and possession of marijuana, and today he is paralyzed from the shoulders down.<sup>42</sup>



U IS FOR

## Unarmed

---

**Black people are killed by police at nearly three times the rate of white people per capita.<sup>65</sup> In the 100 largest U.S. cities, 41% of people police killed while unarmed were Black—despite Black residents making up 19% of those cities' populations.<sup>68</sup>**

---

And that's if you can believe the official reports. A comatose Freddie Gray was charged as armed with an illegal switchblade for possessing something that was 1) not illegal, 2) not a switchblade, and 3) not discovered on his body until after his assault. A mentally ill man named James Boyd was "armed" with two rusty pocketknives when Albuquerque police used stun grenades, Taser shotguns, beanbag guns, and K9s against him, and then shot him three times in the back after he'd surrendered.

And then there are bodies themselves that are considered armaments. Darren Wilson's testimony in the murder of Michael Brown, for which Wilson was never charged, suggests Black men are by definition armed: "He looked up at me and had the most intense aggressive face. The only way I can describe it, it

Police advocates will point to the population of gun-owners in the United States as the reason police must also be armed; they are dealing with an armed populace. But if one believes that the citizenry is armed, and that being armed is reason enough to be fired upon, then one concedes that the police have the right to execute any potential citizen. This enforces a feedback loop where everyone becomes an enemy, and thus everything in their hands becomes an armament—bicycle chains, sticks, Tamir Rice's toy gun. All Daniel Shaver did was reach towards his waistband and the police felt justified in executing him.

Researchers find fewer than 2% of on-duty fatal shootings result in murder or manslaughter charges; of the 204 officers charged from 2005 through 2024, only 64 were convicted.<sup>11</sup>

looks like a demon, that's how angry  
he looked."<sup>43</sup>



V IS FOR

## Violence worker

---

### Police are violence workers.

---

That doesn't mean commit violence is all they do; violence may even occupy a statistically insignificant amount of their daily duties. But it means that violence is their essential function in society.

What is the place of violence work outside of protecting capital? Interpersonal violence begets violence. It is self-fulfilling; resisting the threat of police violence will guarantee that the police are violent with you, as with the Supreme Court's 1989 ruling (*Graham v. Connor*) that the police may use force against any resistance to arrest. Both statistically and narratively, the presence of a gun dramatically increases the odds of fatal injury. Why, then, must traffic police be armed, unless we want traffic violations to be violent occasions? Why do we have police in schools, bringing guns to fistfights? Police do not prevent violence—they commit it, and encourage their victims to commit it in self-defense.

Though a century of reform has seen society layer additional responsibilities on the police, their essential duty—essential to their ability to protect the controlled movement of capital—is to enforce the state's monopoly on violence. They are empowered by the state to tackle us, punch us, bind us, digitally rape us, dose us, abduct us, and eventually shoot us in order to secure completely bodily submission. That is what they, specifically, do; everything else is PR and fundraising.

The majority of police commute to work—they live outside the communities they patrol.<sup>44</sup> Armed outsiders assigned by the state to occupy and control poor and non-white neighborhoods with the constant application of violence.



W IS FOR

## Warren vs. the district of columbia

---

**In 1975 two men broke into a rooming house and assaulted a resident, whose screams alerted neighbors Warren and Taliaferro. Warren and Taliaferro hid in their room and called the police. Five minutes later the police showed up, knocked, received no answer, and left.**

---

So Warren and Taliaferro placed a second call to 911. Unbeknownst to Warren and Taliaferro this second call was never even dispatched. Believing that the police had returned they came out of hiding and called out to the victim, which alerted the invader to their presence. He held all three women captive at knifepoint and abused them for hours.

2005: *Castle Rock vs. Gonzales* holds that the police can't be sued for failing to enforce restraining orders.

2011: The NYPD conduct a manhunt on a knife-wielding murderer named Maksim Gelman. When Gelman attempts to enter the cab of a subway train where an officer named Terrence Howell is trying to hide, Howell locks the door and turns his back. A citizen named Joseph Lozito confronts and subdues Gelman instead, sustaining multiple stab

The police never showed up.

All three women sued the Metropolitan Police Department for failing to follow procedure with the proper degree of urgency, including failure to dispatch, but the trial court dismissed the complaints, and the District of Columbia Court of Appeals upheld the dismissal by holding "the fundamental principle that a government and its agents are under no general duty to provide public services, such as police protection, to any particular individual citizen; the duty to provide public services is owed to the public at large, and, absent a special relationship between the police and an individual, no specific legal duty exists."<sup>45</sup>

2018: Sergeant Brian Miller hides behind his car while shots ring out at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, where 17 people were killed and 17 more injured. Miller is subse-

wounds in his back and neck. On the police report Howell claims to have tackled Gelman himself, but then admits to a juror that he hid because he thought Gelman had a gun. Lozito sues (Lozito vs. New York City) and the suit is tossed out; the police had "no special duty" to protect Lozito or anyone else on the train that day. "Under well-established law, the police are not liable for such incidents," said a city lawyer.<sup>46</sup>

In every state except California, however, it remains illegal to not help the police upon command—a charge called "refusing to assist a police officer."

quently fired, his firing is ruled unconstitutional, and he is reinstated.

Through decades of reform the courts have consistently ruled that the LAPD's famous motto "To Protect and Serve" is nothing more than a legally non-binding slogan. The police have no obligation to help you—and the data suggest they rarely do: most violent victimizations are never reported to police,<sup>70</sup> and most reported violent crimes are never solved.<sup>5</sup>



X IS FOR

# Xenophobia

---

**In 1838 the city of Boston organized America's first police department as a response to the Battle of Broad Street, to control the "Irish problem," i.e., the influx of Irish-Catholic laborers fleeing English genocide.<sup>47</sup> 160 years later the NYPD's "intelligence division" tracked Muslim students across the country, monitoring emails, forums, and social media, even sending an undercover agent on a City College rafting trip.<sup>48</sup>**

---

Policing has always been about othering, and not just in international terms. The so-called "border zone" that defines the jurisdiction of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP—one of the world's largest police agencies, with more than 20,000 police and a budget of over \$18 billion) includes everyone within 100 miles of any border—putting about 2 out of every 3 citizens under their jurisdiction.<sup>49</sup>

In 2020 these facilities were so crowded that Congress passed billions in emergency funding to erect soft-sided tent cities in the middle of the desert such as those in Yuma, Arizona, where dozens of children were sexually assaulted.<sup>53</sup> To pay for all this, taxpayers spend about \$133 to lock someone in a traditional ICE facility; locking children away in

Since 2002 the CBP has been part of the Department of Homeland Security, a police force created by George W. Bush that is now the third largest Cabinet department. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was created at the same time, which has since performed "Enforcement and Removal Operations" on millions of people<sup>50</sup>—separating children from families, torturing them, and sexually abusing them<sup>51</sup> in facilities that not even state representatives are allowed to see the inside of.<sup>52</sup> The July 2025 budget reconciliation bill handed ICE \$45 billion for new detention centers—a detention budget larger than the entire federal prison system—plus \$29.9 billion more for enforcement and deportation operations.<sup>54</sup>

tents in some of North America's harshest environments costs us about \$775 per child per night.<sup>54</sup>

Of over 1,200 sexual assault complaints while in immigration custody, only 2% have been investigated.<sup>55</sup>

Detention has surged past 56,000—the highest since records began—with tent cities, converted warehouses, and Florida's Everglades facility "Alligator Alcatraz," where 22,000 people were cycled through at up to \$860 per detainee per day before it closed in June 2026.<sup>90</sup> ICE agents now conduct street-level enforcement in American cities; in January 2026, agent Jonathan Ross shot and killed Renee Good, a 37-year-old Minneapolis mother of three, as she sat in her vehicle during an immigration sweep.<sup>89</sup>



Y IS FOR

## Yassin mohamed

---

**George Floyd (1973–May 25, 2020) was handcuffed face-down on a Minneapolis street while officer Derek Chauvin pressed a knee into his neck for more than nine minutes. Floyd pleaded "I can't breathe" at least 27 times. Chauvin was convicted of murder; the city paid Floyd's family \$27 million. His death sparked the largest protest movement in U.S. history.<sup>85</sup>**

---

Breonna Taylor (1993–March 13, 2020) was asleep in her Louisville apartment when police executed a no-knock warrant at midnight, firing 32 shots. Taylor was struck six times and died in her hallway. No officer was charged in her death. The city settled for \$12 million.<sup>86</sup>

Sonya Massey (1993–July 6, 2024) called 911 about a prowler outside her Springfield, Illinois home. Sangamon County deputy Sean Grayson entered her kitchen and shot her in the face after she moved a pot of water off the stove. Body camera footage shows Massey ducking and apologizing seconds before the shots. Grayson was convicted of first-degree murder in 2025; the county paid her family \$10 million.<sup>88</sup>

Yassin Mohamed (1973–May 9, 2020) was walking down a rural

Tyre Nichols (1993–January 10, 2023) was beaten for three minutes by Memphis Scorpion unit officers after a traffic stop a block from his home. He died three days later of blunt-force trauma. Five officers were fired; three were acquitted of state murder in 2025, though federal civil-rights convictions followed. The DOJ found Memphis PD "regularly used excessive force against Black residents."<sup>87</sup>

Renee Good (1988–January 7, 2026) was a 37-year-old mother of three in Minneapolis when ICE agent Jonathan Ross shot her during a street-level immigration sweep. Bystanders and Ross's own phone footage captured the encounter; Good was in her vehicle. DHS called it self-defense and labeled her a "domestic terrorist." Hennepin

road in Georgia around midnight on May 9, 2020 when someone called the Evans County sheriff. Police had been hassling him all night and he'd already been hospitalized once for mental health concerns. An "altercation ensued" when two officers attempted to "make contact," and Mohamed allegedly threw a rock at one of the officers before charging with a "larger rock." The officer, sustaining no injuries, shot Mohamed, who died at the scene. It was the 38th police shooting investigated this year by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation; within a month they'd opened their 50th.<sup>56</sup>

Plainclothed police cut off the burglar bars and broke down the door of 92-year-old Kathryn Johnston's Atlanta home in a no-knock drug raid on the wrong house. Johnston (1914–November 21, 2006) fired a single shot from a rusty revolver over the heads of the police, injuring no one; the police fired 39 shots back, killing Johnston and injuring three of their own members. The police handcuffed Johnston as she was dying and planted three bags of weed in the house. They called an informant and had him say that he'd bought crack cocaine at Johnston's house to justify the raid occurring in the first place.<sup>58</sup>

County prosecutors opened an independent investigation.<sup>89</sup>

Pest control specialist Daniel Shaver (1990–January 18, 2016) was showing off the pellet gun that he used to exterminate birds in grocery stores to his friends in his room at the Mesa, Arizona La Quinta when someone called the police to report a rifle in the window. Six police surrounded the room. They yelled contradictory commands to a prone, sobbing Shaver. As he tried to crawl towards the police his waistband slipped and, when he reached to pull it up, 26-year-old Philip Brailsford shot Shaver five times with his AR-15 (engraved with "you're fucked" and "molon labe"), murdering him instantly. According to Brailsford, Shaver was "trying to gain a position of advantage in order to gain a better firing position on us;" he was fired, charged, acquitted, reinstated, compensated for PTSD, and allowed to retire on a pension of \$2,500 per month, or \$1.5 million over the course of a lifetime. He currently works in a steel mill.<sup>57</sup>

Bernardo Palacios-Carbajal (1998–May 23, 2020) was shot 20 times in the back at close range as he tried to flee from the Salt Lake City police. The police yelled "drop it" five times and "show us your fucking hands" to

At 12:40 am on a Sunday in 2010 Joe Weekley of the Detroit PD Special Response Team fired a flash grenade through the front window of an East Side duplex, stormed his way in behind a ballistic riot shield, and then shot 7-year-old Aiyana Mo'Nay Stanley-Jones (2002–May 16, 2010) in the head. Weekley claimed that it was actually Stanley-Jones' grandmother, Mertilla Jones, who killed the girl when she tried to slap the MP5 submachine gun out of Weekley's hands, but tests for her fingerprints on the gun came up negative. After two failed trials against him, Weekley cannot be tried a third time.<sup>60</sup>

A grand jury found the shooting justified, Small's family's federal civil rights lawsuit against the police was thrown out on two occasions, and both of the police that killed her are still working.<sup>61</sup>

James Boyd (1975–March 16, 2014) was sleeping alone in Albuquerque's Sandia foothills with two rusty pocketknives on him when 19 police surrounded him and demanded his surrender. James eventually complied, promising (after hours of harassment) to go with the police shortly after sunset, but as he bent over to pick up his belongings the police deployed a flash-bang grenade, a Taser shotgun, multiple

his dead body, which lay motionless on the ground. Mayor Erin Mendenhall said that video of the incident "disturbed and upset" her as a mother, but after weeks of protests, write-ins, and call-ins demanding at least \$30 million in defunding and the arrest of Palacios-Carbajal's killers, Salt Lake City approved Mendenhall's proposed \$84 million police budget, \$2 million more than last year. This money includes \$322,800 for "training" and \$687,000 to equip every police with a camera, with "data," and a Taser.<sup>59</sup>

After leading them on a slow, meandering 4-mile "chase" in her flattened Buick Century, waitress and mother-of-2 Caroline Small (1975–June 18, 2010) was shot eight times in the face through her front windshield by two Glynn County, Georgia police. "I hit her right in the face, right on the bridge of the nose," they bragged. "Her head exploded." They went on to tell a jury that they'd feared for their lives because Small was using her car as a "deadly weapon," although dashcam footage shows that Small was motionless and boxed-in at the time. Small lost consciousness from her bullet wounds and died a week later. Local news ran the headline: "Woman shot trying to run down police."

beanbags, and a K9 unit. The K9 grabbed Boyd's bag and brought it back to its handler, who then ordered the K9 to return to Boyd—while yet another police shot him three times in the back. Boyd begged for his life as the dog chewed his calf off. He was dead by morning.

And because of laws meant to protect victims' privacy, the public still doesn't know who shot him—because the shooter is being considered a victim.<sup>62</sup>

Nobody faced any consequences. It was the 47th APD shooting, and 32nd death, in 5 years. Despite increased funding for "training," New Mexico has the highest rate of police killings per capita, including 9 people in Albuquerque in 2018.

Few details are known about the murder of Tony McDade (1982–May 27, 2020) by police in Tallahassee, Florida. But according to the Human Rights Campaign, McDade was the twelfth transgender or gender non-conforming person to be shot or killed in 2020.



Z IS FOR

## Zoo animals

---

**In 2018 Sean Bostwick was fired from the Detroit Police Department for posting a uniformed selfie on Snapchat with the following caption: "Another night to Rangel up these zoo animals"<sup>63</sup>**

---

Presumably he meant "wrangle," which the Oxford English Dictionary takes to mean "round up, herd, or take charge of livestock."

The language of racist policing alters every police interaction, and it can escalate even the most routine traffic stops the moment an officer speaks. Research from Stanford indicates that police address white and Black people differently at traffic stops.<sup>64</sup> White victims receive apologies, full names and proper titles, gentle reassurances, and expressions of gratitude from the police. Black victims receive commands, first names and casual titles, and sharp questioning. If one believes that rhetoric has any real-world effect (which the police, with their so-called "attitude test," do), then one must concede that the police are more than predisposed to escalation via the language they use—that the language itself constitutes an escalation.

Such language isn't new. Nazis famously portrayed Jewish people as pests, normalizing associations that lead directly into the holocaust. American slavers depicted Black people as apes. Protestors in Hong Kong today are even called cockroaches. Nor is such language ineffective. Modern studies show that US citizens implicitly associated Black people with apes, which primes us to tolerate more violent policing actions when it comes to Black suspects. Comparing women to animals of prey spikes a sense of hostile sexism, and woman/animal associations have been strongly correlated with sexual harassment and assault.

Especially with a word like "wrangle," which connotes either an exotic other—the zoo—or to livestock. The latter is part of a historical commitment to chattel slavery, in which not just one human is enslaved as property, but all of their

These proto-police, charged simply with "controlling the movements and behaviors of enslaved populations," could enter any property suspected of housing escapees and shoot any Black person. Louisiana privatized its state penitentiary in 1844 as a textile factory, and four years later decreed that all Black children born to parents serving life sentences would become state property. After the 13th amendment passed in 1865 the enslaved labor of Black men was moved from private plantations to public prisons (many of which, like Mississippi's Parchman Farm, were literal plantations) to manufacture things like military helmets and police uniforms, although in 1979 the US gave a little of that enslaved labor back to private hands: the Prison Industry Enhancement Certification Program permitted US companies to use prison labor, which most major corporations take advantage of either themselves or through subcontractors, including McDonalds, Walmart, Starbucks, Victoria's Secret, and Verizon. Inmates in private prisons earn \$0.12-0.40 per hour under optimal conditions; when overcrowding occurs, they're capped at \$5.25 a month.

descendants. Combined with the "one drop rule," wherein just "one drop" of color made a person legally Black, this incentivized systematic raping of enslaved women by both enslaved men and the slavers themselves, who controlled and profited from it all. Chattel conditions were bad enough that enslaved Black people routinely tried to rebel or run away, which is where the South's first organized police force comes from: the slavecatchers of the 18th and 19th century.

That is what police like Sean Bostwick are "wrangling" up: the forced labor that produces our war supplies, police gear, fast food, underwear, and coffee cups. They are wrangling capital.

## Afterword

---

The police protect the controlled movement of capital.

Are we not tired of being fleeced in broad daylight by the interests of capital? Policing is as comically expensive as it is grimly harmful—we spend nearly \$179 billion a year on state and local police alone<sup>72</sup> for a pre-Victorian technology designed to maximize the suffering of the many—the poor and the marginalized, be they Irish-Catholics, Appalachian anthracite miners, Puerto Ricans, or Black nationalists—and minimize the suffering of the few—the capitalists. The essential engine of this work—violence—functions exactly as it did over 150 years ago.

To protect ourselves, we must abolish the police.

They do not solve crimes—56% of reported violent crimes went unsolved nationwide in 2024,<sup>5</sup> and the NCVS finds most violent victimizations are never reported to police at all (48%).<sup>70</sup> They do not fix things. If we need them, they will take our report and then resume their "unassigned duties," doing nothing—until there is a peaceful student protest nearby, or an encampment of unsheltered people. Then they will put on their body armor, load their guns, form a phalanx, and march against us.

Policing cannot be reformed because it is doing exactly what it was meant to do, which is why "reform" as advocacy is a form of police apologia. For over these 150 years we have given the police more money and more weapons and more rights and more training and all they have done is become more dangerous. Actual principles of police reform—such as calls for unarmed, local, democratic policing—are functionally so radical as to almost constitute abolitionism before the wider public, despite the fact that police abolition is already a reality in thousands of towns and communities within the US that have never had

police departments in the first place, let alone the rest of the world.

# Notes & Sources

1. "Stop-and-Frisk Data," New York Civil Liberties Union
2. "Researchers Debunk 'Broken Windows Theory' After 35 Years," Northeastern University
3. @CommissBratton on X
4. "NYPD Data: People of Color Subject to More Than 94% of Marijuana Arrests," The Legal Aid Society
5. FBI, Crime in the Nation 2024 — clearance rates (UCR/NIBRS)
6. "How Do the Police Actually Spend Their Time?," The New York Times
7. "Ex-cop Eric Adams urges New Yorkers to RAT on NYPD officers using their phones on subway platforms," The Daily Mail
8. Washington Post, Fatal Force police shootings database (2015–2024; discontinued Jan. 2025)
9. "Fatal police shootings," Inquest.org.uk
10. "'Volatile, rapidly unfolding' incident led to SLC officer-involved shooting, police say," 2KUTV
11. Philip M. Stinson, On-Duty Shootings: Officers Charged with Murder or Manslaughter, 2005–2024
12. Redfin/Ipsos survey, "Half of Americans Struggle to Pay Rent or Mortgage" (Nov. 2025)
13. Eviction Lab, "Preliminary Analysis: Eviction Filing Patterns in 2024"
14. "Threats of Evictions in the USA: A Public Health Concern," National Library of Medicine
15. "Cop union defiant to the end on Burge," Chicago Tribune
16. "What is the Fraternal Order of Police?" Future Hindsight
17. "Who We Are," Utah State Fraternal Order of Police
18. "What To Know About the L.A. Sheriff's Department's Police 'Gangs'—As Ex-Sheriff Prepares to Testify," Forbes
19. "One Current and Three Former Chicago Police Officers, Once Assigned to Disbanded Elite SOS Unit, Charged with Federal Civil Rights Violations," FBI
20. "Police union has stranglehold on some city politicians," The Daily Record
21. "They called it 'The God Squad.' How a brazen band of cops operated in this N.J. suburb," NJ.com
22. "Six Former Mississippi Law Enforcement Officers Sentences for Torturing and Abusing Two Black Men," U.S. Department of Justice
23. "Homan Square revealed: how Chicago police 'disappeared' 7,000 people," The Guardian
24. "Mayor sticks to script on reports about West Side police facility," Chicago Reporter
25. "Inside Chicago's legacy of police abuse: violence 'as routine as traffic lights'," The Guardian
26. War Against All Puerto Ricans, Nelson Denis
27. "California prisoners could get higher wages under new plan," Los Angeles Times
28. "Davis County to repay 'pay for stay' inmates," The Salt Lake Tribune
29. "Length of Incarceration and Recidivism," United States Sentencing Commission
30. "Ten Ways Police Can Legally Lie To You," Moore Law
31. "Louisville police release Breonna Taylor incident report—it lists her injuries as 'none'," CBS News
32. "The MOVE Bombing," The Philadelphia Inquirer
33. Forum N.H.I., Sylvia Wynter
34. "Racist jokes cemented police culture that ignited L.A. uprising," The Washington Post
35. "Motion: Prosecutors excluded black jurors in seven death-penalty cases," The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
36. "The three pillars of data-driven policing," PredPol

37. "NYPD Commander's Text Messages Show How the Quota System Persists,"
38. NYC Comptroller, cost of incarceration analysis (FY 2021): \$1,525 per day per person
39. "In small-town Texas, speeding drivers keep the lights on at city hall," The Texas Monitor
40. "Are New York City drivers more likely to get a ticket at the end of the month?," Significance, Vol. 14
41. "A 'Not Guilty' Verdict in the Death of Freddie Gray," The Atlantic
42. "Man paralyzed after officers used Taser on him plans to file lawsuit against police, attorney says," WSB-TV
43. "All the Ways Darren Wilson Described Being Afraid of Michael Brown," TIME
44. "Most Police Don't Live in the Cities They Serve," FiveThirtyEight
45. "Warren v. District of Columbia," Justia.com
46. "City says cops had no duty to protect subway hero who subdued killer," New York Post
47. "How Stereotypes of the Irish Evolved from 'Criminals' to Cops," History.com
48. "NYPD monitored Muslim students all over Northeast," Seattle Times
49. "The Constitution in the 100-Mile Border Zone," ACLU
50. "ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations Report," ICE
51. "Immigration detention and sexual abuse," The Intercept
52. "Senator blocked from entering detention center housing migrant kids," USA Today
53. "DHS probing allegation of sex abuse at Arizona migrant detention center," CBS News
54. "This is how much it costs to detain an immigrant in the US," CNBC
55. "Records of Sexual Assault in ICE Detention," The Intercept
56. "Questions remain after US cop kills Muslim man who threw rocks," Al Jazeera
57. "A police killing without a hint of racism," The Atlantic
58. "Remembering Kathryn Johnston 10 years after deadly Atlanta police raid," The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
59. "Protestors return to the streets as new bodycam video shows Salt Lake City officers shot at a fleeing man more than 20 times," Salt Lake Tribune
60. "'She was only a baby': last charge dropped in police raid that killed sleeping Detroit child," The Guardian
61. "Did Caroline Small have to die?" The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
62. "'I need help': McDade struggled with mental illness before fatal stabbing, police shooting," Tallahassee Democrat
63. "Detroit Police officer fired over 'zoo animals' Snapchat," Fox 2 Detroit
64. "Language from police body camera footage shows racial disparities in officer respect," Stanford University
65. Mapping Police Violence, 2025 Year-End Report
66. BJS, Census of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies, 2018; Federal Law Enforcement Officers, 2023
67. DLA Disposition Services, Law Enforcement Support Office (1033 Program) public information
68. Mapping Police Violence, Police Accountability Tool (100 largest cities, 2013–2025)
69. BJS, Jails Report Series: 2024 Preliminary Data Release
70. BJS, Criminal Victimization, 2024 (NCVS)
71. Lee & Eck, "Adding More Police Is Unlikely to Reduce Crime" (Justice Quarterly meta-analysis, 2016)
72. U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, state & local police current expenditures (2024)
73. "Deputies accused of being in secret groups cost L.A. County \$55 million," Los Angeles Times (2020); LA County Office of Inspector General, Deputy Gangs settlement records

74. RAND Corporation, "Understanding Subgroups Within the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department" (2021); Loyola Law School CJLP, "50 Years of Deputy Gangs in the LASD" (2021)
75. "Chicago police torture victims receive \$5.5 million in reparations," Reuters (2016)
76. BJS, Mortality in Local Jails, 2000–2019; BJS, Suicide in Local Jails and State and Federal Prisons, 2000–2019
77. Loder & Meixner, police K9 bite injuries, national emergency department data 2005–2013 (2019); Meade, "Police and domestic dog bite injuries," Injury (2006)
78. Hutson et al., "Law Enforcement K-9 Dog Bites: Injuries, Complications, and Trends," Annals of Emergency Medicine (1997)
79. "U.S. judge approves \$41 million settlement of 'Central Park Jogger' suit," Reuters (2014)
80. "Repeated police misconduct cost taxpayers \$1.5 billion in settlements," The Washington Post investigation (2022)
81. "Predictive Policing Software Terrible At Predicting Crimes," The Markup / Wired (2023)
82. "Freddie Gray's family settles with city for \$6.4M," AP News (2015); The Baltimore Sun, police misconduct payout analysis
83. Reuters Investigates, "Shock Tactics" series on Taser deaths (2017–2019)
84. American Immigration Council, "Congress Approves Unprecedented Funding for Mass Deportation" (July 2025); Public Law 119-21, §90003
85. DOJ Civil Rights Division, pattern-or-practice investigations; City of Minneapolis \$27M settlement with George Floyd family (2021)
86. "Louisville agrees to pay \$12M settlement to Breonna Taylor's family," NPR (2020); DOJ investigation of Louisville Metro Police
87. DOJ, "Investigation of the City of Memphis and the Memphis Police Department" (2024); Tyre Nichols federal civil-rights trial records
88. "Sean Grayson found guilty of murder in the death of Sonya Massey," Romanucci & Blandin; Sangamon County \$10M settlement (2025)
89. AP/CNN reporting on Renee Good shooting, Minneapolis, January 7, 2026; Hennepin County investigation records
90. TRAC Immigration, ICE detention population data (2025–2026); AP/CBS reporting on "Alligator Alcatraz" closure, June 2026
91. Lum, Koper & Wilson, "Body-worn cameras' effects on police officers and citizen behavior" (Campbell Systematic Reviews, 2020)
92. Ariel et al., "Increases in Police Use of Force in the Presence of Body-Worn Cameras Are Driven by Officer Discretion" (RAND external publication, 2016)
93. AP/Howard Center investigation, "Dying Restrained" database: 1,036 deaths after non-lethal force, 2012–2021; 740 involved prone restraint
94. AP investigation, "In hundreds of deadly police encounters, officers broke multiple safety guidelines" (2021)
95. "22% of LAPD officers failed to promptly activate body cameras in force incidents," Los Angeles Times (2021); LAPD Office of Inspector General review
96. Denver Office of the Independent Monitor, body-worn camera pilot evaluation (2015); BJA Death in Custody Reporting Act program documentation

## **The ABCs of ACAB**

An Introduction to Police Work. Published by No Such Press, Salt Lake City.

This PDF was generated from the web edition on 2026-07-04. For the latest text and editorial updates, visit **[abcsofacab.org](https://abcsofacab.org)**.

Non-commercial use encouraged. Share freely.