

## #1360 Redefine, Unburden and #DefundThePolice

**JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Welcome to this episode of the award-winning Best of the Left podcast in which we shall learn about the concept of defunding the police, what it means, what it doesn't and what the goals of the movement are. And before we begin, I had an idea that I think may help some people orient themselves properly to this topic.

You know, a lot of people in the U S are not only comfortable with the police, but feel protected by them. So the idea of getting rid of them is understandably scary. The somewhat logical extension of that is that then the people calling to defund the police either want something scary to happen, or they just don't care about the people who were scared.

So for the person who's nervous about defunding the police listening to this, let's do a little thought experiment, instead of accepting at face value the premise of wanting to abolish the police. Let's start with a completely imaginary hypothetical. Imagine that in 20 years from now, police are going to disappear, whether any of us want them to or not. We have no choice. There's magic involved. Poof, they're gone. Completely hypothetical, completely imaginary. So in 20 years, when the police disappear, there will be no one to control the homeless populations. There will be no one to hassle kids for taking drugs. There will be no one to intervene when a mentally-unstable person is a danger to themselves and those nearby, and there's no one to call for a domestic dispute, and so on and so on. Given that scenario, what would you do in the intervening time to prepare for that eventuality? What changes would you want to make to the resources of society for when that day comes? And your first thought may be, well, I guess I better build a wall around my house and buy a bunch of guns and hire private security, but that sounds first of all, expensive and like not a very fun way to live.

And so if you think, but that's the only possible choice that makes any sense whatsoever, okay I feel sorry for you and that perspective. But let's explore whether there might be another perspective, another option. And so if there were another option that allowed us to live more or less the way we do today, or at least the way white people do today in a mostly police-free existence.

And we still manage to take care of the problems of society that inevitably arise. The chances are that once you start thinking in that direction, you end up with a vision of society that is actually better than the one we have right now. And that is the vision of "defund the police."

So let's learn more about it. Clips today, come from Frontline, The Daily Show, The Takeaway, The Bastani Factor, Mother Jones Radio, News Beat, Boom! Lawyered, Deconstructed, Democracy Now! and possibly the last clip I'll have a chance to play from Michael Brooks.

## Race, Police, & The Pandemic - FRONTLINE - Air Date

**6-2-20**

**RANEY ARONSON-RATH:** When you were reporting our film out of Newark, I remember that you said something that always stuck with me, which was that you see relations between the police and African American community as a gauge of race relations in general. So, I mean,

you're seeing this through the prism of the larger story of race in America. And I'm just wondering if you could comment right now, as you're seeing this unfold in Minneapolis, what is this telling you today?

**JELANI COBB:** Yeah, it's telling us that we are, it's like the kind of culmination of the things that we've seen in the past few years, in the past decades. It's a barometer that this is still something that can happen.

And the other point is I think when we were talking, I've said this too, that in some ways police departments bear a disproportionate burden as it relates to these issues. And the reason being that whenever you see something explosive happen, overwhelmingly it is in response to an issue of police use of force.

We can just kind of go back, in case after case, after case, after case. And it's, you know, a police officer who hits someone, police officer who shoots someone. In this case, a police officer who appears to have asphyxiated someone, and people react. And it just kind of detonates these social tensions that were there before.

But the reason why I say that that's a kind of undue burden on policing, and I don't mean to let people off the hook for that, is that when you report in these communities (and I've done a lot of these stories now, many more than I would've liked to), but when you report in these communities, the first thing that people tell you is not necessarily about the policing incident.

And so, as an example, when I went to Ferguson, people there wanted to talk about schools. They wanted to talk about unemployment. They want to talk about the poor quality of housing there. They wanted to talk about all kinds of other institutional disparities and institutional failures that fell along lines of race.

And, I went to a rally, which was ostensibly about the police shooting in Ferguson that had culminated and all these tensions. And I was talking with people who were saying, we're suspending too many teenagers from the high schools. You know, the suspensions just seemed to be the first thing that comes to mind. You're throwing kids out of the schools and so on. And so people were looking at a much broader slate of social and socioeconomic issues and the policing was just one of them. And so I think that was important to personally, to understand how the police then became kind of a barometer. Like when, once you looked at, the way that policing functioned, it was almost an indicator of the way lots of other institutions were functioning in those communities.

## **Panel Discussion on Radical Police Reform - The Daily Show - Air Date 6-10-20**

**TREVOR NOAH - HOST, THE DAILY SHOW:** I think a lot of the conversation that I've heard from everybody on this panel and from every author that I've read or everyone who's written a study on, it says the same thing. You cannot talk about crime without talking about lack of opportunities, without talking lack of resources, without talking communities that are oppressed or not, or underserved--underserved communities.

So my question then becomes, what is the process? Cause I'll tell you from a personal standpoint, I go, what happens in the interim? We've seen repeatedly in America police departments that go on go-slows or go on like basically mini-strikes, even if they don't call it a strike. What process do you see unfolding on the way there? Because you're saying to these people, we're getting rid of the police as you know it, and I mean, police departments hire thousands and thousands of people who earn a living from this. I can see many people who don't have a vested interest in allowing a smooth transition. So is you don't have, have any of you seen any thought that's been put into how that transition would happen?

**ALEX VITALE:** Yeah. You know, there's two ways to think about it. It's manufacturing the political consent for this. And part of that story is about a neutralizing, the power of police unions, who've become a locus for a kind of ideology that says the only way we can solve our problems is with people with guns. And in New York in the last week, over 15 elected officials rejected police endorsements and went and took police contributions and gave them away to bail funds. They said, we're not going to work with these police unions anymore. Not because of their pensions, but because of their toxic politics.

But the other thing is that we have very concrete interventions in mind to deal with very specific things that police do, including shootings and homicides. We have evidence that shows that well-funded and well-run community-based antiviolence initiatives, credible messenger programs can reduce the violence without driving young people into mass incarceration or labeling them gang bangers or super-predators.

**TREVOR NOAH - HOST, THE DAILY SHOW:** But let's talk about the racial element then, which is how do you convince large swaths of America's population who are wealthier and whites, to buy into a policy where they go, we do like the police. Why would they buy into your philosophy? How do you try and move that needle? Because the needle will need to be moved at some point to get to the tipping.

**JOSIE DUFFY RICE:** Well, it's an interesting question because in many of those communities, they barely have the police. Right? What we're asking them to imagine is a world like the one that they live in, and many of these communities, police are not driving down their streets.

They're not seeing the police at every juncture. You're not seeing-- people aren't being stopped and frisked on their sidewalks, right? When their kid gets caught smoking weed, they deal with it at home. The idea of them liking the police is largely theoretical, I think, and not tangible.

And it's interesting because I think in many communities where the police are the most present, those are the communities that are calling for less police.

**TREVOR NOAH - HOST, THE DAILY SHOW:** Right. Right. Same time respectfully, Josie. I find like when you read the stats or if you just read through America's history, a lot of the time black leaders and, you know, black community leaders, they're the ones who are asking for more police, you know, when people talk about the crime bills back in the day in America and being tough on crime. I've seen the videos of black community leaders saying we need you to send in more police; send in as many police, we need more police. Is there a disconnect in the black community where is it like older, black, conservative people? I don't even know what it is. Like not conservative as in like Republican/Democrat, but rather just

older black people saying, no, we need more police. And different generations saying different things.

**JOSIE DUFFY RICE:** I think James Foreman wrote an incredible book about this a couple of years ago. And I think one of the things that he concluded that I think is worth keeping in mind is that historically in a, you know, you think about the late eighties, early nineties in particular, when black leaders were calling for more police, they were also calling for a lot of other resources. We'd like more police we'd also like better schools.

We'd like our kids to be able to go to the park. We'd like an afterschool program. We'd like jobs. Right? They got was more police, but they didn't the other stuff. And so what we're seeing now is that only investin in law enforcement does not create the kind of change and does not create the better community that we want to see.

When I worked in the South Bronx, they couldn't get their trash picked up for weeks, but you could find a police officer if you walked five steps in either direction, is not the kind of world anybody wants to live in. I don't, I truly don't think anybody white, wealthy, poor black immigrant non-immigrant, wants to live in that world.

**PATRISSE CULLORS:** I also think to Josie's point and to your question, Trevor, there is part of this process is also culture people, people having to change and culture changing. And that often takes time. I think we're in a moment where we can call for more, because when I show up to a march in Los Angeles where 50,000 people come out, it's not all black people. It's a multiracial movement led by black people. But I see all types of folks who are holding up Black Lives Matter signs, Defund signs, largely a younger generation saying we are tired of the ways in which police have related. to black people and we stand on their side. Natalie Portman, who is Natalie Portman, you know, I had a long talk with her about defund the police and BL movement for black lives put out a letter where we had celebrities community sign onto it to defund the police. And Natalie had to have, like, we had a real heart to heart and she said to me, I really feel safe with the police and saying this to you makes me deeply uncomfortable, but it's true. [Wow.] I don't know how to, I don't know how to deal with this contradiction.

She's like, I'm going to go study, send me everything you have. I'll do my own research. And a couple of days ago, she wrote on her Instagram posts. I'm with the defund the police movement, and here's my process. I was not, I was deeply uncomfortable with this because as a white woman, they have, they have kept me safe.

I have called the police on people. They've kept me safe. And now I understand that my safety has everything to do with black people's unsafety. That to me is where we're going. People are reimagining. They're taking the time, they're studying, they're trying to figure this thing out because there's no easy fix.

**MYCHAL DENZEL SMITH:** Yeah. And I think we have to take note of how long that process can be, right? So like formal protest against police violence in this country, by black folks. It's been happening since the early 19 hundreds. Right? Like, and then white affluent liberals sort of understand that concept around 1967 with the Kerner Commission being, you know, put together by President Lyndon Johnson and then being like, Oh, this is going to keep happening unless we fund these programs.

## The Racial Justice Uprising in the U.S. is Taking Hold Overseas - The Takeaway - Air Date 6-8-20

**TANZINA VEGA - HOST, THE TAKEAWAY:** What do you see then as a police system that would both ensure public safety and be a productive use of resources? Because I don't think it's realistic to completely defund any measure of public safety.

**PAIGE FERNANDEZ:** So I think that there is a role for police to play, but that is for the most serious crimes and there are police who agree with this. Police have taken way too much. There are people who have mental health crises and police are tasked with responding to the people who are in the middle of a mental health crisis, and they quite frankly, are not trained for that, nor should that responsibility fall on them. Police have been tasked with dealing with the issue of drug use in this country, and that issue should not fall on them. So when we're thinking about defunding the police, I really want to emphasize that we're really talking about reinvesting that money into services that are better equipped to respond to society's problems. So thinking about things like violence prevention programs and putting counselors in schools, instead of cops, things like jobs training.

**TANZINA VEGA - HOST, THE TAKEAWAY:** I mean, I do know an NYPD officer here in New York who expressed exactly what you were suggesting, that he doesn't feel equipped to handle people who are dealing with mental health issues and felt really helpless in terms of engaging with that community. So I think what you're saying, and maybe hopefully I'm understanding this correctly, is to really decriminalize areas that particularly in areas of public health, so mental health, substance abuse, and, and things like that, so that police can focus on actual criminality.

**PAIGE FERNANDEZ:** Well, I think there's two things here. I think the first thing is defunding and reinvesting those resources into what we're talking about, things like mobile crisis patrols, job training counseling, but I also think we're talking about exactly what you just touched on is that we really need to prohibit police from enforcing a range of non serious offenses. And by reallocating those resources, we can do that. By limiting the role and scope of police we are able to do that. Crime isn't random, most of the time it happens when somebody can't meet their basic needs, and so they go through alternative means. Instead of focusing on what I would say is the backend where police come in, once behavior that's been criminalized or an action, that's been criminalized has been committed, they come in at that point. But what we're talking about when we talk about defunding and reinvesting is really focusing on the front end. What do we do so that people don't have to engage in the behaviors that would lead them to contact with the criminal legal system?

## The End of Policing with Alex Vitale - The Bastani Factor, Novara Media - Air Date 6-3-20

**AARON BASTANI - HOST, THE BASTANI FACTOR:** Obviously with the protest in response to George Floyd's death, there'd be a number of proposals as to how the police can improve, particularly in Minneapolis. What's interesting actually is in the book, you detail the several examples of the kinds of reforms you hinted at it at the beginning of the interview with sort

of procedural justice stuff. Some reforms about how these kinds of atrocities could be avoided in the future. Of course, that hasn't happened. It's happening again? Can you just quickly list the kinds of reforms, the kinds of pilots, which have been trialed in places like Minneapolis over the last 5, 10, 15 years.

**ALEX VITALE:** Yeah, so Minneapolis was really held out as a kind of shining star because of its embracing of all these procedural justice reforms that the Obama administration and others were putting forward.

They had implicit bias training. They had mindfulness training. They had community police encounter sessions. They implemented body cameras. They tried to diversify the race of the police department. They created early warning systems to identify problem officers to correct their behavior.

And none of this stuff helps. It's been completely ineffective and I think that that is a big part of both the anger by the protesters and the violence by the police. In part, because I think the police have run out of excuses and they're down to just doubling down on violence and authoritarianism. They've run out of liberal excuses for what they do.

## **Defunding the Police Is Only the Beginning - The Mother Jones Podcast - Air Date 6-17-20**

**JAMILAH KING - HOST, MOTHER JONES:** Do you know of any examples where alternative models to our current model of policing in the United States have been successful?

**JOSIE DUFFY RICE:** Policing in other places doesn't necessarily look like it does in America. And there are many sort of different kinds of forms of law enforcement in other countries.

From what I can tell, some of them are much more . . . much less brutal, much more successful than American policing. But, it's important to point out that like American policing is unique; it is very unique, right, because it is rooted in a history of racial subjugation, of slavery, of Jim Crow, of classism and racism that is unlike anywhere else on the planet.

It's just not analogous to other places, right, and so when people talk about, well, we can keep the police, we can reform them, look at Sweden or Norway or the Scandinavian countries, or look over, you know, look at this small Island or whatever it is. Those are, those places are not us. You can't, you can't excise American policing from the history of American policing. There are examples where reforms have made minor improvements.

**UNIDENTIFIED MEDIA VOICES COMPILATION:** With so much talk of defunding or disbanding police departments, people might be surprised to know it happened right here in New Jersey.

In Camden, New Jersey, new procedures meant to bring officers into closer face-to-face contact with the people they serve seem to be having a positive effect.

The police force in Camden, New Jersey was in such rough shape two years ago it was disbanded. Now, it's being praised and is an example of good policing.

**JOSIE DUFFY RICE:** A lot of people have been talking about Camden lately, which I think actually is not a good example.

**JAMILAH KING - HOST, MOTHER JONES:** Why isn't Camden a good example?

**JOSIE DUFFY RICE:** Camden has been kind of held up as like a national model because in 2013 they disbanded the city police in favor of a new kind of like police force that was run through the County, but still only had jurisdiction over the city and they fired a ton of officers. They hired a ton of new ones. They train them in all these like de-escalation tactics and community policing, and the bottom line is that, if you look at the numbers, right, the number of violent crimes dropped over the past five years. A 38% decline in violent crimes. And this is considered to be an example of like the future of what's possible when you disband the police.

It's not that there weren't things in Camden that were admirable, at least on a, at least on some level, but the idea of Camden and as being the future is actually not reflective of, like, we actually know about what happened there. So number one, like they disbanded their police department as part of a state austerity measure, right?

Like here's New Jersey trying to cut the budget. They spend a lot of money on policing and, in Camden, the city is trying to cut the budget, and so they basically like impart these austerity measures, which is not the goal here. The goal is to invest the money that you're spending elsewhere. Not to just cut the money that you're spending as a way of reducing city budgets when city budgets are already . . . have already been reduced way too much. Also they implemented a ton of surveillance. There's been like much more aggressive policing in Camden has been the reports from people on the ground. And if you have, if you get rid of the police, and then you just put back in more police and you give them fancy names, you're still seeing police brutality. And we haven't solved the problem.

We're talking about rethinking what the role of police is entirely. And there hasn't really been anywhere that's done that. Right. We haven't really seen that across the country at any point that I know of.

## **Defund Police: What It Means & How It Would Really Work - News Beat - Air Date 6-16-20**

**UNIDENTIFIED MEDIA VOICES COMPILATION:** We have breaking news out of Minneapolis. At the Minneapolis city council members at a rally about an hour ago, have announced their plan: disband the Minneapolis police department.

Our commitment is to do what's necessary to keep every single member of our community safe, and to tell the truth, that the Minneapolis police are not doing that.

Our commitment is to end our city's toxic relationship with the Minneapolis police department, to end policing as we know it, and to recreate systems of public safety that actually keep us safe.

Mayor Eric Garcetti says he and the city council had agreed to take \$250 million on the city budget from every department, including LAPD, and redirect the money to social programs that help minorities and the underserved.

San Francisco Mayor London Breed wants to give a part of the police budget to black communities in the city.

Mayor London Breed says the amount they're looking to redirect will be announced on August 1st, I talked to San Francisco police chief Bill Scott, about the decrease in funding:

To reallocate funding to programs that are going to help the overall city objectives, that's not defunding. I mean, we suffer budget cuts all the time.

**BARRY FRIEDMAN:** Yes, it's head-spinning how quickly that caught on. And in fact, the International Association of Chiefs of Police just issued a statement basically saying, don't cut our budgets.

You know, I want to talk for a moment about what I think it's really about, and then actually something that could go wrong. I really view the defunding movement as a call from people in communities to be saying, "The police are not helping, they're harming. And meanwhile, we have a lot of unmet needs that society is not addressing. So let's stop pumping money into the institution that's harming us, and give money to the institutions that we need to help us."

There's some sense in that. And even as the IACP points out, we defunded mental health a while ago, which is why we've got some of the problems that we have. Government, quite frankly, has dropped the ball on many of its jobs.

Defunding the police is complicated because there's some scholarship that suggests that a very poorly-formed department is a dangerous department.

Officers are just stressed to the max. They don't have equipment that they need. You know, I can see that both ways. That's very, very, very tricky, but I think what we need to do is catch a breath and figure out, do we understand the underlying problem? And are we ready to face up to that problem?

I became curious about what cops actually do all day long, because what cops are, are trained to respond with force and the law, they're law enforcement: law and force-ment. And the question is, is that the right response to substance abuse, homelessness, domestic violence, name it. And what I did as I walked through all the functions that the police served and just kind of did a matchup, you know, just the skill set of force and law, address this issue. Let me give you kind of a good example because it's so mundane: cops spend a fair amount of time, you know, take your traffic report for accidents. Is that a good use of their time? Are they trained to do that, or would, you know, some recent college graduates do a better job of that? Do we need cops? New Orleans decided they don't. They contract that out. Domestic violence. You may well need for it, could be a very volatile situation, but you also may need mediation, meaning somebody going to try to calm the situation down; you may need social work skills, try to diagnose what's going on in that particular domestic unit, see if we can't help long-term problems. Again, cops aren't trained to do that. Cops aren't trained adequately. What I did was just pick that all apart. At the end of the day, I said, look,

there's a function that policing serves, but there's a lot of what we send police to do that really could be addressed with different skillset. And I think that's very much at the bottom of what folks are talking about with the defunding movement right now.

I have this dream of a completely re-imagined idea of first responders. First responders would be trained much more substantially than today's police officers on a wide range of disciplinary skills. So they would know how to use some force and they would know about the law, but they would also know about mediation, social work and EMT and conflict resolution.

They would be incentivized in a completely different way than the police are today. They'd get credit when they solve problems, they'd get rewarded for not using force, for not bringing people into the criminal justice system, unless absolutely necessary. They get rewarded for solving the problem that caused them to be called to the same address and times.

If you look at the streets right now, there are lots of people, maybe tens and hundreds of thousands, who actually have an idea of what policing ought to look like compared to what we're seeing now. So maybe it's a little less of a hard sell than we might've thought. You know, veto-proof majority of the Minneapolis city council says, I think quite correctly, we need a Department of Public Safety, not a police department.

It's ironic because a lot of police departments call themselves departments of public safety. But what the counselors in Minneapolis are trying to say, and I applaud them, is: our goal as a society is to make sure that people are safe along a lot of dimensions. You know, are you safe if you're homeless? Are you safe if you can't conquer a substance abuse problem? And is your family safe in that set of circumstances? Are you safe if you are mentally ill and not getting care? We need to start to have a more capacious understanding of what is public safety. And then we need to target our resources for achieving that, instead of just thinking that we're going to go around.... I mean, the concept of policing is sort of like, we're all at personal risk from bad people at every moment, our homes are being broken into and our bodies violated. There are certainly neighborhoods or communities in this country that have very serious problems with that nature. It is not most of the country.

## **How to Defund the Police - Boom! Lawyered - Air Date 6-11-20**

**JESSICA MASON PIEKLO:** So, now I get to talk about one of my favorite people on Twitter. Her name is Mariame Kaba, and she goes by prison culture on Twitter. She did an interview with Chris Hayes back in April, 2019, and I recently listened to it and read the transcript multiple times and it was positively brilliant. And I have to say she's probably single-handedly responsible for me over the last week changing my thought process around prison abolition and police abolition. So, she's a prison abolitionist, activist and writer, and she advocates for community-based solutions. She gives an example in this podcast where she talks about what if there's a drug addict in your neighborhood named Bill, and Bill breaks into your house and steals your TV. You're not going to call the cops, right? You're going to call Bill or you going to call Bill's family because this is a person who's known to you. Everybody knows that Bill is a drug addict. Everybody knows he keeps breaking into people's houses, and

people are like, Bill, get your shit together. You're going to call someone who knows Bill to encourage Bill to get his shit together, maybe go to rehab, what have you.

**IMANI GANDY:** But what if I don't know Bill. What if Bill's a stranger?

**JESSICA MASON PIEKLO:** Well, think about what would happen now. You'd go outside and be like, Oh no, my Subaru's gone, and then you'd call the cops. But then, what do the cops do about it? They come over; they take some notes; they write a police report, and then they do fuck all. You never hear from them again.

And so, Mariame Kabo wants to imagine a world in which, instead of calling the cops, there is a neighborhood association to deal with problems, right. And this may sound ridiculous, oh, well, we're going to have a neighborhood association that's going to deal with crime? It sounds ridiculous until you think about the ways in which cops respond to certain populations, and what actually gets done when you call the cops. You feel like you've been vindicated somehow. You call the cops; you make your report. You've voiced your outrage. You're told on somebody. Somebody is going to get in trouble. But what has been accomplished, right? The person's going to get in trouble. You're never going to know what the reason was for stealing the TV. Are they poor? Are they drug dependent in some way?

And that person gets funneled into a system. The system doesn't care about making . . . about rehabilitating him or fixing the core reasons of the TV theft. It's just, you got somebody, you put somebody in jail. And then there's somebody else is going to come in the neighborhood and steal your fucking Subaru anyway.

Okay. No, I mean, that makes sense. So, and like, it's, it's a thing, right? My like, it's, I, I love my Subaru, but it's replaceable.

**IMANI GANDY:** Right

**JESSICA MASON PIEKLO:** That's not the case in murder, or like rape cases, you know?

**IMANI GANDY:** Yeah.

**JESSICA MASON PIEKLO:** Like those questions.

**IMANI GANDY:** Those are rough. Those are rough questions, but how do we, you know, what, what, what do present abolitionists say to that, Jess?

**JESSICA MASON PIEKLO:** Well, we've got some news there. Most murders go unsolved. Imani, people are literally out there getting away with murder. That's not just a phrase, it's a reality. So, some folks want to say, well, what about murderers and rapists without examining how the system really works now? And it doesn't work out so well now, does it. It doesn't work well at all. So, the clearance rate for murder cases has decreased from 90% to 64%.

**IMANI GANDY:** Wait, what does that mean? What's a clearance rate?

**JESSICA MASON PIEKLO:** So, clearance rate doesn't even mean the person who committed the crime got convicted. Clearance is essentially cop talk for a case that ends in an arrest or a case in which the perp is identified without the possibility of arrest, so, for example, if the perp died. So, that means that a third of murders never even lead to an arrest, let alone get solved. If you're murdered, there's a one-in-three chance that your killer will never be found.

People watch entirely way too much *Law and Order* and think that the cops always find the culprit, and they just don't.

**IMANI GANDY:** Okay, Jess, I totally get where you're going with this. You're saying that we should be out there murdering more people, right, cause we're not going to get caught. That's what you're saying. I've got an Arya Stark list. Yeah, we can just start going down the list, just knocking people out.

**JESSICA MASON PIEKLO:** That is not at all what I'm saying, Imani. I am not saying that whatsoever.

**IMANI GANDY:** Well, that may not be what you're saying, but that's what I heard.

**JESSICA MASON PIEKLO:** But, seriously folks, what's interesting about Mariame Kaba is how she talks about people relying on the policing model that we have now, because it's all that they know.

**IMANI GANDY:** It's true.

**JESSICA MASON PIEKLO:** So, the idea is we have to do something. We have to do something to deal with crime and criminals, and this is what we've been doing, so this is what we're just going to keep doing.

And Mariame's response to that is, Well, it's not working, and it hasn't worked for 400 years, so maybe we should try something different. She has this whole, she goes on this -- I don't want to call it a rant because I don't like saying the women of Color rant -- but she does talk about how frustrated she is when people get angry with her about her ideas of abolishing the police. And she's like, Don't get angry with me; get angry with the system that you've been upholding for 400 years which doesn't work. So, why are you mad at me when we could just get together, sit in a room and try and come up with some alternative solutions.

And that means non-police solutions. So, things like sending social workers for domestic violence, intimate partner violence-related issues, sending counselors for substance dependency issues, mental health counselors, for people with mental health issues, absolutely removing police from schools and focusing on counselors in that space.

But I gotta say something here. We cannot go back to sundown towns. Because White people like to police their own communities, and when we do, we tend to chase out the Brown folks.

**IMANI GANDY:** Why don't you explain quickly what a sundown town is in case people don't know?

**JESSICA MASON PIEKLO:** Yes, totally. So, you know, as we've said, the history of policing is absolutely baked into sort of White identity in the culture, and sundown towns are literally places where I grew up, in states like Nebraska, Missouri, Arkansas, where when the sun went down, you got the hell out of town if you were Brown or Black because they were patrolled by White patrol to keep the neighborhood integrity. Right. And we hear this in modern day neighborhood zoning fights, right? Neighborhood character fights and city things. Like that's all about all of that. So, as we are talking about community-based solutions

to policing, I just really think it's important for the White folks to be like, no, we can't go back to doing that bad thing again, because that's no good.

**IMANI GANDY:** Right

**JESSICA MASON PIEKLO:** We're not going to have a bunch of George Zimmermans patrolling areas, shooting kids for iced teas and Skittles

**IMANI GANDY:** Exactly

**JESSICA MASON PIEKLO:** We're not doing that.

## Is It Time To Defund the Police? - Deconstructed with Mehdi Hasan - Air Date 6-11-20

**MEHDI HASAN - HOST, DECONSTRUCTED:** My guest today is a fighter, a longstanding campaigner for social justice and human rights. And the co-founder of Black Lives Matter. Patrisse Cullors is also the Founder of Reform LA Jails and author of the acclaimed book, "When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir."

She joins me now from LA.

Patrisse, thanks for joining me on Deconstructed. Let's get straight to it: What does "defund the police" mean, in practice, in the real world?

**PATRISSE CULLORS:** Defunding the police means that we're actually resourcing communities, like black, poor communities with access to health care, access to adequate public education, and access to jobs. Much of what the police do right now are things that social workers can do, things that case managers can do, things that other governmental workers can do. And that's why our movement is calling to defund them.

**MEHDI HASAN - HOST, DECONSTRUCTED:** Is there a difference, Patrisse, between defunding the police and abolishing the police — because we've heard both slogans in recent weeks, and sometimes they sound interchangeable, but sometimes

**PATRISSE CULLORS:** they don't?

Sure. Some people believe in the defund demand because it means that we'll keep police at some capacity. And some people believe that the defund demand is our pathway towards abolition.

So they are two different demands, depending on your philosophies. I'm an abolitionist, so I believe that the first step to abolition is defunding both the police system, but also the carceral system, which is the system that has created mass incarceration.

**MEHDI HASAN - HOST, DECONSTRUCTED:** So, a lot of liberals listening to this will say: "We're totally onboard with the idea that the police are out of control, that institutional racism is a problem, but defunding the police, abolishing the police, those are steps too far, we want reform." What do you say to them? What's wrong with police reform?

**PATRISSE CULLORS:** Well, what I say to people is, and when we say defunding the police, we're not saying stop having people be accountable to issues of harm and violence. This is not a conversation about lack of accountability. This is a conversation about building in a new system of accountability, one that is based on an economy of care over an economy of punishment.

Right now, we have a system that is punitive, that is based on punishing human beings. And that is cruel and evil. The system that we're asking for is a compassionate and loving system, and that is able to still hold people accountable for harm that they cause. That is totally in alignment with people who believe in defunding, and also with people who believe in abolition.

**MEHDI HASAN - HOST, DECONSTRUCTED:** But reform, you believe the police — we have to go beyond reform, reform's not enough reform, doesn't work? What's your position on 'reform'?

**PATRISSE CULLORS:** I think it depends on the kind of reform.

When I talk about reform, I'm thinking about non-reformist reform, which is — my work is about decreasing the police's ability to be in contact with black people. And so whatever demands that I'm making, or the organizations that I work with are making, is always about how do we lessen the burden of police on black communities?

So a reform can be reform like body cameras. Does that change the structural violence and racism inside of police departments? No, actually, it has not changed it at all. Instead, body cameras are just showing us more and more the dysfunctionality of policing.

And so, the other reform that we're calling for — because defunding the police is a reform, but it's the reform that isn't giving the police state more money.

**MEHDI HASAN - HOST, DECONSTRUCTED:** The immediate response from a lot of people in recent days, including people of color, to this idea of defunding or abolishing the police is: What happens if I'm in trouble? What happens if I am facing a violent or dangerous person? Who do I call?

**PATRISSE CULLORS:** Hopefully, we can build new institutions that people can have a new place to call. If it's 911, then hopefully, someone's in a mental health crisis, you can call 911. And instead of them sending a police officer who may kill the person who's in that mental health crisis, you call someone like a caseworker or a psychiatrist who's been trained to deescalate an issue.

The problem is oftentimes when police do show up more violence happens, it doesn't make it less violent when the police are involved. And that's very important for people to understand.

## **The Politics of "Defund the Police" - Politics with Amy Walter, The Takeaway - Air Date 6-12-20**

**MATT KATZ - HOST, THE TAKEAWAY:** I will say, though, on the federal level, there seems to be a disconnect between that kind of thinking and what activists and protesters are arguing on

the street, and then what the leadership within the democratic party is saying. I spoke with Congressman Clyburn on the show about the Justice and Policing Act and he said he was just against the idea of defunding the police, and he said it was just a slogan that would have to be explained to voters. He likes the idea of "restructuring the police departments" instead. Alex, what would you say to congressmen Clyburn? Isn't he and those national Democrats, don't they represent a significant hurdle for this movement?

**ALEX VITALE:** You know, I'm not wedded to any particular slogan or two word description of this movement, *Defund the Police* kind of emerged organically as something that could go on a cardboard sign or a hashtag, but this movement is clear about what it wants. It wants the redirection of resources from criminalization to community empowerment, health, and safety. And so we don't need Congress to pass a *Defund the Police* bill, we need Congress to quit subsidizing local police, to dial back the drug war, to get rid of SESTA/FOSTA that criminalize it sex work, and to put new resources into bringing counselors and social workers back into our schools, to creating high quality, medically based drug treatment programs to help combat the opioid crisis. These are things Congress could do right away without having to get caught up in the language of *Defund the Police*.

**MATT KATZ - HOST, THE TAKEAWAY:** Andrea, are you concerned about the Democratic establishment at large that doesn't seem moved by this idea of defunding the police? Joe Biden, the presumptive democratic nominee says he will not support calls to the defund the police. I'm wondering the same question I asked Alex, where does this leave this movement, and then the police abolition movement at large, if national Democrats who are in power are so staunchly against it?

**ANDREA RITCHIE:** I think that definitely there are significant portions of Democratic leadership that are completely out of step with what people on the ground are demanding, and frankly what's needed to meet this moment and to honor the lives of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and so many more people who have been killed or harmed by police. And again, this is not the time for solutions of the past, which have failed us. This is the time for solutions of the future where we are going to build a world premised on genuine safety and accountability and sustainability and thriving for our communities, and particularly for Black and Brown communities. And so people could look for instance, I agree with Alex that they don't need to introduce the *Defund Police* bill, if they're not happy with the hashtag, but they can look to a representative Ayanna Pressley's *People's Justice Guarantee*, which has provisions in it that specifically would redirect funding from law enforcement to supporting communities to come up with different responses to 911 calls, that would support community members, help them. That would really direct money to the kinds of community based transformative approaches to safety that Alex was just talking about. That would redirect money from pouring police officers, armed police officers into schools who commit not only physical violence, but sexual violence in schools, and instead, move that money to flooding those schools with counselors and resources that will assist young people in surviving and thriving and learning restorative justice practices that they can then take out into their communities to help mediate, prevent, and transform harm.

**We Can't Let The Uprising Get Co-opted - The Michael Brooks Show - Air Date 6-10-20**

**MICHAEL BROOKS - HOST, THE MICHAEL BROOKS SHOW:** We know the dangers that with regards to austerity, the absolute interest in private security, interests, and others into mobilizing this moment for the mercenary industry and whether or not these cuts will turn into austerity, or will they be turned into cuts of police departments and radical and deep funding of everything else. That's what we need to focus on right now. Defund the police is not just defund. It is slash and get rid of abusive, broken windows, systemically racist and classist policing, and redeploy and redistribute money into other vital sectors, health care, education, and all other areas that are vital in states and localities.

It also means breaking up different functions inside the police department. Of course, you need people that investigate and deal with real crimes, but you absolutely do not need people policing communities terrorizing and harassing communities or being given the assignments, doing jobs that they are not able and did not even sign up to do, like social work or education.

So we need to make sure that these moves don't mean that the money just gets taken away in an austerity drive, which we already see across this country, and that will be the counter move that you might see as this agenda gets embraced by a broader set of policy makers.

We already know that we're about to see harsh austerity. New York City's facing a several billion dollar book cut and the private sector, which has already stepped up its efforts, we've seen as an example, the cooperation between one private billionaire giving the Baltimore police department, essentially a drone program, which we've talked about on this program. That the impulse to go towards austerity and privatization is a very real political formation right now. And we also see this in other areas of the world where there's significant problems with out of control, violent, racist, and brutal policing, including Brazil and South Africa. So the clear, clear policy agenda needs to be that that money is not going anywhere. That money is going to...[audio cutout]...Floyd to health, education, jobs, and other community support infrastructure. Then there needs to be the redesigning of the departments themselves so that different tasks are split up into discreet and distinct categories, and this is going to involve treating the democracy and security of all as a fundamental right, and not a privilege of any one race or class. We have seen the absolute viciousness of police departments that many people have been very aware of and have known because they've been on the receiving end of from the perspective of systemic racism for quite some time. And we've seen examples like this, the Minneapolis police department, we're going to let's play this clip of them cutting tires of, do we have this clip of the Minneapolis police department cutting, yeah. This is some protesters and news crews and medics in Minneapolis found themselves stranded after recent protests, the tires of their cars had been slashed, many assume the protestors were to blame. I didn't assume the protestors were to blame, but videos reveal a different culprit, the police watch this.

These are police officers, literally puncturing the tires of this car. People serving as medics during these protests. We need to get rid of all forms of lifestyle policing, all forms of so-called broken windows policing, which has been the dynamic that has facilitated the gentrification, redesigning, and absolute brutality in modern cities that have given rise and been the handmaiden of the real estate industry and extreme inequality.

We need to get rid of that entirely. And we need to make sure that the budgets that remain are redeployed effectively and redesigned creatively inside the departments themselves.

When aiming to dismantle the police department will must be vigilant that the neoliberal religion of replacing the public with the private does not lead to a rise in private policing. It will be disastrous. And if we achieve the goal of weakening the police force, we can only see a rise in policing, tied to private firms use to terrorize on behalf of private interest. We need to also be extremely vigilant of the Democratic party, co-opting the movement and building on symbolic reforms that don't get to the fundamentals. Now the Democrats have put forward bill that as an example, would band choke holds. What kind of a disgusting obscene society we live in that, that wasn't already banned ages ago. And of course we've also seen as in the murder of Eric Garner that bans do not stop police violence. Make it easier to sue police officers who unjustly injure or kill citizens, lower the federal threshold for when police officers can be charged with using excessive force, create a national policemen misconduct registry, end racial profiling, limit the transfer of military equipment to police departments.

These are all good things in and of themselves, but none of them amount to systemic and complete demilitarization as well as a redesign of policing so that these distinct categories are broken up between real crime that needs to be dealt with, things that should not be crimes at all, like the drug war, or areas that are best responded to by social workers, educators, and other community initiatives. The next chapter of this movement is yet to be determined. The social base is growing. There are countervailing forces prepared to absorb and redirect popular anger towards the reaffirmation of establishment power, both in terms of neoliberalism and even in terms of some of the most dangerous tendencies in policing itself. So we need to keep pressing on and we need to be prepared with the next phases of strategy.

## **Activism: #DefundthePolice Locally via @IndivisibleGuide & Nationally with The #BREATHEAct via @Mvmnt4BlkLives**

**JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** You've reached the activism portion of today's show. Now that you're informed and angry, here's what you can do about it. Today's activism, Defund the Police Locally and Demand Your Members of Congress Support The Breathe Act

The Defund the Police movement is a national movement requiring hyperlocal action.

To help, Indivisible has created a tool that allows you to call your local and state officials quickly and easily, and often, to demand they defund the police and invest in Black communities, Indigenous communities, and communities of color – often referred to as B\_I\_P\_O\_C or Bye-POC communities. If Indivisible doesn't have your officials' information, they link to a tool from Common Cause that helps you find what you need.

Visit indivisible dot org, scroll down, and click on the action square that says "Call on your local officials to defund police and invest in Black communities."

At the federal level, the BREATHE Act is a project by The Movement for Black Lives unveiled in early July. This bill that aims to realign America's moral compass by reallocating its massive investments in racist INjustice systems, prisons and war toward incentives for decarceration, community-led approaches to public safety, and environmental, economic, health, education

and housing justice. It's basically "Defund the Police" on a national scale and an effort to acknowledge and right many of the wrongs committed over centuries. It is being called a visionary Civil Rights bill for the modern era.

Representative Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts and Representative Rashida Tlaib of Michigan have signed on to bring the bill to the Congressional floor. Check out [Breathe Act dot org](https://www.breatheact.org) for more information and call your members of Congress today to urge them to commit to supporting this bill.

Finally, there are primaries still coming up in Hawaii, Connecticut, Minnesota, Vermont, Wisconsin, Alaska, Florida, Wyoming, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Delaware, Rhode Island and Louisiana. Find the candidates at all levels supporting Defund the Police efforts and donate or volunteer to help them win. And, of course, keep your eyes on November. We'll have more for you on that soon.

The segment notes include all the links to this information as well as additional resources and, as always, this and every activism segment we produce is archived and organized under the activism tab at [Best of the Left dot com](https://www.bestoftheleft.com). So if ending systemic racism to create a more just and moral society is important to you, be sure to hit the share buttons, to spread the word about defunding the police locally and the breathe act via social media so that others in your network can spread the word too.

## **Angela Davis: Abolishing police is not just about dismantling. It's also about building up. - Democracy Now - Air Date 6-12-2020**

**ANGELA DAVIS:** Well, the call to defund the police is, I think, an abolitionist demand, but it reflects only one aspect of the process represented by the demand. Defunding the police is not simply about withdrawing funding for law enforcement and doing nothing else. And it appears as if this is the rather superficial understanding that has caused Biden to move in the direction he's moving in.

It's about shifting public funds to new services and new institutions — mental health counselors, who can respond to people who are in crisis without arms. It's about shifting funding to education, to housing, to recreation. All of these things help to create security and safety. It's about learning that safety, safeguarded by violence, is not really safety.

And I would say that abolition is not primarily a negative strategy. It's not primarily about dismantling, getting rid of, but it's about reenvisioning. It's about building anew. And I would argue that abolition is a feminist strategy. And one sees in these abolitionist demands that are emerging the pivotal influence of feminist theories and practices.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Explain that further.

**ANGELA DAVIS:** Well, I want us to see feminism not only as addressing issues of gender, but rather as a methodological approach of understanding the intersectionality of struggles and issues. Abolition feminism counters carceral feminism, which has unfortunately assumed that issues such as violence against women can be effectively addressed by using police

force, by using imprisonment as a solution. And of course we know that Joseph Biden, in 1994, who claims that the Violence Against Women Act was such an important moment in his career — the Violence Against Women Act was couched within the 1994 Crime Act, the Clinton Crime Act.

And what we're calling for is a process of decriminalization, not — recognizing that threats to safety, threats to security, come not primarily from what is defined as crime, but rather from the failure of institutions in our country to address issues of health, issues of violence, education, etc. So, abolition is really about rethinking the kind of future we want, the social future, the economic future, the political future. It's about revolution, I would argue.

**AMY GOODMAN:** You write in *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle*, “Neoliberal ideology drives us to focus on individuals, ourselves, individual victims, individual perpetrators. But how is it possible to solve the massive problem of racist state violence by calling upon individual police officers to bear the burden of that history and to assume that by prosecuting them, by exacting our revenge on them, we would have somehow made progress in eradicating racism?” So, explain what exactly you're demanding.

**ANGELA DAVIS:** Well, neoliberal logic assumes that the fundamental unit of society is the individual, and I would say the abstract individual. According to that logic, Black people can combat racism by pulling themselves up by their own individual bootstraps. That logic recognizes — or fails, rather, to recognize that there are institutional barriers that cannot be brought down by individual determination. If a Black person is materially unable to attend the university, the solution is not affirmative action, they argue, but rather the person simply needs to work harder, get good grades and do what is necessary in order to acquire the funds to pay for tuition. Neoliberal logic deters us from thinking about the simpler solution, which is free education.

## Taken on a journey - Nick from California

**NICK FROM CALIFORNIA:** Hey, Jay, I just wanted to say that, that last episode on maintaining the structures of power, it was amazing. You know, at first, I'm obviously out usually doing something a little distracted, maybe walking the kid in the stroller was one and not paying the most attention. And I'm like, what exactly am I listening to? Where's this going very uncomfortable to listen to these people yelling, and I'm not sure where Jay is taking me on this journey, and then it ended up being one of the more insightful journeys you've taken us on, I would say. I really learned something I didn't just listened to some facts, but, I really learned stuff from your podcast there that I will take with me into the future. Your way of saying oh, okay, well this is a classic DARVO and oh, you might know what DARVO is, it's a classic, but just in case you don't and that oriented me to like, wait, I probably should know this, but I'm actually drawing a blank. And then, You explained it, then you explained it a couple of other times to make it clear to make it memorable, but I'd love putting the audio clips in there with each portion. Here's the denial, here's the attack. here's where the reversing victim and offender and, like I said, I just, I listened to the podcast completely yesterday. I'm listening to the bonus now. And, and I still remember it from yesterday when normally I don't know that I would remember an acronym and all the details like that.

And you sort of audio trained us to spot when it's happening. And you also had a deeper lesson about how it enforces the structures of racism, more deeply in this narrative, and in

this example, and I just thought it was a, an amazing journey you brought us on, which, is both a difficult journey, but a memorable one, that I needed to go on.

So, uh, thank you, Jay. Stay awesome. I know that was a lot of work for you, but, you know, great great work. So I definitely think it was worth the time to have maybe one less episode to have one that you know, and we're supposed to listen to it thought quite a bit and learned a lot about the subject.

Thank you. Bye.

## Final comments puncturing the myth of the individuality of whiteness

**JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Thanks for listening everyone. Thanks to Amanda Hoffman for all of her work on our social media outlets and activism segments. And thanks to all those who called into the voicemail line. If you'd like to leave a comment or question of your own to be played on the show, you can send us a voice memo by e-mail or simply record a message at (202) 999-3991. And I've got to say, I'm glad to be getting back to voicemails for the first time in a long time. And today's was great. It got me thinking in a really interesting direction.

So, Nick called about the Systems of Power episode. He mentioned specifically DARVO, and I just wanted to reiterate once again to please go check out Rachel Cargle and The Great Unlearn Project. She's doing great work, and a lot of it is just posted on Instagram. So, she is at RACHEL.CARGLE on Instagram but then her website and everything else is great. And so, to expand on this and go into what I think is an interesting direction, I just want to talk more about how White people reject the idea of being thought of as a group.

This is just a universal truism of White people. We hate thinking of ourselves as a group who have like interests and tendencies in line with each other because of our group dynamic, even though we're perfectly happy to put pretty much everyone else in the world into groups and think, you know, those groups help to define those people, but, we as White people, we are not part of a group. We're all individuals, you know, economically, emotionally, even historically. A lot of people in the U S think that they can be proud of the Confederacy without bringing any of the racism it represented into the present. And even more think that we can run police forces without any concern for their history too, even though, for instance, police who had been on the force since the 1990s were this year found to have said, "We are just going to go out and start slaughtering them f\*\*\*\*ing n\*\*\*\*\*. I can't wait. God, I can't wait," and another said that a civil war was needed to "wipe them off the f\*\*\*\*ing map. That'll put them back about four or five generations." That's what police who had been on the police force until within the last few months were saying accidentally on tape. So, if you think that you can run a police force without having any concern for its history, exhibit A.

So, I have a story that relates to all this. The most fascinating thing that I ever heard Amanda's 90-plus-year-old grandmother say. I love "meemaw" stories. She was really, really interesting. She was 90 years old, more than 90-plus years old.,was born and raised in the South, was an FDR Democrat her whole life, and just had a really interesting slate of

opinions, and was sharp as a tack. So , she could hang with any political conversation we threw at her, and she loved to do it. She hated racism. She desperately wanted for it to just be in our past, and fervently wished that Black people could just learn to get over slavery. Sure, it was painful; it was a bad thing, but it was such a long time ago, can't they just get over it. And this is a really standard line from White people. But even though she was very progressive, as I said, for her age and upbringing, she was still a product of having been raised in the South by grandparents who had lived through Reconstruction themselves. So she's effectively like one generation away from having lived through Reconstruction.

So, she'd got the stories from her grandparents about this. And so one night, she gave to Amanda and I -- she had this very eloquent explanation of the legacy of losing the Civil War and the impact it had on, not only the people who lived through it, but on their descendants as well in the South -- she spoke of an intergenerational pain and humiliation attached to the outcome of that war, and she explained how that humiliation continued to trickle through the generations through to today. I mean in the year 2016, she was still mad about Sherman for his march through the South, burning cities as he went, and she held a personal grudge about that.

And so, Amanda and I are listening to this, and we're both screaming in our heads: That, that right there! You are perfectly explaining the pain of slavery that is continuing to trickle through the generations. That is why it is silly to tell them to just get over it. You're describing the other side. You can see it in the White people, but you can't see it in the Black people. To be clear, this wasn't hypocrisy; it was ignorance and blindness to the parallels that she was describing.

So, White people get to hang onto the past. We're individuals. We have individual connections to the past. We have ancestors, and we want to find ways to be proud of where we came from, and we want to connect with those people who lived in the past whom we come from. We want to empathize with their losses but not make them the villains. Black people, on the other hand, they're not really individuals with individual connections to the past Black people. They're just a group; they're collectively obsessed with this long-past history. They don't really have any connection to it. Their lives today aren't really a reflection of slavery, either. It's so different now. And so they, as a group, should be expected to just forget the past and appreciate how they're collectively better off than their ancestors were.

And *White Fragility*, I mean the book and the concept, says the same thing. It's talking about how it's appropriate to see White people as a group, and it is being rejected by many White people for the same basic reasons.

**JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** White people think it's unfair to group us all together and to say that the majority of us react in the same bad way to discussions of racism. But the whole

**JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** point of that book, of the Great

**JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Unlearn project from Rachel Cargle and talking about terms like DARVO and applying that to White people talking about race, is to show the patterns that emerge like big, bright flashing billboards. You know, it's not subtle. White people as a group, regardless of how much they hate being grouped together, end up falling into the same patterns over and over again.

**JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** So, Rachel Cargle does this great series on Instagram and maybe elsewhere, but you can find these on Instagram, where she annotates comments that she receives to demonstrate how often well-meaning and sometimes not well-meaning White people fall into the same patterns over and over again. So, here's the one that Rachel Cargle used, and this is what introduced us to DARVO. She had, I guess, explained DARVO: Deny Attack, Reverse Victim and Oppressor. I went into detail on that; that's what Nick was referring to from the Systems of Power episode. So, here's the comment that Rachel is responding to.

So, this person who's writing -- apparently a previous post of hers had been used in one of these annotation lessons -- so this person writes back saying:

"I am heartbroken you used my post of hope and love that White people in 2020 might be stumbling toddlers as we learn how to be antiracist in such a negative way. We can't be perfect immediately, and I was begging for encouragement as we try together to make the world a better place. If I said it poorly, I apologize from the bottom of my heart. I'm crying now to be so misunderstood. Clearly, my best isn't good enough. I'm sorry."

And so, to the general lay person, that sounds like a genuine heartfelt apology and, trying to correct a misstep, but again, even when incredibly well meaning, when trying to say the right thing, it falls into the same pattern again: deny -- "we can't be perfect immediately;" attack -- "you used my post of hope in a negative way;" and reverse victim and oppressor -- "I'm heartbroken. I'm crying now and I was begging for encouragement." And Rachel's comment on this is: "This is a literal academically studied tactic of psychological manipulation, and it's employed by White people against the Black community day in and day out." So, as I said, that's just one example. She has a whole series of these, and it's not to condemn that commentor as terrible; it's to show that, even when we mean really well, we fall into these same patterns.

One more example for you. So, here's another comment that came in and then Rachel annotates it. So the comment is:

Yes, systemic racism is real, but lots of "White people" who seem blessed are dealing with their own childhood traumas and abuse. Your post makes it seem like "White people" collectively have perfect lives, and Black people are collectively suffering. Each soul comes into this world with their own challenges, opportunities, advantages and disadvantages. Do you think Oprah would have made it as far as she did if she sat around hating on how many more opportunities White people had than her? No.

Okay. So, Rachel comments on this. Again, like for the lay person, this sounds well meaning, sounds like they're trying to be constructive and add nuance, but let's see about some of the patterns that this commenter has fallen into. The first annotation is just on the word 'yes' at the very beginning. Yes, systemic racism is real, but, and Rachel writes,

'Yes, but,' also known as 'what about-ism,' is a variant of the "tu quoque" logical fallacy that attempts to discredit and opponent's position by charging them with hypocrisy without directly refuting or disproving their argument.

Annotation No. 2 is under "White people." Rachel writes :

White people, when referring to themselves, often put the word White in quotation marks. Over text, it's understood that these translate to 'air quotes' in the English language. We take 'air quotes' to denote sarcasm or irony. This is a form of delusion in which White people believe that they are a default and have no labeling while everything else indeed does, as it becomes convenient for them.

Annotation No. 3 is on Black people. Rachel writes:

She then, as expected, didn't seem to find the need to put quotes around Black people. Interesting.

The fourth annotation is on Oprah. Do you think Oprah would have made it as far if she sat around hating? So Rachel writes:

The deep desire for White Americans to tokenize successful Black people as a means to bury the realities of systemic racism and push ideologies of merit-based achievement have been one of the tools of this country since its inception. From 'the happy slave' to 'but look at Oprah and Obama,' these efforts pushed to reinforce the American dream to Black Americans, despite the structural economic and political barriers that exist in our racist society. Tokenism glorifies the exception in order to obscure the rules of the game of success in a capitalist society.

And the fifth annotation is around 'Oprah as if she sat around, hating on how many more opportunities White people had than her.' Rachel writes:

When the discussion of racial justice and/or critique of our racist systems is punctured by bringing up the cases of Oprah or Obama, note that it's rarely ever followed by dynamic discussion about reproducing those successes in this new and shiny system we have. It's however a plea to "shut up and be grateful someone like you finally got somewhere."

So, that's just an example of the kind of work Rachel Cargle is doing annotating White people's comments to show how, No, you are not unique. No, your ideas are not new. No, you are not an individual who just means well and whose intentions should be valued higher than the impact of your actions or your statements. You are regurgitating well-worn paths of rhetoric. This is what happens over and over again for generations, centuries, and it doesn't mean that the people making these comments are terrible people. It just goes to show that they are members of a group who act predictably based on being raised as a member of that group.

As always, keep the comments coming in at (20) (202) 999-3991. That is going to be it for today. Thanks to everyone for listening; thanks to those who support the show by becoming a member or making donations of any size at [patreon.com/bestofleft](https://patreon.com/bestofleft). That is absolutely how the program survives.

Of course, everyone can support the show just by telling everyone you know about it and leaving us glowing reviews on Apple podcasts and Facebook to help others find the show. For details on the show itself, including links to all of the sources and music used in this and every episode, all that information can always be found in the show notes on the blog and likely right on the device you're using to listen.

So coming to you from far outside the conventional wisdom of Washington, D C, my name is Jay, and this has been the Best of the Left podcast, coming to you as often as we are able, thanks entirely to the members and donors to the show from [best of the left.com](http://bestoftheleft.com).