

FALSE FRAMING AND REAL SOLUTIONS: *Police-Community Relations vs. Police Accountability*

Thank you for attending this event. Your presence shows that you are interested in the quality of policing our community experiences.

Like so many other recent events on policing, organizers want to discuss the issue of “police-community relations” as a way of addressing the serious issue of police brutality, misconduct and abuse of authority. Many of these events are driven by a sincere interest in improving policing and addressing abuses.

The problem is, this is a false framing of the issue. This, like so many other reform efforts, centers on improving what politicians like to call “police-community relations.” This framing proposes that if police and the community could somehow just get along better, trust would be built and the problem would be solved. It also places half the responsibility for the problem on the community, when we have little control over police descending on our streets in armored vehicles, wearing riot gear and carrying high-powered weapons, or violating people’s rights—and bodies—with impunity.

We need to be clear—this is an issue of police abuse of authority, the oppression that underpins it, and the lack of accountability that encourages it. No amount of “dialogue” or other relationship-building measures will improve this because “relationships” aren’t the underlying cause of the problem except, perhaps, relationships between police and people in power, who benefit from the current police state.

Unless efforts shift from “police-community relations” to police accountability and community control of the police, these problems will continue. In fact, if police were held accountable for their actions in meaningful ways, police misconduct would nearly disappear and police-community relations would improve on their own, with no special efforts needed.

What’s the solution?

Police brutality, misconduct, and abuse of authority are difficult problems. Multiple solutions are needed:

- Requiring police officers to carry their own professional liability insurance so that they have financial consequences for engaging in misconduct (and a financial incentive not to).
- Restoring a true civilian review authority with subpoena power and power to enforce discipline.
- Community oversight of police policies, with the community setting standards of acceptable conduct.
- Independent investigation (by an independent panel, not another police department) and prosecution of police officers who engage in serious incidents such as theft, sexual assault, brutality or who kill members of the community.
- Termination of police officers when lawsuits for brutality are successful. No cop that costs taxpayers huge amounts of money should be working for us.
- Demilitarization of police—removing tanks, grenade launchers, and other military weapons from our local police forces.

There are many other proposals worth considering—and they will do far more to solve the problems than worrying about so-called “police community relations.”

Information provided by **COMMUNITIES UNITED AGAINST POLICE BRUTALITY**. Join us! We meet every Saturday at 1:30 at 4200 Cedar Avenue South in Minneapolis. For more information or for help with a police brutality incident, call our 24-hour hotline: **612-874-STOP** or see our website at **www.CUAPB.org**.