

## CUAPB Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the purpose of Communities United Against Police Brutality?

CUAPB was created to deal with police brutality in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area on an ongoing basis. We work on the day-to-day abuses as well as taking on the more extreme cases. We work to combat police brutality from many angles, including political and legislative action, education, research, and providing services and support for victims and their families.

Our overriding goal is to create a climate of resistance to abuse of authority by police organizations and to empower local people with a structure that can take on police brutality and actually bring it to an end.

### What does CUAPB do?

CUAPB takes on police brutality in a number of ways.

**Advocacy:** CUAPB provides assistance to individuals and families dealing with the effects of police brutality. We offer a 24-hour crisis line (612-874-STOP) that people can call to report instances of abuse. We can send out a crisis team to investigate the complaint, take photos and statements and offer immediate assistance. We follow up with legal, medical and psychological referrals and other services as needed. We work to influence media coverage so that survivors and family members have their stories told. We bring together families and survivors in a local network to provide ongoing support and empowerment for people suffering from their encounter with police brutality.

While these services are a key way people come in contact with CUAPB, we always make it clear that we are about social justice, not social services. We ask those who have been helped by the organization to attend meetings and become involved in helping others secure justice and in our other work. In this way, not only do we help those affected by police brutality regain their sense of personal power but we build a powerful and lasting movement.

**Political Action:** CUAPB routinely wages battles in the political and legal arenas to bring about changes in laws, policies and practices that reduce accountability and allow police brutality to occur. We hold rallies and protests to demand justice in particular cases. In addition, we operate copwatch and courtwatch programs to bring accountability directly to the institutions most responsible for brutality and injustice.

We are currently working to get a charter amendment on the ballot that would require Minneapolis police officers to carry their own professional liability insurance. If successful, police officers who engage in misconduct would see their premiums increase and some would eventually become uninsurable and be off the force. This is

an extensive, multiyear project that will have a powerful effect impact on addressing the underlying causes of police brutality. For more information on this effort, see <http://cfppmpls.wordpress.com/>

**Education:** CUAPB provides a number of educational programs to inform the community about police brutality and justice system issues. Our Know Your Rights trainings arm the community with tools to interact safely with law enforcement officers while asserting their rights. Our copwatch trainings empower people to provide oversight in their own neighborhoods.

### **Who is affected by police brutality?**

Although a majority of Minnesota police brutality incidents take place in a broader context of the nationwide epidemic of police violence and race profiling, where victims are predominantly people of color, police brutality respects no boundaries. Over our history, roughly 60% of people contacting our hotline with a police brutality complaint are African Americans. This is similar to the racial composition of those filing complaints with city agencies in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Caucasian people make up 15% of our callers. Significant numbers of people we work with are homeless or low income. The racial composition of those calling from outstate areas varies, but generally reflects the local populations of color and low income people in those areas.

As police target particular communities, brutality becomes a weapon for the repression of people of color, immigrants, homeless people, youth, activists and others. The impact on our communities is to create a climate of fear and powerlessness while abusive police act with impunity.

### **Why does CUAPB exist?**

CUAPB exists to address police brutality in the Twin Cities area. Police brutality is a national epidemic but because police are employed by municipalities, it manifests in unique ways in each community and must be addressed locally.

### **How did CUAPB get started? When was it started and by whom?**

CUAPB was formed in 2000.

Since 1995, various people in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis/St. Paul) formed ad hoc committees each year to mark the October 22 National Day of Protest Against Police Brutality. Sometimes we talked about keeping things going afterwards but it didn't happen. In 2000, tensions with the police were particularly high and we had a very large turnout at our October 22 event. One of the speakers at the event was a man named Charles "Abuka" Sanders. Abuka was well known in the community as he was active on the local poetry scene and was well-loved in his neighborhood as a carpenter

who did repairs, cleared snow and otherwise helped his elderly neighbors. On November 1, 2000, we opened the paper to see that police had gunned down Abuka as he drove his car in the alley behind his home. Unarmed, he was shot 33 times and died on the scene. Several neighbors witnessed the shooting and the community was horrified. An emergency meeting was called and the Justice for Abuka Sanders committee was formed. Several actions were held, but these did not result in justice for the wife and children Abuka left behind.

Along the way, our founders came to realize that while many people respond in powerful ways to brutal police killings and other egregious incidents, handling each case separately is not an effective way to deal with police brutality. Reinventing the wheel with each new case almost assures there will be more cases. It was time to form an organization to take on police brutality 24/7/365 and to work on day-to-day abuses with the idea that taking them on could reduce the number of more serious cases. Four activists met and planned a kick-off meeting for this new organization. In mid-December 2000, CUAPB held its first meeting at Hosmer Library in Minneapolis.

### **Does CUAPB have members? How much is the dues?**

CUAPB is not a membership organization and does not collect dues. This is strategic in that we want all to be able to participate, regardless of income or economic circumstances. Further, we do not want to create an opportunity in which those who oppose our efforts to increase police accountability could buy memberships and hijack the organization and our work.

### **How is CUAPB organized?**

CUAPB is an all-volunteer organization. We meet every Saturday to do our work (though much work happens between meetings). We have four officers, a working board and a large number of volunteers and much of our work is done through working groups. Most officers and board members are survivors of police brutality or family members of people who have died at the hands of police. In addition, we rely on relationships with representatives of a number of communities to inform our work and ensure that we authentically meet the needs of the communities we serve.

### **What are the locations of your organization? Can I start a chapter of CUAPB in my town?**

CUAPB's office and meeting space are at 4200 Cedar Ave S, Minneapolis, MN. We are a local organization working on police brutality in Minneapolis, St. Paul and the surrounding suburbs. We are able to offer some assistance to people in other areas of Minnesota. However, as an all-volunteer organization, we are unable to offer

assistance to people outside of Minnesota, though we attempt to refer people to others doing this work in their area.

People often ask if they can start a chapter of CUAPB in their area. We encourage people to start similar organizations in their areas. However, as an all-volunteer organization, we have chosen not to set up chapters in other areas as we do not want to take responsibility for actions of others outside of our local area. ***Further, the name Communities United Against Police Brutality and the acronym CUAPB are trademarks and cannot be used by others without our written permission.***

### **Is CUAPB against police?**

CUAPB is against police brutality and in favor of accountability and community control of police. We recognize that the issue is not individual police officers but a system that rewards brutality and misconduct and insulates officers from accountability. Our efforts are centered around changing that system, with the ultimate goal of ending police brutality.

Honest police officers are also against police brutality and a number have chosen to work with us as allies, though law enforcement officers, judges and other government officials are not permitted to attend our meetings except under special circumstances so that our meetings can remain a safe haven for survivors of police brutality and family members of people killed by police.

### **How can I contribute or get involved in CUAPB?**

We gratefully accept donations sent to our office at the address below. More important than donations, however, are people's efforts. We ask that people come to our meetings to learn about the projects we are working on and to get involved in a working group or other efforts.

Successful volunteers bring with them a passion for justice and the ability to work effectively with a wide range of people, including people of other races and socioeconomic status.

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