

June 25, 2020

Katal Weekly Update

Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice



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#DefundPolice, Invest in Communities



Artwork by Josh MacPhee of Justseeds

Protests continue across the country, with tens thousands of people in the streets demanding that municipalities and states #DefundPolice. In Connecticut, groups across the state -- including Katal - are demanding City Councils and mayors take action around police accountability, including:

- every officer within the state of Connecticut that has been involved in the killing or beating of a civilian be held accountable;
- people who are elected to the Civilian review board are viable people elected by the community;
- immediate divestment of School Resource Officers within public schools;
- and immediate divestment of police departments.

In New York, groups including **Communities United for Police Reform** -- in which Katal is proudly a member of -- are [demanding the City Council](#):

- defund NYPD's FY21 budget by at *least* \$1 billion (CPR's budget report actually identifies \$2billion in savings that can come directly from the NYPD's expense budget);
- block NYPD budget line increases and require increased NYPD budget transparency;
- remove police from homelessness outreach, mental health response, and schools and invest in housing, education, healthcare, counselors.

The work ahead is increasingly clear. Since the awful murder of George Floyd in May, police have continued killing Black people across the country. Breonna Taylor's killers still have not been held accountable. And instead of meaningfully responding to demands for action to address police violence and dismantle systemic racism, some elected officials are instead nabbing headlines by painting the phrase "Black Lives Matter" on streets.

The recent victory in New York, with [the Repeal 50-a bill being passed](#), is but one example showing that movements are winning real systemic change in this moment of reckoning. And together, we can continue the momentum. If you want to get involved with us in Connecticut or New York, just respond to this email or hit us up on our [volunteer page](#).

#CovidBehindBars Update

Although reporting on COVID-19 has slowed and Governors Cuomo and Lamont have stopped holding daily briefings on the virus, [cases have surged nationwide to the highest level](#) in 2 months and are now back to where they were at the peak of the outbreak.

COVID-19 continues to ravage people inside jails and prisons in Connecticut and New York -- which we know are inherently unsafe and incubators of contagion. And the response from state government across both states has been to put people in solitary confinement or isolation, which is torture and can also lead to death.

Solitary confinement is not an adequate response to a global health crisis. This torture tactic paired with the negligence of Corrections is what led to the tragic [death of Layleen Polanco](#) who should be here with us today. It is more important than ever that state governments act urgently to save the lives of their incarcerated constituents and mitigate the impact of the virus.

If you live in CT or NY, take action with us today to urge CT Gov. Lamont, NY Gov. Cuomo and state legislators to take immediate action NOW. It's easy and takes just a few minutes to make an impact! We must tell them: #DefendBlackLives #FreeThemNOW

Connecticut residents, [take action here](#).

New York residents, [take action here](#).

Please be safe out there and take care of each other. Keep practicing social distancing, wear your mask, wash your hands, and check in on your neighbors. If you want to get involved, learn more about our work, or just connect, please don't hesitate to reach out - we're online and on socials via [@katalcenter](#).

**Katal works to strengthen the people, policies, institutions, and movements that advance health, equity, and justice for everyone. Join us: web, Twitter, Facebook!
Email: info@katalcenter.org. Phone: 646.875.8822.**