MOVING NEW JERSEY’S COMMUNITIES FORWARD AS ONE:

10 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO REFORM LAW ENFORCEMENT IN NEW JERSEY

do social justice.

NEW JERSEY INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

www.njisj.org
1. Advocate for Police Officers to Serve as Community Organizers and Community Members, Not Just Armed Patrolmen

2. Work to End Racial Profiling

3. Advocate for Body-Worn Cameras and Public Access to Camera Footage

4. Support the Decriminalization of Code Violations and Minor Offenses

5. Urge Your Local Police Department to Provide Treatment, Not Incarceration for People with Substance Abuse Issues and Mental Health Challenges

6. Fight for Juvenile Justice Reform

7. Urge Your City to Develop a Civilian Complaint Review Board

8. De-Militarize the Police

9. Vote!

10. Join New Jersey Communities Forward
The killings of Philando Castile, Alton Sterling, Laquan McDonald, Michael Brown, Rekia Boyd, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, Akai Gurley, Walter Scott, and so many others underscore the necessity of ensuring that police officers serve and protect all of us.
As a nation, we are still catching our collective breath following the tragic killing of Alton Sterling by police officers in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and the heartbreaking video of his wife and young son, both overcome by grief.

Then, a day later, we watched the overwhelming footage of the killing of Philando Castile in Falcon Heights, Minnesota during a traffic stop. Incredibly, Mr. Castile’s girlfriend, Diamond Reynolds, managed to remain composed enough to narrate the death of her loved one in the presence of her daughter and in the face of an officer who, with his gun still drawn, blamed Mr. Castile for his death.

These shootings were not isolated events: Mr. Castile’s death marked the 123rd Black person shot by law enforcement in 2016.

People across the country came together to peacefully protest these killings, including about 800 people in Dallas, Texas the night following Mr. Castile’s death. But this protest also ended tragically in violence, as a sniper shot at police, killing five officers and injuring other officers and civilian marchers.

These heartbreaking events present an important moment for us to fundamentally transform the relationship between law enforcement and the community here in New Jersey in a way that serves as a national model for police reform.

The New Jersey Institute for Social Justice and its initiative, New Jersey Communities Forward, offer the following 10 concrete things you can do to help facilitate that transformation.¹

¹ Some of the below recommendations have been modified from the policy recommendations provided in the Center for Popular Democracy and PolicyLink’s report Building Momentum from the Ground Up: A Toolkit for Promoting Justice in Policing, available at http://www.justiceinpolicing.com/.
Advocate for Police Officers to Serve as Community Organizers and Community Members, Not Just Armed Patrolmen

Law enforcement officials must see themselves as community organizers duty-bound to respect and honor the rights, dignity, and humanity of the people they serve. They must seek first to build community, and then join with the communities they serve to be both peacemakers and peacekeepers. Building on this sense of community, law enforcement officers should not fear being targeted for doing their job.

The *Washington Post* reports, however, that new police recruits on average spend 60 hours learning how to handle a gun, but just 8 hours apiece learning how to interact with community residents, de-escalate difficult situations, and properly respond to drug-addicted people or those with mental illness, according to the Police Executive Research Forum.

Instead, police should view themselves as community developers who join with the communities they serve to realize public safety as part of a shared vision of a healthy community. Toward that end, police should be trained on how to develop trust and build relationships with their communities, training that should incorporate culture, racism, bias, and de-escalation.
WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Urge your elected officials to create, incentivize, and enforce a local residency requirement for your city’s police officers so that law enforcement officials live in the communities they serve.

- Urge your elected officials to ensure that police departments receive academy training, field training, and continuing education on racism, implicit bias, relationship-based policing and community interaction, crisis intervention, mediation, conflict resolution, appropriate engagement with young people based on the science of adolescent brain development, de-escalation, minimizing the use of force in common situations (including vehicle pursuits), and interacting with mentally ill or drug-addicted people.

- Advocate for racial, ethnic, and gender diversity among your local law enforcement officers, and for local hiring.


---

Work to End Racial Profiling

Across the country, law enforcement officers continue to disproportionately stop, frisk, detain, search, interrogate, and arrest people of color without evidence of criminal activity. Indeed, Philando Castile had been stopped by police for supposed traffic violations 52 times in his short lifetime.² Biased-based profiling not only erodes trust between communities and police, but there is no evidence that it is an effective law enforcement strategy. Law enforcement resources must be directed to people on the basis of reliable intelligence, not a person’s racial or ethnic identity.

---

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

• Advocate for local police departments to mandate data collection on the people stopped, detained, and interrogated each month, even when those individuals are not arrested, so that patterns of racial profiling can be identified and remedied.

• Advocate for state and federal legislation banning racial profiling, and urge your members of Congress to support the End Racial Profiling Act.

• Urge your local and state law enforcement to adopt an evidence-based anti-bias and cultural competency hiring and training program for officers, which helps them identify and address both their implicit and explicit biases.

Advocate for Body-Worn Cameras and Public Access to Camera Footage

Without civilian cell phone video footage, we may have never known exactly what happened in the shooting deaths of Philando Castile, Alton Sterling, and many other people of color killed by law enforcement.

Police departments across the nation have implemented or will be implementing body-worn camera policies to hold police officers accountable in their interactions with the public. New Jersey Communities Forward has led the effort to bring body-worn cameras to New Jersey. As a result of its efforts, former Acting Attorney General John Hoffman required every state trooper (currently numbering over 1,000) to wear body-worn cameras by the end of 2016. In addition, the New Jersey Attorney
General’s Office awarded $2.5 million to local police departments to implement body-worn camera policies.\(^3\)

However, there is work to do to ensure that the public and law enforcement have appropriate access to body-worn camera footage. For example, under the proposed Senate Bill S788, police departments would be able to withhold this camera footage under an exemption to New Jersey’s open public records law.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:**

- Review the New Jersey Attorney General’s directive and local policies on body-worn cameras to familiarize yourself with the use of body-worn cameras in our state: [http://www.state.nj.us/lps/dcj/agguide/directives/2015-1_BWC.pdf](http://www.state.nj.us/lps/dcj/agguide/directives/2015-1_BWC.pdf).

- Advocate for public and law enforcement access to video footage.

- Oppose the proposed Senate Bill S788, which would allow police departments to withhold camera footage under an exemption to New Jersey’s open public records law, by contacting your State Senator and Assemblymember.

Support the Decriminalization of Code Violations and Minor Offenses

Far too many citizens in New Jersey—especially people of color—are stopped, fined, and arrested by police for minor conduct, such as loitering or riding a bicycle on the sidewalk. A recent study by the ACLU of New Jersey showed that in Jersey City, Elizabeth, New Brunswick, and Millville, Black people are as much as ten times more likely than their white counterparts to be arrested for the low-level offenses of loitering, disorderly conduct, trespassing, and marijuana possession. We cannot transform policing in this state without fighting to eliminate over-criminalization, especially when it reinforces racial bias.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

• Advocate for the repeal of the Parking Offense Adjudication Act, which allows municipal courts to suspend driver’s licenses for unpaid parking tickets, which can lead to that individual’s arrest for driving on a suspended license.

• Review and track legislation, such as S677/A3677—which requires racial and ethnic impact statements for certain bills and regulations affecting sentencing—to stay informed about legislative decriminalization efforts.

---

Write an article for your local newspaper discussing the importance of decriminalization efforts and their impact on creating more healthy communities.

**Urge Your Local Police Department to Provide Treatment, Not Incarceration for People with Substance Abuse Issues and Mental Health Challenges**

Law enforcement too often adopts a “one size fits all” approach to policing that does not take into account the unique needs of the population they serve. Among others, this strategy harms members of our community suffering from substance abuse issues, whose addiction is often the source of any violations of the law. Rather than incarcerating drug-addicted people or mentally ill individuals, our justice system should focus on providing them with treatment options that will them get reengaged with society. This requires our communities to push for a paradigm shift that views addiction and mental illness as a public health issue, rather than a criminal justice issue.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:**

- Learn more about programs, like the Gloucester, Massachusetts Police Department’s Angel Program, which provides treatment, instead of incarceration, for individuals addicted to drugs.

- Get involved with organizations working to adopt a public health—rather than a criminal justice—approach to drug abuse and addiction, such as the Drug Policy Alliance.

- Ask your legislator to increase funding for Drug Courts, which provide alternatives to incarceration for individuals who commit a crime while suffering from addiction or mental health challenges.
No discussion of policing reform would be complete without an evaluation of how law enforcement officials interact with the most vulnerable members of our community: our children. The disproportionate interaction of our youth of color with the criminal justice system should be an area of utmost concern. We must serve as our children’s advocates to make sure they stay where they belong, behind the walls of the classroom, not the prison.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Attend public meetings held by your local Youth Services Commission, the county body responsible for developing programs and sentencing options tailored to the individual and unique needs of youth in your community.

- Go to meetings of your local school board to determine what efforts it is implementing to end the school-to-prison pipeline.

- If you are a concerned parent, or have a child who was exposed to the juvenile justice system, join an organization or coalition that is addressing these issues, such as the Youth Justice New Jersey coalition.

- Develop a resource guide of diversion programs for youth—including stationhouse adjustments—in your county.
Urge Your City to Develop a Civilian Complaint Review Board

Police accountability and oversight is one of the most important goals of any police reform effort. Cities across the nation have given some of this responsibility to everyday citizens, creating entities that provide civilian oversight of the police to ensure greater transparency and accountability. Not only do these boards serve as a check on police misconduct, they also allow the community to be engaged as a partner in community safety.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- If you live in a city, like Newark, with a Civilian Complaint Review Board, you can run for a position on the Board.

- If your city does not have a Civilian Complaint Review Board or other civilian oversight entity, urge your city council or mayor to adopt one.
De-Militarize the Police

Since 9/11 and the U.S. involvement in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, state and local police departments have received military-grade weapons and technology from the federal government to combat terrorism locally, as equipment from our overseas wars was retired from use by the military. Unfortunately, this equipment—which was designed for use in war—has resulted in a militarization of local law enforcement. Militarized local police departments too often escalate confrontations with civilians simply because of their use of weapons-grade equipment and firepower, and, even when these interactions do not rise to the level of excessive use of force, they still alienate the officers from their communities. In order to break down the mistrust between officers and their communities, local departments must focus on de-escalating situations and refrain from using equipment and tactics for war in our New Jersey neighborhoods.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Urge your local law enforcement to stop using military equipment and tactics in their policing.

- Ask your city council to hold a public hearing to discuss the effect on the community of militarizing local police departments.
Vote!

One of the most impactful ways you can shape policing practices in New Jersey is through your vote. Your vote is your voice, and it allows you to support legislators and candidates who are responsive to the issues you care about. By voting for candidates who are advocating for policing reform and proposing solutions, you are helping to shape policing in New Jersey.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

• Register to vote no later than October 18th to vote in the upcoming presidential election on November 8th. For more information about registration, go to the New Jersey Department of State website: http://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/voting-information.html.

• Participate in a voter registration campaign, such as Prepared to Vote 2016, to encourage your friends and neighbors to vote on Election Day.

• Keep your eye out for any issues at the polls on Election Day. If you, or someone you know, run into problems at your polling place, please contact Election Protection at 866-OUR-VOTE.

• In future elections for local politicians and court officials, research the candidates’ backgrounds in criminal justice and campaign for those who have shown a commitment to policing reform.
Join New Jersey Communities Forward

New Jersey Communities Forward (NJCF), an initiative of the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, is at the forefront of bridging the gap between law enforcement and the communities they serve in New Jersey. NJCF seeks to build stronger, safer communities through community forums and trainings with law enforcement. NJCF aims to create a safe space for honest and difficult discussions between community stakeholders and law enforcement to encourage a fundamental shift in police-community relations, and to advocate for effective policing models in cities in New Jersey and across the country. NJCF is always looking for active and engaged members committed to our mission.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Join the NJCF Facebook Group to hear the latest about events happening in your community: https://www.facebook.com/newjerseycommunitiesforward/.
- Attend an NJCF forum in your city.
- Run for a position on an NJCF Leadership Team. Please contact NJCF’s Statewide Coordinator, Retha Onitiri, for more information (ronitiri@njisj.org).
do social justice.

60 Park Place, Suite 511
Newark, NJ 07102-5504
Phone: 973.624.9400
Fax: 973.624.0704
Email: justice@njisj.org