Policies & Positions: Policing

Policing in America – and New Jersey – is broken. In its current form, infected with structural and overt racism, it does not provide for the safety of Black and other communities of color. Indeed, it is often a source of mistrust, danger and harm. The need for deep structural change is urgent.

The Institute believes that any police reform efforts must center the community’s voice so that new policies and practices directly address the safety needs of those communities. We take this approach in our role on the Monitoring Team overseeing reforms at the Newark Police Division under a Consent Decree between Newark and the Justice Department, where, through community surveys, public meetings and ongoing community feedback, we ensure that community needs are at the heart of the reform process.

It is essential that even as we implement reforms in policing, we simultaneously rethink the entire institution of policing and work toward reducing its footprint in our communities, with a focus on what community members need to feel – and be – safe and protected. The Institute’s current work on exploring alternatives to policing is focused on demilitarization, the use of restorative justice, non-police first responder models and increased funding for community resources that will allow communities to develop their own methods to keep themselves safe outside of law enforcement intervention.