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CULTURE & COMMUNITY

Does the M4BL volunteer space have community agreements (agreements that all M4BL volunteers stand by)?

Yes. All volunteers should uphold the [M4BL Volunteer community agreements](#).

What is Juneteenth About?

Juneteenth is a nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the US. To many black Americans, it is seen as more important than the Fourth of July. On June 19, 1865 a group of over 250,000 enslaved black people were notified that the Civil War had ended, of which they were unaware. Many confederate states were not adhering to the Emancipation

Proclamation to maintain their control. It has now become a day, week, or month of celebrations, actions, gatherings and events organized by Black folks for Black liberation.

What policies are M4BL pushing forward?

Supporters of the Movement for Black Lives come from diverse backgrounds. What unites us is our commitment to Black Liberation and the defense of Black Lives. We will lift up Black leadership for collective liberation. Read up on the [Movement for Black Lives Policy Platforms](#).

2016 Platform

- We demand [an end to the war against Black people](#).
- We demand [reparations for past and continuing harms](#).
- We demand [a divestment from the police and investment in Black communities](#).
- We demand [economic justice for all our people](#).
- We demand [community control](#).
- We demand [independent Black political power and Black self-determination in all areas of society](#).

2020 Rapid Response Platform

- We demand [that the rights of protestors be respected](#).
- We demand [immediate relief for our communities in this time of the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

What if someone violates a community agreement?

If someone violates a community agreement please [fill out a Goober Report](#). Violations of our community agreements will be handled by Volunteer Support folks and may result in a warning or a permanent banning from the Slack, depending on the situation.

Where can I go to learn more about Anti-Blackness and how to be an ally/accomplice to the Black community?

The Movement for Black Lives asks you not to use volunteering in this space as your primary learning environment about Anti-Blackness and racism.

There are many spaces available to you outside of this one to do your own learning, and we ask that you engage with [those existing resources](#). We expect all volunteers to uphold our community agreements and have a basic stance against Anti-Blackness and racism.

I think that I am in agreement with everything but I have a couple of questions about whiteness/racism/Anti-Blackness and I want to learn more. Where can I go?

[Please see our Anti-Racist resources page.](#)

What is white fragility?

It is discomfort and defensiveness on the part of a white person when confronted by information about racial inequality and injustice, especially their own part in those systems. White fragility is when a white person chooses to take criticism or a stance as a personal attack instead of taking into consideration the present/history of racism and the plight Black people experience every day under the structures of White Supremacy. You should instead just stop, listen, and look at the pointed commentary from that person.

“That person said my comment is racist and I feel personally attacked. Is this harassment?”

In conversations and action that seek to address white supremacy, we must center the experiences of those most marginalized, rather than how an issue was communicated. Injustice exists because of systemic power imbalance. If you are discussing an issue with a person whose life/dignity is at stake, it's not appropriate for you to set the terms for how the issue should be discussed.

Someone pointing out racism is not harassment. We all benefit when someone points out racist words/behavior/policy, so that we can identify and stop it in the future. If someone calls our words/behavior “racist”, it might be good to sit with that for a minute. Consider the impact of your words/behavior on Black people and other people of color. If you're down for Black Liberation, it's important that we listen when people name racism,

consider it, and keep it moving. Don't get bogged down in defending a position. Your actions to fight for Black Liberation will speak louder and have a bigger impact than any explanation of why x, y, or z isn't racist.

Where can I learn more about the abolition of police, prisons, and the entire criminal-legal system?

Here's a great start for resources, articles, and curricula:

<https://transformharm.org/abolition/> and on our [Anti-Racist resources page](#).

ABOUT POLICING & PRISONS

Why is it important to demand Trump resign in addition to defunding the police?

President Trump has given a green light to police and militias to beat, maim and kill people with impunity. He's encouraged police to riot coast to coast -- beating, gassing and shooting protestors who have called for an end to police violence. They want to ensure that people who protest for their dignity and rights are susceptible to the same deadly pandemic the Trump Administration has failed miserably at stopping.

It's not clear what law enforcement agency seized the "Black Lives Matter" masks or why. But, by withholding COVID-19 masks from protestors -- law enforcement agents are demonstrating a gross disregard for Black life, and are aiding and abetting a deadly virus. The pandemic together with this new spike in the epidemic of police brutality has escalated the grave threat to black lives and compounded suffering for Black families. Almost 400 people have been shot and killed by on-duty police officers in 2020—about the same rate as other recent years despite the coronavirus pandemic that has already claimed more 100,000 American lives. Black families are already experiencing some of the worst outcomes of COVID-19 and from police violence.

In the 60's federal law enforcement agencies crossed the line to monitor the mail of Black activists and that practice clearly continues today. Despite this attempt to intimidate protestors against police violence and deny us the right to speak freely and safely -- we aren't going anywhere.

This continued, heavy handed surveillance and repression of protected speech and assembly is both chilling and dangerous. It should be wholeheartedly condemned. These violations remind us why piecemeal, incremental reforms remain ineffective and insufficient. The only way to reduce police violence is to reduce the size, scope, and role of police departments.

What if we provide more training to the police?

More training will require more funding and resources going to police to develop and run those training. Further, better training does not ensure that we can rely on police for safety, or that instances of police harm and violence occur because of lack of training.

Police already get a lot of training, and in some ways training is part of the problem. There's been an increase in "warrior-style" training from former police and military members. Put this together with institutional pressure to act with force, and it means that racial bias and de-escalation training are like putting band aids on a gunshot wound. More training is not the solution.

Better training has been the focus of police reform work for decades, and we've made small gains but they have not been enough. The murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor show us we need to prevent these wounds from happening in the first place by defunding, not reforming police.

What about crime?

This has to be weighed against the cost of police violence -- even with all of the proven anti-brutality strategies, more cops on the street, all else equal, will probably mean more opportunities for violent abuses. Cities with more crime

may decide the tradeoff in Black, Brown, and Indigenous lives is worth it, but we know we don't create crime, systems do.

“When we get more police, what we're seeing is an increase in broken-windows policing, where police are surveilling poverty and not actual crimes. We're seeing checkpoints where police are surveilling undocumented folks who are just going about their daily business. That doesn't lead to safer communities.”

Policing does not stop violent crime. Police don't really solve or prevent most of what is classified as criminal activity. Instead they often escalate situations, and operate primarily to threaten, surveil and warehouse poor people and Black and brown communities and preserve the status quo.

Studies have shown that although violent crime has declined, police budgets have steadily increased. The reasoning is political rather than practical. If violent crime isn't present, it's created.

Philando Castile, who was murdered by police near St. Paul, Minnesota, had dozens of traffic violations on his record, but nothing violent or felonious. If anything, his nearly-50 traffic arrests were the result of racial profiling, not because he lacked a job or housing.

There's no fundamental reason that police spending should rise along with spending on things like infrastructure and education. Although many cities allocate large percentages of their general funds to policing, this spending often bears little obvious relationship to actual rates of violent crime.

The best way to fight crime is to invest in underserved communities. One way to invest in underserved communities is to take money away from bloated police budgets and move it into affordable housing, education, community health clinics, parks, and other public institutions.

What do we do instead of police?

While there are no perfect answers we know, police do not prevent violence. What we need in the event of violent crime is a service that will effectively respond to it, stop it from happening if it is ongoing, and investigate the circumstances surrounding it.

Instead of relying on police, we could rely on well-trained social workers, sociologists, forensic scientists, doctors, researchers and other well-trained individuals to fulfill our needs when violent crimes take place.

Why can't we reform the prison system and make it better?

Prisons have never truly been about creating safety or ending violence. Prisons are a tool of racial control. Prisons, since their creation in the United States, have been about caging people that dominant society (white, heterosexual, able-bodied, cisgender, wealthy men) considers dangerous, undesirable, or disposable. The unsettling truth is that prisons cannot be reformed because they are not broken; prisons function exactly as they were intended to.

But what about the murderers, rapists, serial killers, etc?

At this moment, all of us on the outside of prison are living around people who have killed people or sexually assaulted people. Police and soldiers are legally allowed to kill people, and they are our neighbors or in our families. Many murders are never solved, especially murders of Black people and others considered disposable by the police. Even the FBI will say that 14 out of 15 people who sexually assault someone will never spend a day in jail. Prisons are not a deterrence for interpersonal violence. Even when someone who commits a violent offense is “caught” by the system, rarely do survivors, family, and community get the “justice” they desire and deserve, be it a chance to speak with the person who harmed them, a chance at reconciliation, an assurance it won’t happen again, or access to healthcare and healing services.

Just because the current systems of policing and punishment fail, doesn’t mean that there aren’t ways to effectively prevent and respond to interpersonal violence. People have been building and continue to build ways

to prevent and respond to interpersonal violence outside of these systems. These include resources for survivors, transformative justice, education about healthy relationships, free and affordable family counseling, and more. We should further invest in these resources and listen to survivors and communities about what other resources we need to build.

ABOUT VOLUNTEERING

How do I sign up to volunteer?

Chances are, if you're reading this, you're here because you already signed up on our [M4BL Volunteer Sign-Up Page](#). But if you didn't feel free to head there now, and while you're at it, invite allies to come volunteer!

Can I invite my friend to volunteer?

Of course! You can send them to the [M4BL Volunteer Sign-Up Page](#)

What are my options for volunteering?

M4BL volunteers have the option to:

- Host an Event
- On-Site Tactical Role at the event
- Send Text Messages
- Research & Power Mapping

Can I be on multiple volunteer channels in Slack?

Absolutely! If you have that much time to give, we are grateful to have it.

VOLUNTEER COMMUNICATION

How do I get into the volunteer Slack?

You will be emailed an invitation to the M4BL Volunteer Slack team once you've signed up. You can download the Slack app on your phone, use the computer application or log in right on your web browser.

What is the volunteer Slack team for?

Our volunteer Slack team is where you can find out how to plug in, help, meet other volunteers, and get oriented to help with the Day of Action online.

What if I don't know which Slack channel I should join?

Contact someone with “- Volunteer Lead ★” in their Slack display name and they will help you, or just pick one that sounds interesting and try it out.

Can I watch the Spoke video training?

Absolutely, here it is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6FGfpnfnNlo&t=7s>

Can I donate?

Yes! Thank you so much. The best way to donate is by visiting <https://sixnineteen.com/> and clicking on the Donate tab!

What if I have a Canadian/International number?

They can use the zip code 00000 and still sign the pledge!

HOSTING EVENTS

Where can I find a how-to for hosting an event?

Our M4BL Defend Black Lives event host guide [can be found here](#).

Where can someone sign up to host an event?

If you would like to host an event, please [click this link to sign up](#)

What if I or someone else has a question about hosting an event?

They should ask someone in the Slack.

Are there virtual events? I don't want to leave my house due to COVID

I totally understand! You can find a virtual event here: <https://m4bl.live/virtual>

HELP ME UNDERSTAND

Navigating questions/comments/concerns on issues of systemic racism/white supremacy, the prison industrial complex, and abolition.

This is new to me. / Where do I start or learn more? / I just need an actual Black person to explain this to me.

There is so much happening in this time, and ideas that are new to many people are gaining traction and media. For those of us newer to some of these ideas, it is our responsibility to educate ourselves, and there are lots of resources available. Black people, Indigenous people and other people of color, as well as some white anti-racist elders, have been writing about and organizing around many of these issues for years. [We want to share this resource list with some of our favorite resources for you to check out and learn more.](#)

How do I get involved locally?

There are a lot of ways to get involved in this moment! There are many protests led by Black and other people of color in cities around the country that you can show up for, bring snacks, water, offer support. If you live in a small town where there isn't anything being organized, you can organize your own protest at the police quarters or other officials' buildings with some friends. There are many call in campaigns about defunding the police that you can participate in. We are the most effective when we are part of organizations. There are many organizations throughout the country working on issues of racial justice and against police brutality. If you are a white person, you might want to check out SURJ ([Showing Up for Racial Justice](#)); they have over a hundred chapters around the country and many national calls and ways to plug in.

What if there are no Black organizations [I know of] in my town/community?

There are still many ways to support Black lives and organizing even if there are not any local Black led organizations! Getting involved in the national M4BL efforts and actions is one way. You can also organize your own protest if you live in a small town where there aren't any happening. If you are a white person, you might want to check out SURJ ([Showing Up for Racial Justice](#)) for other resources and to see if there is a chapter near you.

“This focus on race is alienating to working class white people.”

Race and class are structures of power that were created to keep people divided (along with other forms of oppression). The billionaire class does everything in its power to prevent working class white people from seeing their struggles and freedom as connected to Black and brown peoples. Working class white have a huge amount at stake in ending white supremacy and transforming capitalism, including defunding the police in order to invest in poor and working class communities. So we have to talk about race when we talk about class with the goal of building a multi racial working class majority to create racial and economic justice for everyone. Working class and poor white people have always played and continue to play a critical role in anti-racist organizing, check out SURJ's centering of working class/ poor, rural, and southern leadership, and this recent group Rednecks for Black Lives. [You can check out this article for more context!](#)

WHAT DO I SAY WHEN SOMEONE SAYS...

“I support the Movement for Black Lives, but I don't support the looting/rioting and other “violence”.

Black people and other people of color have been experiencing real violence and murder at the hands of the police for years. We encourage you to focus

on the violence protesters are responding to, rather than the way they are protesting. Buildings can be rebuilt, but lives can't be un-taken.

“If they want real change, they should vote.”/ “I just hope all of these people vote in November!”

Mariame Kaba reminds us that voting will not uproot oppression, only social movements can do that. Voting is harm reduction, and it is one tool in a larger toolkit to engage politically. Individuals can choose to vote or not vote, as part of their social change work.

“These bad cops need to be held accountable, but I don't agree with defunding or getting rid of the police”/ “They should let the legal system do its job.”

These protests are about more than just charging one person, but are about the ways that the police across the country do not keep Black people and other POC safe and actively harm them. Decades of increased and “improved” training has failed to solve police violence. What's more, the problem is about accountability, not training. Until we disband police, police will continue to kill, harass, profile, beat, and frisk Black people with impunity.

“The people I really feel bad for are the business owners who've lost everything.”

Buildings, and businesses can be rebuilt, often with insurance money, but lives can't be un-taken. A number of owners of the businesses that caught fire or were damaged have been coming out in support of the protests, saying they care more about the lives lost to police violence than their buildings and businesses.

“The police --the good ones-- support Black Lives Matter, as long as the protestors don't get violent. Have you seen them taking a knee with the protestors?”

The system of policing is inherently violent against Black and other people of color. In many instances, the same police who made a symbolic gesture of taking a knee are later in situations where they are tear gassing or pepper

spraying, or arresting protestors. And maybe they don't want to be cracking down on protestors, but that's their job. The show of solidarity we need from individual police officers is to leave their job, and we need to defund police overall.

“Well the military is only keeping the peace.” “If the protestors weren’t violent then the government wouldn’t need to call in the military!”

Even members of the military have cautioned national guard troops against orders to activate against protestors. The National Guard is part of the military and emerged from militias that were used to wage violence against Indigenous people during colonization, to fight wars abroad, and locally to wage wars against striking workers and protestors. It is a dangerous entity that has no place in these protests and does the opposite of keeping the peace.