

Dave John Cruz-Bustamante

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Public Testimony to:
The Police Transparency and Accountability Task Force
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I'm Dave Cruz-Bustamante, I use he/they pronouns. I am a Wilbur Cross High School student and I am a community organizer at Sunrise Movement New Haven and Citywide Youth Coalition.

I believe that Connecticut needs to become a national leader in developing a new public safety system that will actually serve to keep people safe and healthy. The police brutality against black and brown and other marginalized bodies have gone on before the murder of George Floyd and time after time we see commissions and governmental bodies set up to come up with solutions to racism in the criminal justice system and we see more money poured into police departments¹. Minnesota was a leader in slow, gradual, police reform, through increased funding, training, body-cameras². Yet, the systemic murders of black, indigenous, and people of color, especially queer and transgender people of color, continues.

21 people have died at the hands of police in Connecticut in the past five years³. What we need is to defund the police to start the collective construction of a public safety system where we place rehabilitation and restorative justice over punishment and intimidation in our communities. We need social workers, mediators, mobile crisis units, better schools, better social safety nets, better transportation and housing, better job opportunities. I believe we need more restorative and proactive solutions, not more reactionary police officers. I do not believe we need more trainings and money going into police budgets.

¹ [ACLU: What 100 Years of History Tells us about Racism in Policing](#)

² [The Intercept: The George Floyd Killing in Minneapolis Exposes the Failures of Police Reform](#)

³ [Hartford Courant: Police have killed 21 people in Connecticut in the past five years](#)

What Connecticut and our nation needs is a total revamp of the criminal justice system that was built during the times of slavery: jail bonds, the Prison Industrial Complex, the School-To-Prison Pipeline, and the exploited labor of prisoners, once again, continues to disproportionately affect black, brown, and working class people till this day, our police and prison systems have an incentive to lock people up. Addressing the machine, which is poverty, that produces crime is essential, not criminalizing the poor and mentally ill, not addressing and locking up the symptoms of that machine. The segregation, lack of service, and the underfunding of black and brown communities is still present. New Haven is occupied by three police departments: the New Haven Police Department, the Yale Police Department, and the Hamden Police Department, yet we do not see improved safety or a reduced level of inequality in our neighborhoods. “*Community policing*” and attempts to improve relations between community members and police officers are often superficial and insufficient. In June of 2020, the New Haven Police Department engaged in vague virtue-signaling, saying that they were in support of ending the systemic killings of people of color, they would later go on to pepper-spray peaceful demonstrators at the steps of the police station.

To reiterate, it is crucial that we stop criminalizing and over-policing our community members and school children and start investing in new solutions and our livelihoods. We do not need more money flowing into police budgets to institute short-term transparency and accountability solutions.

Thank you,

Dave John Cruz-Bustamante