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## **Real Change Requires Altering the System and Structure of Policing**

*The following is a statement from the team at Kids Forward*

Yesterday, like so many across the country, we collectively at Kids Forward experienced a deep visceral and momentary sigh of relief at the verdict that Derek Chauvin was guilty on all three charges in the killing of George Floyd. It is a brief moment that demonstrates the possibility of justice in a sea of ongoing injustices and killings perpetrated by police against black and brown citizens.

This guilty verdict is a rare but welcome instance of police violence being punished. The recent killings of Adam Toledo and Daunte Wright, however, remind us this is all too commonplace and countless others have died without any semblance of accountability for those who did it.

Further, the Kenosha police officer who shot Jacob Blake seven times in the back has returned to active duty. According to the police chief, he was “found to have been acting within policy and will not be subjected to discipline.” This is a clear example that the Derek Chauvin trial offers only the mirage of accountability at the system level.

Officers are too often found to be following policy and training procedures when they shoot unarmed Black and Brown people, including children. Police policy and practices are the problem. We need a reconstruction of policing, policies, and laws that govern police officers. Their role should not be one of violence, aggression, and intimidation.

Wisconsin and the nation need to acknowledge and atone for the decades of police trauma in communities of color and re-envision the purpose of policing. And we need to be brave enough to consider all solutions that people and communities directly and disproportionately impacted by police violence have been proposing for years. Reform around the edges and accountability after the fact is woefully insufficient.

This violence and destruction is being done in our name, with our tax dollars, and with our collective acceptance: traumatizing generations of Black and Brown families. All white people should be

ashamed to live in a country so desensitized to the entrenched racism that has led to a pandemic of murders by the police.

For those of you who think this level of reform and rehabilitation is impossible, please consider the words of Josie Duffy Rice, president of The Appeal: “Many people in America already exist in a world where police and prisons do not exist. Go to any middle to upper class suburb in America. Cops aren’t wandering the streets. People aren’t being arrested. Neighbors aren’t being sent to prison. And generally everyone is....fine.”

It is beyond clear that policing of Black and Brown people in this country must change and has not meaningfully improved – from the days of Emmitt Till to Rodney King to Breonna Taylor to Jacob Blake to 13-year old Adam Toledo to Ma'Khia Bryant. Change involves fundamentally altering the system and structure of policing – a dramatic shift in our society and culture. The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act is a possible start of systemic reform, a national and unified response providing momentum and direction towards transformative change, racial equity and justice.

Kids Forward will continue to stand with those seeking reform and will work tirelessly for systems and structural accountability so that EVERYONE EVERYWHERE can live in a neighborhood free of police violence and with equitable access to health and opportunity.

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*Kids Forward, formerly the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, advocates for effective, long-lasting solutions that break down barriers to success for children and families in Wisconsin. Using research and a community-informed approach, Kids Forward works to help every kid, every family, and every community thrive.*