

Statement Regarding the Trial of Former Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin and the Murder of George Floyd

Although the jury has spoken and justice has been served for the family of George Floyd, the stain of the racial injustice at the center of this trial shall never be removed. The pain brought on by the loss of Mr. Floyd's life will not go away with the verdict of one trial. Neither does policing's responsibilities and obligations to learn from it and atone for it as a profession. We must own this, and work relentlessly and harder to ensure that the conditions and traditions that brought us here are rooted out. We must ensure that those conditions and traditions are replaced with values and practices that protect and serve humanity and fiercely defend the sanctity of every life. We must be accountable.

We can be encouraged, and we should recognize the members of the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) who provided courageous and truthful testimony that led to the rightful guilty verdict, defying any cultural norms, ostracizations, or anticipated solidarity in favor of what is just and right. The accountability and integrity shown by those who testified from the MPD is beyond noteworthy, but the accountability does not end with this trial as there are still many outstanding questions that we must all consider and respond to:

- Why was an officer, with a reported questionable history of complaints and reprimands, designated as a training officer?
- How was an officer who, according to open-source reporting, faced prior allegations and litigation related to excessive force rehired?
- Why did none of those officers who were present at the scene feel empowered to intervene or act more affirmatively to stop the horrific actions that led to Mr. Floyd's death?
- Was the call handled with appropriate response and restraint from beginning to end, and what caused it to go wrong and when?
- Did the MPD's culture or significant group(s) within or associated with the department or its officers create an environment that allowed the horrific event to take place and prevented intervention by officers on the scene?

The path to change may be illuminated by what research and science can tell us, but this path should be determined by a commitment to the sanctity of life and justice for all.

Following events like these, it is common to focus only on the use of force itself, rather than looking at and learning from the totality of the situation. The calls for justice are calls for

change. Evaluating and changing the use of force policy and training may be a single step in the right direction, but working boldly and tirelessly to erase the stain of this injustice will require that policing do more to change the conditions that allowed it to happen in the first place. Injustice is a part of our history and culture and can no longer be tolerated or ignored—it must be rooted out and brought to an end.

Millions of people depend on police officers every day to protect their lives and thousands of officers do so routinely with bravery, sacrifice, humility, and courage. Making bold and courageous transformations within the profession honors the sacrifices of officers and respects the will of the people and our democracy.

The verdict in the Chauvin trial is one single step in the right direction. However, we still have a long path ahead of us. We are committed to this journey forward and will continue to do all we can to transform and reform policing through innovation and science.

Sincerely,



James H. Burch, President
National Police Foundation