

Open Letter to Charleston Police Department, Charleston County Sheriff's Department, and SLED,

The over-policing of black communities is the root cause of the mass incarceration of black bodies, the death of black people by officers, and the root of the lack of resources needed to live healthy, safe, and sustainable lives for black communities. The recent move by law enforcement agencies in Charleston to continuously patrol, stop, and harass residents is an updated form of broken-windows policing. We know that this road leads to further criminalization of poverty and opens the door for further police violence. The claim made by law enforcement agencies in Charleston that our community is asking for a stronger police presence is simply a lie.

The Charleston Police Department, Charleston Sheriff's Office and SLED initiatives to increase police presence is a complete direct disregard to community demands and needs. This increase in state violence sets the tone for control and an authoritarian nature in which the elected officials and governing bodies are using to respond to the civil unrest and outcry from the community. This message is clear. They do not trust the demands we have made for a decrease in police and an increase in community resources. We are gravely disappointed in the lack of any systematic changes. This increase in the police is punitive to communities and not the police who have caused the harm. The source of the problem is being rewarded with more tax dollars and empowered to take more of our people to jail. Jails are facing the deadly COVID-19 pandemic with fewer resources and torturous conditions. This decision is not just a lack of judgment from our leadership, but a stance against the demands made by the community and an attack on the very people fighting for change.

To activate SWAT is to anticipate the need for the extreme and possibly deadly force inside of the very communities police are supposed to be protecting.

Out of the 10.3 million arrests across the nation per year, only 5 percent are violent crimes meaning murder, rape, and aggravated assault. 34.36% of arrests across the nation were for DUI's, theft, and drug abuse ([FBI](#)).

How have communities been assessed to need more police? Have these same tactics of assessment been used to implement mental health support, community centers, jobs, public transit, and address wage disparities and housing insecurity? If not, then police, elected officials, and governing bodies have put our communities in a vulnerable position and set them up once again to be the bad guys. We are exhausted from screaming in the streets, writing letters to the elected officials, and building community alternatives. It is now time for elected officials, police, and governing bodies to listen.

Signed in Solidarity,

The Black Liberation Fund

Kwadjo Cambell

ACLU, South Carolina

Courtney C. Hicks

The Independent Black Lives Matter Charleston

Representative Marvin R. Pendarvis

Representative Wendell G. Gilliard

Low Country Mutual Aid

Immigrant Coalition

We Are Family

Stand As One

Omar Muhammad

Charleston Black Pride

Community Solutions Consulting LLC

Charleston Democratic Socialists of America