

Respect

FALL 2020 VOL. 20 NO. 1

A DIVERSITY NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED BY NEW JERSEY STATE BAR FOUNDATION

Reform Efforts to Police the Police *by Michael Barbella*

Michael Brown. Tamir Rice. Eric Garner. Philando Castile. You may recognize the names. They have two things in common—all were killed at the hands of the police and they are all African American.

Many more names could be added to the list. According to data compiled by *The Washington Post*, “The rate at which Black Americans are killed by police is more than twice as high as the rate for White Americans.” Activists have been pushing for police reform for decades. During the summer of 2020 things reached a fever pitch.

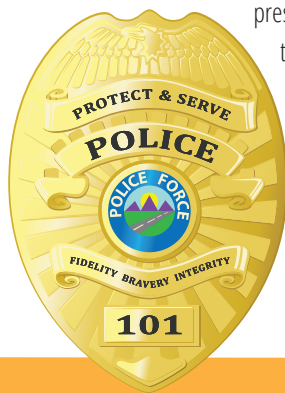
The tipping point was the death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020. Floyd was killed when a Minneapolis police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes, despite pleas from Floyd that he couldn’t breathe. Floyd’s crime? He allegedly passed a counterfeit \$20 bill at a grocery store.

Fueling the fire was the investigation into the death of Breonna Taylor, who had been killed on March 13, 2020. Taylor

was shot multiple times by police in her own apartment. Louisville, KY police officers were conducting a narcotics investigation and executing a no-knock search warrant. Such warrants allow law enforcement to forcibly enter homes without warning. Louisville Metro Police officials insist that officers announced their presence in the Breonna Taylor case and identified themselves several times before entering her apartment via the use of a battering ram.

In September 2020, a Kentucky grand jury **indicted** one of the detectives, not for killing Taylor, but for endangering her neighbors by recklessly firing his gun. The two officers that actually shot Taylor were not charged. Derek Chauvin, the officer who knelt on George Floyd’s neck, however, has been charged with second-degree unintentional murder and second-degree

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History Tells Us that Protests Can Bring Change *by Maria Wood*

The killing of George Floyd during an arrest by Minneapolis police in May 2020 ignited protests across the nation calling for police reform and an end to systemic racism.

According to data from Civis Analytics, a data science firm, as many as 26 million people have participated in demonstrations since George Floyd’s death. *The New York Times* reports that those numbers make the Black Lives Matter protests the largest in our nation’s history. According to the data, more than

40 percent of U.S. counties have had a protest and they are continuing.

“It looks, for all the world, like these protests are achieving what very few do: setting in motion a period of significant, sustained, and widespread social, political change,” Douglas McAdam, a professor at Stanford University who studies social movements, told *The New York Times*. “We appear to be experiencing a social change tipping point—that is as rare in society as it is potentially consequential.”

To put the Black Lives Matter protests in context, Deva Woodly, an associate professor of politics at the New School, a private research university in New York, told *The New York Times*, “If we added up all those protests [from the 1960s civil rights marches] during that period, we’re talking about hundreds of thousands of people, but not millions.”

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**PROTEST
FOR CHANGE**



White Supremacy Rises Across the Nation *by Jodi L. Miller*

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) defines white supremacy as a term that characterizes an **ideology**, which goes beyond racism or **bigotry**. This ideology seems to be on the rise. *Time Magazine* reported that in June 2020 alone Facebook removed 190 accounts that had ties to white supremacist groups.

According to ADL, white supremacist ideology comprises one or more of the following **tenets**:

1. whites should have dominance over people of other backgrounds, especially where they may co-exist; 2. whites should live by themselves in a whites-only society; 3. white people have their own “culture” that is superior to other cultures; 4. and white people are genetically superior to other people. In addition, the ADL states that most white supremacists also believe “the white race is in danger of extinction due to a rising ‘flood’ of non-whites, who are controlled and manipulated by

Jews, and that imminent action is needed to ‘save’ the white race.”

Origins of white supremacy

Patrick Breen, a history professor at Providence College in Rhode Island, told *The Washington Post* that the concept of white supremacy is “older than the country itself” and it didn’t start with slavery but with the fear of Native Americans.

“There was a concern [by the colonists] that there would be a genocide if the Indians united,” Professor Breen said. He goes on to say that in 1619 when the first enslaved Africans were brought to America, that fear was transferred to them.

Mark Pitcavage, an expert on right-wing extremism for the ADL, told *The Washington Post*, “Before the Civil War, you had people who argued that whites and Blacks could not live together unless it was a situation where Blacks were under the control of whites. They argued that if you had emancipation, you’d inevitably have a race war.”

Accelerating the hate

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), a nonprofit legal advocacy organization, tracks hate groups through its Intelligence Project. SPLC reported in 2019 that the number of hate groups nationwide has been rising since 2014. In 2014, SPLC tracked 784 hate groups. By 2019, they reported 940 active hate groups across the country. SPLC divides these groups into categories, such as white nationalist, neo-Nazi and Ku Klux Klan, to name a few. However, many of the ideologies of these groups overlap. According to its 2019 report, there are 148 active

white nationalist groups across the country, 112 neo-Nazi groups and 51 active Ku Klux Klan groups. Many of these groups recruit members online on platforms like 4chan, Reddit and Instagram, as well as through video gaming.

Daniel Byman is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, a nonprofit public policy organization based in Washington, DC whose mission is to conduct in-depth research to solve societal problems. He says that white supremacists took delight in the killing

of George Floyd, with some holding signs during the protests that read: “A knee is the new noose!!” Byman, who specializes in foreign policy and counterterrorism, says that white supremacists are pushing the concept of “accelerationism,” which is the notion that by increasing civil disorder they can foster more polarization.

For example, in his manifesto, John Earnest, who in 2019, killed a worshipper in a synagogue in San Diego, wrote, “I used a gun for the same reason that Brenton Tarrant [the shooter that killed 50 people at a mosque in New Zealand] used a gun. The goal is for the US government to start confiscating guns. People will defend their right to own a firearm—civil war has just started.”

“Basically, [they] find issues that divide people, like race or guns, and worsen the divisions,” Byman says. “So [they] try to strengthen extreme positions and destroy the middle ground.” Byman says these groups believe that this strategy of accelerationism makes what they call “The System” collapse more easily.

In September 2020, Christopher Wray, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), testified before the House of Representative’s



This publication was made possible through funding from the IOLTA Fund of the Bar of New Jersey.

Jodi L. Miller
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Homeland Security Committee, advising that the majority of domestic terrorism incidents were from white supremacists. Wray revealed that the FBI conducts approximately 1,000 domestic terrorism investigations per year and has made more than 120 arrests this year. He said that white supremacist extremists “will remain the most persistent and lethal threat in the homeland through 2021.”

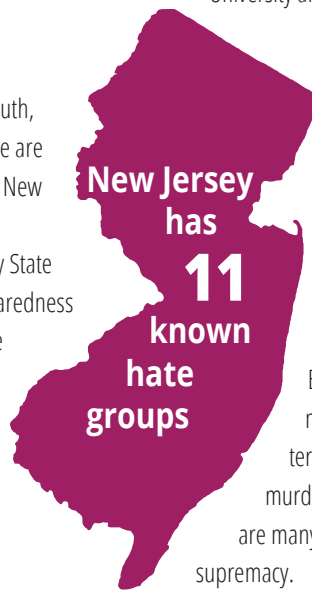
On the rise in NJ

While you may think that white supremacy is only a problem in the South, that’s not true. According to SPLC, there are 11 hate groups operating statewide in New Jersey.

In February 2020, the New Jersey State Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness issued a threat assessment, raising the threat level of homegrown violent extremism, specifically white supremacist extremism, from “moderate” to “high.” That threat level is higher than that of al-Qaeda or ISIS, which are both rated as “low.” The report states, “Supporters of this [white supremacist] ideology demonstrate the willingness and capability to carry out attacks, direct and inspire sympathizers online, and attempt to network globally.”

Experts say this threat level is not unique to the Garden State. Other parts of the country are seeing similar threats, but New Jersey released its research and analysis publicly. The threat assessment cited 44 domestic terrorist incidents in the United States, with four having ties to New Jersey. In addition, six of the 41 violent extremists arrested for these incidents

were caught in New Jersey or New York. The assessment also reported an increase in recruitment efforts. There were reports of 168 instances of white supremacist groups distributing propaganda in 2019, which is an increase from just 46 incidents in 2018. The ADL also reports that these groups target college campuses. Sixteen Pennsylvania and New Jersey colleges were targeted last year, including Princeton University and Rutgers University.



Fighting hate

Currently domestic terrorism is not a federal crime, though Byman notes that there is a push to make it one. Most of the violence in these cases, however, is already covered under state law, he says.

“Dylann Roof, who murdered Black churchgoers, was charged with multiple counts of murder, but not terrorism,” says Byman, who notes that murder is a serious charge. He says there are many ways to counter the threat of white supremacy.

“When [threat of white supremacy] is violent, it is vital for the police and FBI to arrest members and then for them to be prosecuted and jailed,” Byman says. “Social media companies like Facebook can also ‘de-platform’ groups and members to prevent them from having a way to get their message out, and politicians must also condemn them and encourage people to reject their messages.”

Byman says that white supremacist violence goes up and down, so it’s good to take a long-term perspective. He notes that in your grandparents’ day white supremacy was just taken for granted in much

of the country.

“White supremacists often worked with local law enforcement and were tolerated by the federal government,” Byman says. “Now they are much more likely to be on the run. [White supremacy] remains a **virulent** strain on American politics, but certain ideas that white supremacists find abhorrent, such as intermarriage, LGBTQ rights and equality before the law, are now mainstream ideas.” •



1. The four tenets set forth by the Anti-Defamation League explain the ideology of white supremacy. What is the impact of this ideology on people living in America? Does it matter whether or not a person impacted by white supremacy is a citizen? Explain your reasoning.
2. The article mentions how white supremacists engage in “accelerationism” on issues that already divide the country, such as race and guns. What other issues divide us as a nation? What do you think can be done to unite us as a nation?
3. The threat of white supremacist extremism was raised to high in New Jersey. How do you feel about that? Are you surprised that there are so many hate groups operating within the state? Explain your answer.
4. Currently domestic terrorism is not a federal crime. Do you think it should be? Why or why not?

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manslaughter. The three other officers involved in Floyd's death face charges of aiding and **abetting** second-degree murder.

The outcry over these and many other deaths prompted some legislative reform. For example, Louisville legislators banned no-knock warrants and mandated that police wear body-cameras during the execution of search warrants. Baltimore and Los Angeles lawmakers reduced police department funding, something that some activists have demanded. New York state politicians, meanwhile, authorized the public release of police disciplinary records. In New Jersey, leaders expanded the state's use-of-force database and launched crisis intervention team training in four cities.

On the federal level

Federal reforms were proposed as well. In June 2020, the House of Representatives passed the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2020. The legislation contains many police reforms, including banning the use of no-knock warrants and chokeholds and restricting qualified immunity for police officers that engage in misconduct. At press time, the Senate had yet to take up the House's bill for a vote.

The Senate proposed its own bill, which would limit, but not ban, chokeholds. The legislation would also not restrict no-knock warrants or qualified immunity. In June 2020, the Senate proposal failed to get the 60 votes needed to advance to the floor of the Senate for debate.

What's qualified immunity?

Dr. Paul Hirschfield, a sociology professor at Rutgers University who focuses on the consequences of intensified surveillance, explains that qualified immunity is a principle that the U.S. Supreme Court created. It states that police are not liable in civil lawsuits for injuries they inflict during the course of their normal duties.

"George Floyd's murder provides an opportunity for police reform, and reform advocates recognize that qualified immunity is a major obstacle

to holding individual, abusive police officers accountable in civil court," Dr. Hirschfield says. "The best way to fix this problem is through legislation that declares that qualified immunity is not a permissible defense against lawsuits arising from on-duty misconduct."

Qualified immunity was originally supposed to protect police from frivolous lawsuits and give authorities some "breathing room" during tense, often life-or-death situations involving split-second decisions. U.S. Supreme Court Justices Clarence Thomas and Sonia Sotomayor have voiced concerns about the qualified immunity doctrine.

In one **dissenting opinion**, Justice Sotomayor pointed out that the U.S. Supreme Court often sides with the police in qualified immunity cases. "Such a one-sided approach to qualified immunity transforms the doctrine into an absolute shield for law enforcement officers," Justice Sotomayor wrote.



The U.S. Supreme Court had the chance to re-examine the qualified immunity doctrine it created nearly four decades ago with nine appeals cases that were requesting the Court's consideration.

"There are many calls, from both sides of the aisle, for a reconsideration of qualified immunity," notes Dr. Bill McCarthy, a dean at Rutgers University's School of Criminal Justice. "People argue that it reduces government officials' responsibility for their own conduct and thus encourages misbehavior;

others argue that this misbehavior has been disproportionately directed at racial, ethnic and gender minorities. In the George Floyd case, the question is can his family win a suit for damages for wrongful death against the officer who killed him?"

In an unsigned June 15 order, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to re-examine any of the pending qualified immunity cases, prompting a dissent from Justice Clarence Thomas, who wrote, "I continue to have strong doubts about our Section 1983 qualified immunity doctrine."

In a statement, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) responded to the Court's decision by urging Congress to abolish qualified immunity through legislation, "ensuring that no government actor can evade accountability for violating constitutional rights."

Defund the police

Besides ending qualified immunity, police reform advocates have also urged leaders to defund and/or abolish police departments. These terms have caused controversy and confusion over what they really mean. In a blog post on Montclair University's website, Jessica S. Henry, a professor of Justice Studies and a former public defender, explains the complex issue.

"In its modest iteration, 'abolish the police' doesn't really mean abolish, and 'defund the police' doesn't really mean defund," Professor Henry wrote. "Instead, these phrases are rallying cries designed to provoke immediate and sweeping police reforms and to provide protections for Black and brown people against police violence."

For example, Professor Henry explained, "defunding the police" means "redirecting funds traditionally allocated for police to social service agencies" and "scaling back the size and scope of police responsibilities and investing in social services that help people." She points to statistics that reveal nine out of 10 police calls are for nonviolent events.

The call to abolish the police, which means to dismantle an existing police force in order to restructure it, was strong in George Floyd's

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hometown of Minneapolis. A majority of the city council agreed in June 2020 to dismantle the police department; however, the likelihood of such a change actually happening is currently unclear. The council has taken the first step toward its goal: Proposing an amendment to the city's charter (basically, its constitution) to allow for the disbandment. Voters would need to approve the measure, however, before any change could occur.

Abolish the police proponents have cited Camden, NJ as a model of successful reform. The New Jersey city disbanded its police department in 2013 in favor of a county-run force. New officers trained in de-escalation tactics and community policing helped reduce violent crime and civilian complaints. Scholars and experts, however, warn against using Camden as a model for police reform.

"We should be very cautious about using one case as 'proof' that something works," Dr. McCarthy says. "The approach Camden used may work in other cities, but Camden may have a number of attributes that may make it special. A good approach would be to take several cities that are alike in many ways and have some follow Camden's approach and another keep its current practices."

Dr. Hirschfield attributes Camden's police reform success to better funding.

"I think Camden is more of a model of full replacement than defunding," he notes. "I would imagine the Camden County police department is better funded than the Camden City police department. I suspect that better funding has enabled them to hire better officers and offer better police services. I am concerned about the curtailment of civil liberties associated with their surveillance technologies. But we should listen to the residents and see what they think of their police department."

School Resource Officers

Another demand that police reform activists have made is the removal of the police presence from American schools in the form of school resource officers (SRO). The SRO program began in the 1950s as a way to improve the relationship between police



and youth. The program gained more support in the 1990s in response to school shootings. Today, the National Association of School Resource Officers estimates that as many as 20,000 SROs are in schools nationwide.

According to analysis by the Education Week Research Center, which looked at data from 43 states and the District of Columbia, schools with a police presence are more likely to refer students to law enforcement, even for non-violent behavior. In addition, Black students are more likely than their peers to be arrested at school.

Dr. Hirschfield has reviewed several studies examining the effects of SROs on crime, which suggest that installing an SRO increases both arrests and recorded crimes in school.

"This result is hardly surprising given that more police likely means more crimes will be detected, reported to the police, and ultimately recorded as crimes. That result does not mean that police increased crime," Dr. Hirschfield says. "But if police do reduce crime eventually we would expect to see a decrease in recorded crime over the long term and that result has not been reported."

Don Bridges, who has 20 years of experience training SROs and is a Baltimore police officer, told National Public Radio (NPR) that law enforcement still has a place in schools. Officer Bridges, who is Black and a former president of the National Association of School Resource Officers, told NPR a positive story of running into one of his former students, now 38 years old.

"He's a man of color. He said to me, 'I want to thank you for helping me,'" Officer Bridges said. "A few years ago, he and his friends were stopped by the police. He said, 'because of what you taught us while I was in high school, I was able to communicate with those officers. And I feel that if I had not used the strategies that you shared with us, that situation would have gone south.'"

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the second largest labor union for teachers in the United States, passed a resolution in June 2020 laying out 19 commitments to combat systemic racism, including the separation of school safety from policing and police forces.

"We must do all we can to create safe and welcoming environments," AFT President Randi Weingarten said in a statement. "That requires us to rethink school security starting with separating police forces from schools and ending the militarism and zero tolerance policies that have criminalized so many of our students of color." •



1. How did you feel this summer after the George Floyd killing?
2. What do you think of the qualified immunity doctrine? What should police officers be held accountable for when they are on the job?
3. The article explains that efforts to "defund the police" are just reallocating funds to social services programs. What do you think about that? What are the benefits of such a reform? What are the drawbacks? Why do you think the language "defund the police" and "abolish the police" were chosen?
4. What do you think about the statistics of Black students being arrested at school? Do you think schools should have school resource officers? Explain your reasoning.

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How protests spark change

Far from merely generating nightly media coverage, the Black Lives Matter demonstrations have resulted in concrete changes in police practices. Minneapolis banned the controversial tactic of chokeholds, with New York state and Aurora, Colorado following suit. It also seems that Minneapolis will restructure its police department, although what form that will take is still unclear. In New Jersey, Attorney General Gurbir Grewal announced the establishment of a statewide database to track instances of police acting with excessive force.

All these actions support the view that protests can spark real societal change, which doesn't happen overnight.

Maxwell Burkey, an adjunct professor of political science at Stockton University, says protests provoke change on two levels—appealing to society's fundamental values, such as justice and racial equality, and disrupting entrenched social structures.

One group, usually a marginalized group of citizens, refuses to submit to historical norms, upending long-established standards of behavior, Professor



Burkey says. For example, the sit-ins and demonstrations during the Civil Rights Movement succeeded because African Americans declined to conform any longer to Jim Crow laws that essentially relegated them to second-class status, he says.

Professor Burkey explains that by withdrawing their cooperation in what they identified as an unjust system, in the form of striking or not sitting in the right seat on the bus, African Americans created enough disruption in the daily life of the South that President Lyndon Johnson and other politicians ultimately had to push for the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

"Protests are anti-institutional by their very nature," he says. "It happens because we're dissatisfied with mainstream institutions."

Professor Burkey also points to the anti-war demonstrations of the 1960s and 1970s, during which protestors burned their draft cards and attacked draft boards. He says that in that instance, it became "not just a moral awakening moment," but also a moment in which those in power realized that to prevent more radical change, concessions had to be made to the underclass. Public

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Famous Protests That Made A Difference

The right to protest has deep roots in our nation. The United States was founded on it, and Americans hold the right dear.

As the accompanying article mentioned, the Black Lives Matter protests have been the largest in our country's history, with more than 1,300 demonstrations and counting. Below are five other influential protests.

Boston Tea Party—December 16, 1773

It wasn't a party. It was a protest. This protest was not the first in our country's history, but it was definitely the most significant of its time. The American colonists were protesting harsh taxes from the British, specifically the Tea Act of 1773, which essentially granted the British East Indian Company a **monopoly**. The colonists were also upset that even though they paid taxes, they enjoyed no representation in Parliament. Taxation without representation, sound familiar?

Over the course of three hours, approximately 100 colonists dumped 45 tons of tea belonging to the British into Boston Harbor. The protest was met with punishment from the British, with Parliament passing more retaliatory measures, including closing the Boston port until the debt from the ruined goods was paid. The spark of revolution was lit, however, and the American Revolution would follow.

Women's Suffrage Parade—March 3, 1913

By the time this parade/demonstration down Pennsylvania Avenue in

Washington, DC was held, women had been fighting for **suffrage** for 60 years. Organized by the National American Woman Suffrage Association and suffragist Alice Paul, the demonstration was intentionally held the day before Woodrow Wilson was to be inaugurated as President of the United States (inauguration day was held in March back then).

More than 5,000 suffragists marched in the parade, which turned violent when spectators attacked some of the women. More than 100 women were injured. The demonstration brought more attention to the cause of women's suffrage. Seven years later, after many more protests and demonstrations, the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, granting women the right to vote, would be **ratified**.

March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom—August 18, 1963

More than 250,000 demonstrators marched to the Lincoln Memorial to protest the unequal treatment of African Americans. The march concluded with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivering his "I Have a Dream" speech.

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character," Dr. King said.

This march is credited with spurring then President John F. Kennedy to action in pushing for civil rights legislation.

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sentiment ultimately turned against the war, Professor Burkey says, because there was so much **civil disobedience**, even within the military at that time.

Change takes time

In the aftermath of George Floyd's death, several cities swiftly changed laws on the local level. However, Professor Burkey says new laws shouldn't always be the measure of a protest movement's success.

"Rarely does success take the form of an immediate legislative response as we saw following George Floyd's death when cities began to ban chokeholds," he says. "Although that success seemed gratifying, we have to remember that a full-throated federal response to Black Lives Matter, which is not limited to banning chokeholds, remains far from certain."

It sometimes takes decades to topple long-standing cultural attitudes. In many cases protests trigger a national conversation about the unfairness of social norms and then act as a spark to spur legislative change. For example, the Stonewall Inn riots of the late 1960s didn't result in an immediate acceptance of LGBTQ rights, but it launched a movement that culminated in a 2015 Supreme Court decision granting marriage equality.



"It is impossible to imagine the Court granting same sex couples the right to marry [without] a half century of LGBTQ agitation, beginning with the Stonewall Inn riots in 1969, to demonstrate in a very public and visual way the humanity of gay people," Professor Burkey says. "The Stonewall Riots accomplished nothing in the way of legislation [immediately] but they started a narrative about fundamental dignity."

Peaceful protests work

Protests are a protected right under the First Amendment, which guarantees the right to peacefully assemble. However, cities and municipalities can place reasonable limitations on demonstrations.

"The government is permitted to place neutral time, place, and manner restrictions on protests," Carlos Ball, a professor at Rutgers Law School—Newark, says. "Cities, for example, may require protestors to march down one avenue as opposed to another, or to demonstrate during certain hours of the day."

Professor Ball says there are two things that are crucial about government restriction.

"First, the restrictions must allow for a reasonable opportunity to assemble," he

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Stonewall Inn Riots—June 28 to July 3, 1969

These riots were in response to repeated raids on the Stonewall Inn, a local gay bar in New York City's Greenwich Village. Protests continued for six days and many credit that time for the birth of the LGBTQ Movement, with several gay-liberation organizations being formed in response. One year after the riots, the Christopher Street Liberation Day march was organized, which led to the annual gay pride events that are held worldwide every year in the last week of June. Since then, the LGBTQ community has made great strides in expanding rights for these marginalized Americans, including marriage equality, which was passed in 2015.

May Day Protests—May 3 to May 5, 1971

There had been numerous protests held by student demonstrators on college campuses during the 1960s to protest the Vietnam War. By the 1970s, what would become known as the "May Day Tribe" was formed. This group included members of the People's Coalition for Peace and Justice and the War Resisters League and they used more aggressive tactics, including forming barricades to block traffic in in the nation's capital. Their organizers said, "If the government won't stop the war, we'll stop the government." The May Day Protests, which began on May 3rd in Washington, DC and continued until May 5th, were a series of civil disobedience actions, to protest the Vietnam War.

The Nixon Administration authorized the deployment of 4,000 troops from the U.S. 82nd Airborne to aid the DC Metro Police and 2,000 National Guard members in suppressing the demonstrations. Protestors were sprayed with tear gas and when all was said and done, more than 7,000 were arrested on that

first day, the largest mass arrest ever in the United States. On May 4th, another 2,000 demonstrators were arrested while conducting a sit-in outside the Justice Department. On the final day, at a rally on the steps of the U.S. Capitol, 1,200 more people were arrested. All tolled, 12,614 people were arrested over the three days. Only 79 protestors were eventually convicted.

As for the other protestors, the American Civil Liberties Union sued in federal court on their behalf. The federal court recognized that in some cases the protestors' right to freedom of assembly had been violated and ordered the government to pay financial compensation.

The March for Our Lives—March 24, 2018

Students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida organized this march, which was held in Washington, DC. The month before, on Valentine's Day, 17 people were killed in the school when a former student opened fire on them with a semi-automatic weapon. The march, along with affiliated protests across the country, brought turnout for the cause on that day to approximately two million demonstrators.

The students were able to shine a light on the gun-control issue and advocate for stricter laws. As a result of their activism, the Florida State Legislature passed the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act. Among other things, the Act raised the minimum age for gun purchase to 21 and increased the waiting period to three days, allowing for a background check. •

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says. “Second, the government cannot make distinctions based on the ideological message of the protests by, for example, giving preferential treatment to one political group over another.”

Research suggests that more can be accomplished with peaceful protests rather than violent ones. In 2011, authors Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan analyzed the outcomes of more than 300 violent and nonviolent protests between 2000 and 2006 in their book *Why Civil Resistance Works*. What they found is that nonviolent campaigns resulted in success 53 percent of the time compared to 26 percent for violent campaigns. The authors say nonviolent social movements lend legitimacy to protests and attract more participants. In addition, if a protest sparks a state-sponsored backlash against nonviolent protestors, public perceptions are more likely to be sympathetic to the protestors.

That’s essentially what happened in the 1960s when civil rights marchers were met with police force, Professor Burkey says.

“If you look at the sit-ins and Freedom Riders of the Civil Rights Movement, while aggressively transgressing Jim Crow laws, they still humbly submitted to police punishment,” he says. “They showcased their restraint and civility and non-violence.”

If protests are seen as a lightning rod for widespread violence, however, there could be a backlash against the cause. In an article published in *The New Yorker*, Omar Wasow, a professor of politics at Princeton University, noted that when protestors react with what could be perceived as aggression, or looting occurs, it can damage the cause.

“Instead of talking about the history of police killings in Minneapolis, we are talking about a store going up in flames, and the focus in reporting tends to shift from a justice frame to a crime frame,” Professor Wasow said. “And that is an unfortunate thing for a protest movement. It ends up undermining the interests of the advocates.”

Violence doesn’t necessarily doom a protest movement to failure, according to Professor Burkey, who points to the early riots that instigated the labor movement in the United States. In 1877, railroad workers stopped working to

protest unsafe working conditions and low wages, sparking riots and ushering in decades of labor unrest. Ultimately, though, the movement resulted in the passage of the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, which permitted **collective bargaining**.

“The labor rioters of 1877 were doing violent things toward property and were scorned in their time, but we tend to hold them in higher regard today,” Professor Burkey says.

Evidence that the Black Lives Matter protests are having an effect on the perception of racism in this country is reflected in a Monmouth University poll released in June 2020. The poll revealed that 76 percent of Americans, including 71 percent of white people, acknowledge that in the United States racism and discrimination is a “big problem,” which is a 26 percent increase from 2015. •



1. The statistics show that the Black Lives Matter protests have had the participation of as many as 26 million marchers, compared to hundreds of thousands for the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Why do you think that is? What factors have changed since the 1960s that would affect that kind of turnout? What is the potential impact of having the millions of protestors we have today in response to the killing of George Floyd? What are these modern protestors asking for and do you think it is a reachable goal?
2. Professor Burkey says that the passage of laws shouldn’t be the only measure of a successful protest. What other measures could be used to judge a protest movement’s success?
3. Why do you think it takes so long to make significant changes? In what ways could the process be expedited?
4. Should all groups have the right to protest? Even hate groups?

Glossary

abetting — encouraging or assisting someone to commit a crime. **bigotry** — intolerance of those of different races or religions.

dissenting opinion — a statement written by a judge or justice that disagrees with the opinion reached by the majority of his or her colleagues. **civil disobedience** — refusal to comply with certain laws as a peaceful form of protest.

collective bargaining — the negotiation of wages and/or working conditions by an organized body of employees.

ideology — principles or a way of thinking that is characteristic of a political system. **indicted** — to be charged with a criminal act by a grand jury. **manslaughter** — unlawful killing of a human being without premeditation. **monopoly** — exclusive control of the supply or trade in a commodity or service. **ratified** — approved or endorsed. **suffrage** — the right to vote in political elections.

tenet — principle or theory. **virulent** — infectious or contagious.