



## Women's International League for Peace and Freedom - US

### **Police and Workplace Murders: Two Intersecting Pandemics** Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, US Section

In the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tatiana Jefferson, Trayvon Martin and many other people of color, including demonstrators, we see how Blacks, Latinxs, Asians, Native Americans/American Indians and other people of color are more likely than whites to be policed harshly and judged as criminal.

The global pandemic of racism continues here in the US. Although we have a tradition of supporting many human rights, we are a country that has roots in [racist and imperialist beliefs and policies](#).

The [covid pandemic has joined the racism pandemic](#) to heighten continuing economic and other disparities in the US. Consequently, people of color and the poor suffer from health conditions making them far more likely to die from COVID-19. Persons filling many "essential jobs" [are especially vulnerable](#) to death – *economic murder* – in this second pandemic.

As the result of racism and violent police, immune from prosecution, we have reaped protests – led by courageous [young people](#) of color. Now many police departments and politicians – with their support of deplorable [policing](#) and [arrest practices](#), without regard for pandemic safety – have confirmed the need for change.

In the US today, the two pandemics are intersecting in cataclysmic ways. WILPF stands with Black Lives Matter, the Movement for Black Lives, and others calling for racial justice. It is in our power to end the pandemic of racism. In an equitable, humane, and just society, we can face the COVID-19 pandemic together.

In support, the US Section of WILPF declares and affirms the following:

1. WILPF extends empathy and compassion to people of color who have borne the traumatic and heavy emotional and bodily burden of constant racist oppression.
2. WILPF redirects focus to the **ongoing** violence by law enforcement, *reflected* in the **short-term** violence against property.
3. WILPF condemns police violence encouraged by the Trump administration against protestors exercising First Amendment rights. The President's decision to tear gas peaceful protesters for his June 1 photo-op was unconscionable.
4. WILPF calls for major and fundamental changes in police systems:
  - ◆ [Divestment from](#) and [defunding of the police](#), in order to make funds available for a People's Budget for services that help and strengthen community.



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- ◆ A national police registry, to identify officers who have been fired for improper conduct, plus legislation by every state, forbidding their being rehired in other jurisdictions.
  - ◆ Police transparency by requiring all officers to film their interactions with the public, under legal penalty, and to release any footage of officer-involved shootings, along with detailed reports of these shootings.
  - ◆ Civilian-advised initiatives to improve police practices, such as creation of civilian oversight committees, hiring local residents for community policing, ongoing diversity training of police administered by local residents, and community and school involvement to encourage and develop a Culture of Peace.
5. WILPF calls for an end to the militarization of police forces and of policing:
- ◆ Halting the use of military equipment by police forces; such equipment contributes to police seeing the public as “the enemy.”
  - ◆ Ending military tactics in civilian settings.
  - ◆ [Ceasing to call in the military](#) against the people’s right to assembly; protest is no threat to our society.
6. WILPF calls for dramatic and necessary changes in our system of criminal justice:
- ◆ Prison abolition and grounded justice (please see this [essay for explanation](#)).
  - ◆ Development of alternative policies such as restorative justice.
  - ◆ Restoration of the right to vote to those convicted of or imprisoned for felonies.
7. WILPF calls on white people to recognize white privilege and commit to racial justice by their actions, including [educating themselves](#), their white family members, and their white communities about the history and effects of US racism and white defensiveness about racist behaviors.
8. WILPF calls on the US media to transcend the distortions of racism in their coverage:
- ◆ Stopping using the inaccurate term “race riots” in describing political protests by people of color.
  - ◆ Weighing the lives of people of color equally to the lives of whites in making coverage choices for international news, such as stories on the effects of the pandemic.

**To achieve a more just civil society and in support of lasting peaceable relations, WILPF offers these practical suggestions:**

9. WILPF calls on the US, state, and local governments to take action to protect water quality and environmental quality for all Americans, with special attention to people of color who have heretofore lacked such protections. To affirm and support such protection, the US must rejoin the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and rescind recent decisions by the President to scale back environmental protections on water quality.



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10. WILPF demands that federal and state budget priorities change to direct the great majority of revenue towards programs that meet human needs and prioritize *genuine security* for our communities:

- ◆ [Budget funds for social use and to address systemic injustices](#), based on defunding the war machine:
  - Direct federal funds to state budgets, in this time of financial crisis.
  - Support necessary social infrastructure: our schools, hospitals and clinics, housing for all, systems for clean water, and the US Post Office.
  - Initiate a Green New Deal that supports energy-efficient homes; carbon-free, [nuclear-free energy systems](#); sustainable agriculture and transportation; healthy lives and jobs; and Earth-friendly lifestyles.
  - Fully fund Social Security and health care for all.
- ◆ Take the steps needed to defund the war machine, in order to reduce the levels of violence and despair in the US and the world:
  - End the US wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria.
  - Bring troops home from the hundreds of US bases in Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Honduras, Afghanistan, Iraq, Jordan, Kosovo, Kuwait, Oman, Syria, Niger, Chad, Mali, Somalia, NATO countries, and elsewhere.
  - Cease US unilateral economic sanctions and military intervention.
  - [Disarm nuclear weapons](#) and do not build more.
  - Cut arms programs, reaffirming the US commitment to arms control.
  - Rejoin the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the Open Skies Treaty, and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (the Iran nuclear treaty).
  - Cut the unnecessarily high levels of funding for police, “homeland security,” border patrol, and immigrant detention.

### ABOUT THE WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM & THIS STATEMENT

Jane Addams, the first WILPF president, was a co-founder of the [NAACP](#). For over one hundred years WILPF has sought nonviolent means to improve human rights, eliminate racism, aid refugees, and end war.

Our [Advancing Human Rights Committee](#) and its Communities Working Towards Racial Justice initiative are the focus of WILPF's human rights work. We also work in alliance with the [Poor People's Campaign](#).

As a grassroots and member-driven organization, WILPF US produced this statement deliberatively and with multiple voices.