



TRIBAL LAW AND POLICY INSTITUTE

Serving Native Communities Since 1996

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To our Circle of Supporters,

The Tribal Law and Policy Institute (TLPI) writes to express our deep condolences to the families of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Renee Davis (Muckleshoot), Cecil Lacy, Jr. (Tulalip), John T. Williams (Nuu-chah-nulth), Jason Pero (Bad River Band of Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa Indians), Zachary Bearheels (Lakota, Kiowa, Apache) and the many others in our communities of color that have lost their lives at the hands of law enforcement. TLPI stands in solidarity with our Black relatives and condemns the unlawful and violent actions of federal, state, and local law enforcement.

Indian Country knows too well the terrible harm that racist and unaccountable police officers can inflict upon peaceful citizens. [Study](#) after study confirms that the bias against Black and Native people in the criminal justice system corrupts nearly every encounter. From the treatment of victims, handling of suspects, stops for “suspicious activity,” to any other type of encounter, racial biases are present. The constitutional and civil rights of Black and Native people are violated on a daily basis. Black and Native people have fatal encounters with law enforcement at alarming rates. According to [data](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Native Americans had the highest rate of fatal encounters with law enforcement from 1999 to 2015, just above the rate for Black Americans. In the Ninth Circuit alone, Native Americans have [18 times](#) as many fatal encounters per population as whites. Historical trauma and mental illness are pervasive factors in Native encounters with police, particularly those that result in death. The criminal justice system is out of balance and unjust, and the wounds run very deep.

The Tribal Law and Policy Institute is a 100% Native American non-profit organized to design and deliver education, research, training, and technical assistance programs which promote the enhancement of justice in Indian country and the health, well-being, and culture of Native peoples. TLPI’s mission is to strengthen tribal sovereignty and justice while honoring community values, protecting rights, and promoting well-being. Our organizational objectives include helping create and support institutions and systems that work toward improving the welfare of Native communities, including future generations and facilitating the empowerment and healing of all Native individuals and communities that have suffered from abuse or abusive historical practices and policies. Our philosophies on victimization include the following:

- We believe that past institutionalization of biased policies and practices has created an environment of disparity and despair in parts of Indian Country.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT: Abby Abinanti (*Yurok*) | VICE PRESIDENT: David Raasch (*Stockbridge-Munsee*) | SECRETARY-TREASURER: Margrett Oberly Kelley (*Osage/Comanche*)

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- We believe that the response to all violence should include adapting culturally respectful solutions that do not compromise the safety of individuals or communities.
- We believe victims of crime have inherent rights that should be honored and upheld by all governments.
- We seek to empower victims of crime rather than pathologize their response to victimization.
- We believe that tribal communities have a long history of providing support and services to victims of crime, and contemporary responses should enhance these inherent strengths.
- We endorse safety for victims, accountability for offenders, and accountability for governmental entities for prevention of offenses and the rehabilitation of offenders or the segregation of those offenders when that will protect the community.
- We believe that all governments must be accountable for the safety of their citizens.

TLPI's mission, objectives, and philosophies are inextricably tied to the issue of police violence against Black people. Our Black relatives are displaced Indigenous People who have experienced forces of institutionalized, systemic violence in this country, and share a complex historical relationship to the Indigenous Peoples of this continent. TLPI recognizes that our Black relatives are part of tribal communities, part of Indian Country, and commits to holding ourselves and our partners accountable in confronting anti-Blackness.

We call on our Circle of Supporters to take action consistent with TLPI's philosophies to empower victims, honor their rights, and hold perpetrators, particularly government actors, accountable while maintaining your personal well-being.

Please consider taking the following steps:

Step: Learn. Learn about police accountability measures and act - sign a petition, call your local representative, and provide comment. TLPI asks our supporters to think about the complexities of jurisdiction and public safety in Indian Country versus urban areas, especially in learning about implementing comprehensive community safety and defunding strategies.

Resource: Black Lives Matter, [#DefundthePolice](#); The Marshall Project, [Police Reform](#); [8CantWait](#); U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Chapter 5 of [A Quiet Crisis: Federal Funding and Unmet Needs in Indian Country](#) and Chapter 1 of [Broken Promises: Continued Funding Shortfall for Native Americans](#)

Step: Protest. TLPI respects the right to protest and recognizes it as a catalyst for change. TLPI has been particularly inspired by the international impact of the Black Lives Matter movement. [Indigenous Peoples around the world](#) are joining the movement, protesting the continued targeting of Black and Indigenous people by government actors.

Resource: ACLU, [Know Your Rights: Protestors' Rights](#)

Step: Vote. Like the right to protest, TLPI respects the right to vote and recognizes it as a catalyst for change. This is especially true in local elections of judges, district attorneys, and other actors in criminal justice systems.

Resource: Black Lives Matter, [#WhatMatters2020](#); Voter Registration, <https://vote.gov/>

In community,

Tribal Law and Policy Institute