

# AUSTIN CRIMINAL DEFENSE LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION

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The Austin Criminal Defense Lawyers Association (ACDLA) as an organization would like to express our collective outrage over the extremely cruel and senseless death of George Floyd. Americans across this nation continue protesting police brutality against George Floyd and countless other black men and women who have lost their lives due to the excessive use of deadly force. This issue is particularly relevant in Austin, because of the numerous unjustified killings of members of the Austin minority community and individuals with mental health issues by local law enforcement. In spirit and in deed, we support their calls for reform. As defense attorneys, we are in a unique position because we interact with a broad spectrum of the community and we bear witness to the disparate treatment that some of our clients receive at the hands of the Criminal Justice System.

The Nation's collective condemnation of police brutality and racism presents a unique opportunity to start a conversation about what we can do to make the Criminal Justice System more equitable and just for those encountering this system. The ACDLA would like to be a part of that conversation.

We propose the potential solutions:

- Increase the training of police officers on de-escalation techniques.
- Increase mental health training for all patrol officers.
- Demilitarize police agencies. Increasingly law enforcement agencies are using military equipment and tactics like armored personnel carriers, assault rifles, grenades and sniper rifles. Our communities are not battlefields.
- Remove the shield of Immunity from Civil Liability for officers who commit Civil Rights Violations.
- Immediate termination for officers who have been found to use excessive use of force; as well as departments who continually protect those officers from the discipline of excessive force.
- End the practice of pretextual stops which are primarily conducted in minority communities.
- Create a separate and independent prosecutors office to prosecute cases against police officers who engage in misconduct and to address bias and the appearance of endorsed bad acts.
- Screen and eliminate applicants during the hiring process with a history of wrongdoing coming from another law enforcement agency.

To provide an open forum and ongoing discussion of these issues, The ACDLA is forming an Equal Justice Committee. The focus of the committee will be to help identify solutions to ending systematic inequality in the Criminal Justice System and collectively address police brutality. We are stronger together when justice in every aspect of society is fair and equitable.

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