

**Christina D. Brown Testimony**  
**Policy and Oversight Mass Demonstration Task Force Listening Session**  
**Presidential Task Force on 21st Century Policing**  
**January 30, 2015**

Greetings to the members of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. My name is Christina D. Brown, I am a founding organizer of Black Lives Matter Cincinnati. Black Lives Matter Cincinnati arose to address a local void in Black millennial actions in response to the nationwide and local protest to state violence, particularly police violence. I make mention of this, not because I speak on their behalf, and I explicitly state today, I do not speak on behalf of this organization, but on behalf of myself. I state this because it is important for the task force, law enforcement officials, criminal justice stakeholders, detractors, and supporter to hear Black lives matter, this declaration is what is driving demonstrations throughout the world. I confess that it was a difficult task to provide policy recommendations on mass demonstrations because the culture of state violence against communities of color is what leads to the act of demonstration itself.

Inability to understand and empathize with the context in which these anti police brutality demonstrations take place, is in itself a systemic failure. Dispatching officers whose leadership believes demonstrators are merely "race baiters" or conspiracy theorists perpetuates the cycle of distrust and make Black and brown communities incredibly vulnerable. While this may not play out in the literal spaces where demonstrations occur, it's emanated in public comments made by law enforcement officers, their union representatives, and anti activist sentiments .

Today I insist that mass demonstrations and community policing as an ideology must be navigated through the context of three lenses: interpersonal gentility, individual officer restraint, and institutional criminal justice reform. When adequately balanced, mass demonstrations can healthily occur, reducing the potential of escalating tension between communities, (especially communities of color) and police. Today I will provide

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institutional recommendations to consider implementing when navigating mass demonstrations. Institutional recommendations to improve outcomes during mass demonstrations are as follows:

- 1- Eliminate usage of military grade equipment during demonstrations, especially within the urban core. *This not only triggers imagery of historical trauma but according to the American Civil Liberties Union War Comes Home: The Excessive Militarization of American Policing , deployment of military equipment and militarized tactics, have a disparate impact on Communities of Color .*
- 2- During times of visible tension between police and communities of color, reduce and suspend enforcement of minor violations. *Hyper policing further propels the culture of selective enforcement and maintains the status quo, Broken Windows policing.*
- 3- Advise elected officials to deploy national guard, enforce Marshall law only in response to mass violence, not in anticipation or agitation of mass demonstration. *As demonstrated by MO Governor Jay Nixon who repeatedly, publicly announced days before the grand jury decision announcement, this can be viewed as a fear tactic to deter demonstrations, however it only escalates tensions.*
- 4- Inform law enforcement to remove riot gear attire, and to maintain neutral stance during demonstrations.
- 5- Anticipate traffic disruptions, reroute traditional traffic, only create protest barriers when necessary for protestor safety.
- 6- When possible, identify leadership within mass demonstrations and primarily communicate through representatives, especially possibilities of arrest or deployment of force.

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While I am one of many leaders in a movement of countless others, I have noted both from experience and from afar how the consequences of ignoring these considerations may play out. As a protestor I have witnessed police successfully allow mass demonstrations temporarily disrupt traffic, only to regroup and lawfully disrupt, and I have also witnessed police aggressively forewarn protestors against exercising their first amendment rights. I express these sentiments not to evoke sympathy for the masses, but to ensure consideration is given to protect those who might otherwise be targets of state violence. Before I close, I'd like to leave you with a paraphrased quote from Millennial activists ofcolor, The Ohio Student Association, "Task forces are where the concerns of the community go to die.". Having stated this, I challenge the task force ensures that these concerns and other recommendations of the larger communities of color do not die. Thank you for your time and attention.