

**RACIAL JUSTICE TEAM**  
 First Congregational Church of Stratford  
**LOVE COMES FIRST**

# Police Reform

by Zuri A. Ewers



Some of West Michigan's youngest activists took to the streets of Grand Rapids Saturday morning to share their pleas for racial equality and police reform. The "Justice for Black Lives: Kids March" led families through downtown Grand Rapids and was followed by snacks, face painting and a dance party on Saturday, June 20.

The protest was an opportunity for kids in Grand Rapids to take part in the nationwide protests police brutality – but in a safe and friendly way. For many families, the rally was an opportunity to teach their young children about systemic inequality in a kid-friendly way. Grand Rapids resident Susan Karanja said she marched Saturday to create a better world for her young son. "My husband moved here when he was 12 and I witness the racism he faces every day and I don't want my 10-month-old son, Malachi, to grow up in that world," Karanja said.

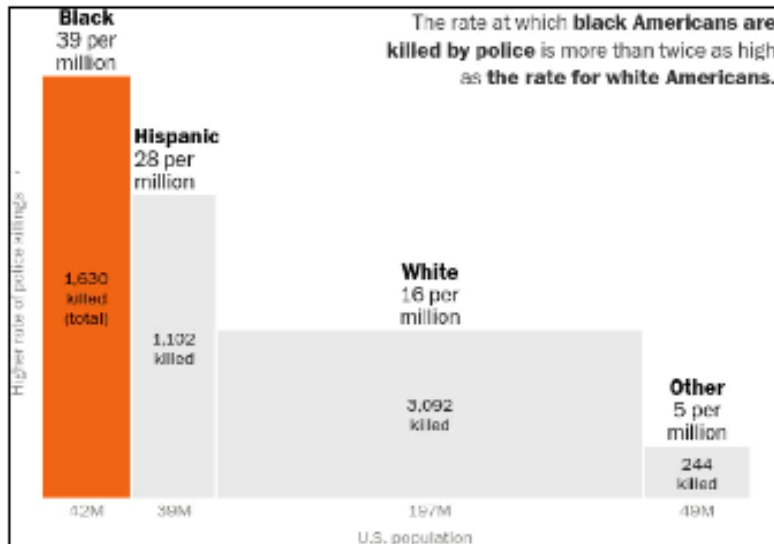


Last month, 13-year-old Naiara Tamminga spoke in front of a city commission board at a Grand Rapids, Michigan meeting to call out officials for lack of action/ the treatment of the police officer involved in Patrick Lyoya's death. 26-year-old Lyoya, a Black man, was fatally shot in the back of his head by Officer Christopher Schurr during a traffic stop on April 4. Lyoya was from the Republic of the Congo

and at the time of his death, his father spoke through an interpreter saying that their family moved to America to escape violence in their country. Even though Tamminga carried out her speech on May 17, thanks to social media, more and more people are now hearing her powerful message. I hope today you take in this powerful and mind opening content about the mistreatment and straight up racism that has gone on for way too long, especially regarding a system that is supposed to protect and serve. Not strike and kill without any other explanation or follow up in the situation that they are trained for every day.

On June 6, 2022, it was reported that the video of the 13-year-old was recently shared by Academy Award-winning actress Viola Davis, D.L. Hughley, Jesse Williams, and Leslie Jones.

The number of black people being disproportionately killed by police is steadily growing by the year.



Although half of the people shot and killed by police are White, Black Americans are shot at a disproportionate rate. In the U.S. the white population is 197 million and the black population is only 39 million. Black Americans account for less than 13 percent of the U.S. population but are killed by police at more than twice the rate of White Americans. Black Americans - 39 per million vs White Americans - 16 per million. Hispanic Americans are also killed by police at a disproportionate rate.

In Connecticut on July 31, 2020, Governor Ned Lamont signed House Bill 6004, *An Act Concerning Police Accountability*. Some of the highlights include:

- Changes in the membership of the Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POST), which provides certifications and trainings to police officers in Connecticut. POST will be reconstituted to include persons impacted by the judicial system and towns of various sizes.
- POST will issue an annual report on police department efforts to recruit minority officers, and it will develop new crowd control policies, require implicit bias training, and ensure that police disciplinary records are subject to Freedom of Information Act requests.
- Uniformed police officers must have their names and badge numbers readily visible on all outer garments.
- Cities and towns can create civilian review boards, which will have subpoena power through their local legislative bodies (i.e., Board of Selectmen).
- Body and dashboard cameras will be mandatory for any officer interacting with the public.
- Chokeholds, strangleholds, and other tactics restraining oxygen and blood flow are banned, and officers will have whistleblower protections to report excessive use of force.
- A new independent Office of the Inspector General will conduct use of force investigations.

The work continues.

#### Links and sources

- <https://d/www.revolt.tv/article/2022-06-08/173076/naiara-lamminga-slams-grand-rapids-officials-for-police-attack-of-patrick-lyoya/>
- <https://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/2020/06/young-activists-protest-racism-police-brutality-in-grand-rapids-kids-march.html>
- [https://finance.yahoo.com/video/13-old-activist-calls-grand-042500876.html?guccounter=1&guce\\_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29yZ2xlLnNybS8&guce\\_referrer\\_sig=AQAAADqb\\_a0WolqNFY1mSgipAy5WnhAc79sy3Pi0utzeCnyrRle0k3iYz4WoUu6uhmYzFR9szUoFe1is8NeeeE89L\\_LG9rrKAfOSifanOkx-s6P](https://finance.yahoo.com/video/13-old-activist-calls-grand-042500876.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29yZ2xlLnNybS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAADqb_a0WolqNFY1mSgipAy5WnhAc79sy3Pi0utzeCnyrRle0k3iYz4WoUu6uhmYzFR9szUoFe1is8NeeeE89L_LG9rrKAfOSifanOkx-s6P)
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- <https://portal.ct.gov/Office-of-the-Governor/News/Press-Releases/2020/07-2020/Governor-Lamont-Signs-Policing-Reform-Legislation>