



Chicago Alliance Against Racist & Political Repression
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MEDIA ADVISORY

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The People Will Not Be Ignored The Time Is Now for CPAC!

Frank Chapman

When it comes to police reform, the powers that be in Chicago have been negligent in their response to the demands of the people of this city and this nation. People across the country are calling for systemic police reforms now. The resounding voice of the people in the streets is, “We will not accept this anymore!” In Chicago, we’re not new to this plaintive cry, unfortunately. We have the longest standing movement for community control of the police in the country, stretching back to the 1969 police murder of Fred Hampton of the Black Panther Party. Yet our city is lagging behind every other major city with respect to announcing much needed reform, including New York City and Minneapolis.

Our Mayor hasn’t even put out a statement on this issue and continues to concoct all manner of stall tactics to ignore what the people demand – claiming she will come up with her own reforms in 90 days, convening yet another working group to study the use of force (as if the policies, and not police impunity, were the root problem), and arguing that defunding the police will lead to racism. Since she was elected as a so-called police accountability “reformer”, Lori Lightfoot has not convened a single hearing to involve the community in the so-called “community oversight” she liked to speak of when she was a candidate. There are a few things she has done around this issue. She did have her police forces trap and brutalize peaceful protesters in downtown Chicago who were there to voice their disgust and outrage at racist police murder on May 30th. She did impose a curfew as a pretext for arresting some 1,500 people. And she did praise her officers who beat and clubbed those exercising their First Amendment rights.

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UNITY + STRUGGLE + ORGANIZATION = VICTORIES!

But it's not just the Mayor who needs to be called out. With the exception of half a dozen elected leaders, we don't see public officials marching with the people here in Chicago and taking part in the protests wracking this city. Where are the members of the county board and our elected members of Congress? They have not been in the streets demanding change. You know who has been in the streets since May 30th? Over 100,000 Chicagoans demanding that the Mayor and City Council enact the ordinance for an all-elected Civilian Police Accountability Council (CPAC) that would finally give communities the rights and power to do what our elected officials will not do -- end police terror, murder and abuse. We know because we're the ones who mobilized them.

Millions of people throughout the country have been calling for radical systemic change in the ways our communities are policed. All of the reforms being called for, including abolishing and defunding the police -- reforms that directly affect the current existence of the police as outside occupiers of our communities -- are embedded in CPAC. CPAC is the way to ensuring these demands are met. CPAC puts the power of reform in the hands of communities through directly elected representatives. That's community control. With community control, we decide the if, when, and how of policing -- up to and including abolition. With community control, we can defund, demilitarize, and regulate the police out of existence. Communities can reimagine a world without police -- but not without the power to do so themselves. We've heard nothing from our elected leadership about this broad demand to reconceive public safety, except for the 19 alderpersons who support CPAC.

We are demanding that the Mayor and the City Council enact CPAC now. Black lives depend on this. Public safety depends on this. Community investment depends on this. This moment in history demands historic new rights and power for the people to decide who polices us and how we're policed -- especially for those communities most directly impacted by police crimes and abuse.

Our organization wrote the Mayor on March 11th, asking for a meeting to discuss the overwhelming demand for CPAC. To this day, we have gotten no response. We demand a response. The Mayor is disrespectful of the democratic demands of the people of this city. There is no ward in Chicago where the demand for CPAC has not loudly rung out. In the past couple weeks, we have had several alderpersons tell us they have received over 10,000 emails demanding CPAC. The people cannot and will not be ignored. We will be protesting at the offices of our elected officials until we get a response. Democracy demands that we get a response and that we be heard.

Frank Chapman is the Field Organizer and Co-Chair of the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, which first proposed the Civilian Police Accountability Council ordinance in 2013, and Executive Director of the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression.