

The modern system of policing is rotten to its core. Here's how we got here. ■■

In the early 1700s, the Charleston slave patrol was formed — the earliest example of organized city policing in the US. It was designed to maintain control of enslaved Black people and protect the interests of white people within the white supremacist system of slavery.

In 1868, the 13th Amendment officially ended slavery in the US, except as punishment for a crime. This loophole enabled police to arrest Black people in order to “lease” them to white business owners, who used their forced labor in convict leasing arrangements.

In the late 1800s, following the Civil War, sheriffs and police departments continued to enforce racial segregation, including Jim Crow laws.

In 1919, a commission studied an increase in violence in Chicago. The commission's recommendations to address violence and crime — including investment in underserved communities, integration, and equal protection under the law for Black people — were largely ignored by officials

In 1965, President Johnson declared a “War on Crime” and appointed a Crime Commission to study it. This commission based its findings on racist notions that pathologize Blackness, and their report erroneously recommended increased policing and surveillance as solutions to crime.

Later in 1965, The first Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) unit in the U.S. was formed by the LAPD in response to the Watts rebellion. This marked the beginning of police militarization as we know it today.

In 1967, President Johnson formed the Kerner Commission to investigate the cause of the 1967 uprisings in Detroit and other cities. The resulting report identified racism, segregation, and underinvestment in Black communities as causes of the uprisings.

The 1967 report recommended investment in Black communities to provide jobs, quality education, access to welfare, a system of income supplementation for low-wage workers, and access to housing. President Johnson disbanded the commission and took no action on its recommendations.

In 1968, the Crime Commission report from three years earlier became the basis for a new agency within the Department of Justice tasked with granting hundreds of millions of dollars in federal money to state and local law enforcement.

In 1969, the first SWAT raid occurred when the LAPD raided the Black Panther Party's Los Angeles headquarters.

From 1986 to 1988, a series of laws called the Anti-Drug Abuse Acts implemented mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses and led to the expansion of prisons and police presence in predominantly Black and Brown communities.

In 1991, after Rodney King was severely beaten by LAPD officers, Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley formed a commission to conduct “a full and fair examination of the structure and operation of the LAPD.”

The 1991 commission found a “grave problem of excessive use of force by a significant number of officers, as well as issues of racism and bias.” The commission also found that “Los Angeles' social problems are well beyond the ability of the LAPD to resolve on its own.”

Few of the 1991 commission's recommendations were enacted, and the LAPD's budget has continued to grow throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.

In 1994, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act was passed, providing federal funding for state and local law enforcement agencies to hire 100,000 new officers. It gave local law enforcement agencies \$14 billion and allocated over \$9 billion for prison construction.

After September 11, 2001, the militarization of local and state police saw its biggest increase since the 1960s. Over the past two decades, DOJ and DHS have granted hundreds of billions of dollars of federal funds to state and local law enforcement for “counterterrorism.”

Today, federal funding is spent blanketing cities and towns with surveillance cameras, subscriptions to data brokers, and on cutting-edge technologies like “Stingray” cell phone trackers — technologies that surveil and police Black and Brown communities and people.

From its inception in slave patrols to the growth of militarization and surveillance, policing has always been a racist institution in the United States.

We have known for centuries how to change it. It is time to invest in our communities and divest from the police.