

TESTIMONY TO VERMONT LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES -August 12, 2020

I am an old white woman. I have always been respected and given assistance by Police everywhere I've lived from Manhattan to Atlanta, London, Roxbury, MA to Vermont. This makes the murders of my black, brown and other marginalized sisters and brothers even more starkly abhorrent. This is not the description of DEMOCRACY I was told about growing up.

I do question how to make any dent in this outrageous situation with the myriad other inequities and inequalities in our national fabric, but I strongly believe this criminal activity on the part of POLICE is shockingly urgent. I support the 10 points of the ACLU, JUSTICE FOR ALL and the 13 other organizations.

AND It is clear to me that we must REINVENT the very concept of "POLICE." We must DECONSTRUCT THEIR FUNCTIONS. This means to acknowledge the contradictory meanings people hold for the term POLICE and to reveal how the term POLICE does not fully explain what it claims to mean to our nation's citizens.

I recommend we form a diverse Citizenry-led TASK FORCE to REINVENT the entire current multiple job descriptions and activities currently falling to something we call THE Police.

Of course we will need a PROTECTION TEAM because people do get out of control and dangerous (#). But a PT will not be called on to rescue cats out of trees or play basketball with neighborhood kids. They will be respected and acknowledged as guardians of the peace and their actions will work in collaboration with Citizens Review Panels and be diverse in make-up and training.

AND in addition, we will need ADEQUATELY FUNDED EMERGENCY SERVICE TEAMS (ESTS). Like the amazing work of our EMTS – EMERGENCY MEDICAL TEAMS – the ESTs will be persons with empathy, trained in the many instances of services our citizenry currently needs. Many of these needs we must also acknowledge are due to enormous inequities in financial security and well-being in our country.

In fact, IN CONCLUSION, these reconfigurations I'm suggesting should be considered only temporary emergency remedies caused by GROSS INHUMAN INEQUALITIES, centuries of discrimination and violence. We need to fix the very underpinning of our social institutions, our social fabric of our relationships and bend the curve toward EQUITY and EQUAL JUSTICE if we are to save our democracy.

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(#) Some reasons for cause of out-of-control violent and dangerous behaviors : –

o- mental health illnesses – some organic, some a result of early abuse & physical or emotional deprivations, PTSD from violence & early witnessing violence, or the wars we send citizens off to fight.

o- alcohol and hard drugs. Environmental toxins and lack of basic needs (poverty) also can contribute.

o- social inequities from income inequality, lack of universal health care, inequality of educational opportunities, environmental neglect, centuries of discrimination and systematic institutional racism.