

Council Perspectives

[Adam Gelb](#)

CCJ President and CEO

George Floyd should be alive today. What happened to him should never have happened.

No verdict can bring back his life, or erase the pain that his death has caused his family and the country, especially Black Americans. Nor can the decision in an individual case resolve the deep, fundamental challenges facing American law enforcement and our justice system as a whole.

But it does mean that healing and progress are possible. Along with the killings of Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks, and far too many others, Floyd's murder sparked the largest civil rights demonstrations in U.S. history. It is shameful that it took bystanders with camera-equipped cellphones to break through the denial and vault police violence to the top of the nation's conscience. But it's there now. And it will take a collective effort to keep it there.

Many police are among those who see the outcome as a step forward. As Charles Ramsey, a highly respected law enforcement leader who serves on CCJ's Board of Trustees, put it, the conviction of Derek Chauvin is a victory for officers serving honorably. Police can no longer ignore that some in the ranks have no business wearing a badge. That old line about "a few bad apples" no longer works.

This verdict marks a rare moment of accountability. In this instance, the system worked. For there to be true justice, though, it can't be an aberration.

[Khalil A. Cumberbatch](#)

CCJ Director of Strategic Partnerships

Hearing the word "guilty" three times as the verdict was read to Derek Chauvin did not bring me comfort or relief. I wish it had, but a verdict does not bring back a brother, a father, a son.

A verdict does not bring back George Floyd. In fact, this verdict only brings more questions about what comes next for our country, especially given that killings of Black and brown people at the hands of law enforcement have continued, right through Chauvin's trial.

I do hope, however, that this verdict puts us on a path toward healing, for Mr. Floyd's family and the nation. Healing, along with the rare and welcome measure of accountability produced by this historic moment, is what's needed if we are to become a land where all people are treated with true equity, fairness, and fundamental justice.

Laurie Robinson

Chair, CCJ Board of Directors

The Chauvin verdict today represents an important milestone showing that America's justice system can work in holding police accountable. It was highly significant that policing leaders — including Minneapolis' police chief — took the stand in court on behalf of the prosecution. That is rare.

But going beyond the jury's action to find one individual guilty, this case is significant in other ways. It has dramatically penetrated public consciousness not only in this country but across the world, and with the verdict today it has reshaped the landscape in which policing will now have to operate in this nation.

The terrain going forward will not be the same. In that environment, there is a broad demand for racial equity and change. I hope policing leaders, both from management and from unions, will now be carrying the baton in advancing measured and honest discussion about how to change what is broken in American law enforcement. (From [Politico](#))

Thaddeus Johnson

CCJ Senior Fellow

Many feel optimistic in the wake of Derek Chauvin's conviction, but I'm struggling to get there. Yes, this case set a precedent – an important, historic one. But George Floyd is still dead and a veteran officer who swore to protect and serve was led out in cuffs because he

violated this sacred oath.

It is convenient to place the blame for this tragedy solely on Chauvin and the other officers who failed to step in and stop him. I do not. The entire police department, including its leadership, failed Floyd and the Minneapolis community. Sure, the chief and other officers testified against Chauvin – they had no choice. Where was their bravery before Floyd was murdered? Where was this nobility that might have prevented the misconduct and brutality before their combination left a man dead in the street?

Let us also acknowledge that it's a sad state of affairs when justice being served is an event and not the status quo. We cannot be distracted by this verdict and treat it like a win for our nation. Justice was served for George Floyd, at least under the letter of the law. But not for countless other people whose lives were unjustly ended by police. Remember, justice is the absence of injustice, and we're not there yet. There is much more work to be done.

Mark Holden

Co-Chair, CCJ Board of Trustees

Thankfully, reason prevailed. The 9-year-old girl who told the Minneapolis officers to “get off of” George Floyd was right: This never should have happened. The jury’s unanimous verdict is a critical step in helping the country to move forward in a productive way.

As important as this case is in its own right, and as much as it represents a victory for the rule of law, it also highlights the need for more justice reform. Our country must now turn its focus to police reform that works for everyone, especially for those who have been marginalized for generations. Smart reform can help our citizens, as well as the majority of law enforcement officers who work hard to do the right thing every day.

My hope is that this verdict begins a healing process and is a step toward improving trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve. Good policing and protecting communities should not be mutually exclusive. We need to continue working to make our justice system smarter on crime, and to make equal justice a reality for every American.
(From [Politico](#))

Mayor Michael Nutter

Member, CCJ Board of Trustees

I certainly felt relief at hearing the verdict, but that was only after feeling anxiety all day, and throughout the trial. This murder should NEVER have happened, and that's what makes me angry about this whole thing.

George Floyd committed a minor offense that turned into a fatal tragedy. Why? The inability of the Officers involved to make the right judgment about HOW to treat him and his offense in the right context and procedure; the fear they clearly had of this Black man, as Black men are often unreasonably feared by white police officers; and the lack of fear by the Officers of any punishment by our system of justice. These are the issues that need to be "put on trial" all across America.

Yes, I'm relieved at the verdict, but I am NOT satisfied with our system of justice. This case is almost the perfect exception to a long line of bad outcomes. The work continues. George Floyd should not be dead, and there is no verdict that can return his life. He paid the ultimate price which may enable some others to live. (From [Columbia University](#))

Marc Levin

CCJ Chief Policy Counsel

This moment must be a beginning, not an end. Because of the life of George Floyd, the reckoning that followed his murder, and now this verdict, we are closer to ending brutality and racial injustice in policing. Not only was Derek Chauvin guilty, but the murder of George Floyd laid bare that our system of policing, our government, and indeed our society are culpable for overlooking the disparate impact of police misconduct on people of color and the rules and culture that too often shield law enforcement from accountability.

While the image of an officer taken away in handcuffs was a powerful indication of the remarkable progress since the days when sheriffs rounded up fugitive slaves, policymakers must take this opportunity to further shed the enduring stain of our painful history and chart a course of racial equity and safer, more unified communities by enacting evidence-based

reforms such as prohibiting chokeholds and similarly dangerous restraints, establishing a duty to intervene, expanding de-escalation training, and investing in proven violence prevention initiatives along with alternative and co-responder programs.

Tashante McCoy-Ham

Member, CCJ Task Force on Policing

Today let's normalize convicting cops who unjustly kill people. I thank God for that jury for simply doing what is RIGHT.

Christy Lopez

CCJ Member

One aspect of the trial that was encouraging was the willingness of so many law enforcement officials to state unequivocally that Derek Chauvin's use of force was unlawful and unnecessary. That was likely quite significant in the jury's reaching the verdict it did, and it underscores the importance of law enforcement officers policing their own — not only to ensure that an officer is held accountable for wrongdoing after the fact, but also to prevent harm from occurring in the first place.

Still, it is too early to know whether this verdict is a flash in the pan or a sea change. Even if it signals a new willingness for prosecutors to bring charges against officers, and for juries to convict, holding an individual officer criminally liable does not fundamentally change the trajectory of policing. This verdict is significant and important. But it shouldn't cause us to lose sight of the fact that Chauvin was more a symptom of policing's current pathologies than a cause.

We need to move beyond conceptualizing criminal prosecutions as the solution to police misconduct. For one thing, prosecutions of police officers generally occur only after someone has been terribly harmed or killed. We need to do much more to prevent policing harm. This requires vastly different recruiting, training and accountability measures, but it also requires fundamentally rethinking the policing function. We have given police an impossible job — one

that underprotects communities even as it needlessly provokes conflict. Unsurprisingly, it's not going particularly well. No amount of after-the-fact prosecutions — even successful ones — is going to change that. (From [Politico](#))

DeRay Mckesson

CCJ Board of Trustees and Task Force on Policing

Remember, accountability is what happens after the trauma, justice is the idea that the trauma shouldn't exist in the first place. The police have already killed over 300 people in 2021. One verdict does not bring them back. The demand for justice continues.

David Safavian

CCJ Member

The justice system worked in holding people accountable for their actions. The weight of the evidence was insurmountable. Combined with outside pressure from activists and politicians, that made the outcome a near certainty. The only question is whether the verdict is at risk on appeal.

Had Derek Chauvin been acquitted or had there been a hung jury, I think the message would have been very clear that it's nearly impossible to hold law enforcement accountable for wrongdoing. In the grand scheme of things, today's conviction is a small step toward accountability. But I think police will still be given the benefit of the doubt in future cases.

I hope Minneapolis can heal. But I'm doubtful it will happen anytime soon. (From [Politico](#))

Walter Katz

Member, CCJ Task Force on Policing

I think about my own experiences as a young man, as a college student, or as a law student, being stopped by the police, and how I was treated. And I'm not unusual. Every single Black person in this country has a story to tell about how they were treated differently, how they were treated unfairly, and how that has stuck with them. So this is one small moment. It's good to see that George Floyd and his family got some justice. But the fight goes on.

I think back to last May 25 and the aftermath. I remember seeing the video for the first time, I think it was 24 or 36 hours after George Floyd was murdered, and how searing and jarring it was for me at a distance. And I think that same sense of trauma came across to witnesses who testified, who were at that scene that day, and how helpless that felt. I'm hoping that for George Floyd's family, for his friends, for those people who were out there at the scene, that they have a sense of relief that justice has been served. It doesn't bring George back, but hopefully it will send a clear, clear signal that justice can come when it comes to fatalities of members of the public and black and brown people at the hands of police. (From [Arnold Ventures](#))

Louis Reed

Member, CCJ Board of Trustees

[#GeorgeFloyd](#) wasn't a perfect man ... but he was a man who deserved the perfection of dignity and grace [#DerekChauvin](#) didn't give him. This guilty (guilty guilty) verdict is what we need.

Chief Art Acevedo

Member, CCJ Task Force on Policing

Tonight all Americans should breathe a collective sigh of relief as justice has been served in the death of [#GeorgeFloyd](#). Police officers throughout our nation saw the same injustice in his death, that his family & the communities we serve saw. Let's move forward in peace & unity.