

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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Opening Statement

Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney

Full Committee Briefing

“Voices from the Front: An Overdue Reckoning with Structural Racism in Policing” June 19, 2020

Good morning. And thank you to everyone for being here for this important briefing.

Black Lives Matter.

I can't breathe.

Hands up, don't shoot.

No Justice, No Peace.

These powerful phrases are rallying cries for fair-minded Americans seeking to live up to one of this country's core principles: equal justice under the law.

Since our nation's founding, African Americans have struggled, fought, and died for the right to be free and equal citizens.

This month marks 99 years since the Tulsa Race Massacre where an entire vibrant community was destroyed and black men, women, and children were systematically murdered.

Today is Juneteenth—a holiday that celebrates the freedom of Black people in America.

That freedom did not come until 1865—two and a half years after President Abraham Lincoln abolished slavery.

We are still working for freedom, and we are still working to provide equal opportunity for all citizens in our country.

Our work is not done.

The long list of names of black people unjustly brutalized by police shows that the fight for justice must continue.

George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and so many others deserved so much more from their country.

These heart-wrenching murders have sparked protests across the country.

They are just victims from the past few months. They are just the ones we know about.

How many other George Floyds and Breonna Taylors have there been?

How many others have had their lives snuffed out without anyone but their grieving families protesting their deaths? The answer is undoubtedly—too many.

George Floyd's murder was live-streamed, but his was not the first captured by fellow citizens on their cell phones.

In 2009, Oscar Grant's murder by transit police in Oakland, California was also filmed on a cell phone.

How many deaths could have been prevented if we had listened to the call from Mr. Grant's family more than a decade ago?

The national reckoning with systemic racism in policing is long overdue. We have known the truth of police brutality for years.

We must not let this moment pass without sweeping reform.

I urge my colleagues in the House and Senate to embrace this moment and heed the calls of a mournful nation.

If you believe that Black Lives Matter, you will vote for the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act.