

# **Proposal for Community Oversight of Police An Abstract**

**Presented by  
Communities United Against Police Brutality**

At the root of police brutality in Minneapolis is a profound lack of oversight of police by the communities they serve. The Civilian Review Authority was created to provide this oversight but was not given the power to do the job. CRA is seen as a toothless tiger by many people in the community and reporting complaints to them is seen as futile.

In addition, the relationship between the Hennepin County prosecutor's office and the police is close by nature and necessity. However, this relationship clouds the ability of the prosecutor's office to make independent judgements on bringing charges of excessive use of force or other police misconduct. This same situation taints the work of the Hennepin County Sheriff, who is charged with investigating violence by Minneapolis police.

This combination of factors has created a situation in which the police chief oversees a department that has minimal accountability to the city administration or to the people of the city. Debacles such as ISAG, Operation Safe Streets, CODEFOR, and racial profiling are the direct result of a disconnection between the police and the community they purport to serve. Thus the absence of strong community oversight of the police creates a structural basis for brutality to exist.

While correcting this structural basis for police brutality will not end the practice completely, doing so would set a tone for what is acceptable behavior by police and would significantly improve the problem. Therefore, we submit the following proposal for your consideration.

## Commission on Police Accountability

We propose that a Commission on Police Accountability be established. This commission would replace the expensive and impotent Civilian Review Authority.

**Structure:** Two members would be elected from each precinct and would serve four-year terms. An additional at-large member would also be elected. Terms would be staggered. The commission would also have a paid staff of investigators and support staff.

**Responsibilities:** The commission would have a broad mandate to oversee the operations and behavior of the Minneapolis police. They would serve as a search committee for new chiefs of police and would submit a slate of candidates to the mayor for final selection. Commission members would act as liaisons with precinct captains and the police chief and would provide data on trends seen through complaints. The commission would accept citizen complaints, investigate them (issuing subpoenas if necessary) and would appoint special prosecutors when appropriate.

**Accountability:** The commission would be directly accountable to the people of the community through the electoral process. In addition, quarterly reports would be submitted to the Public Safety and Regulatory Services Committee of the City Council with information regarding the numbers and types of complaints received, action taken on the complaints and their outcomes.

## Changing the Term of Office for the Police Chief

We propose that the term of office of the Police Chief be changed from three years to four years to correspond with the Mayor's term of office. By necessity, the Mayor and the Chief of Police work together closely and their terms should run together.

*Communities United Against Police Brutality is a Twin Cities-based grassroots organization working to give a voice to victims of police brutality, to increase community control of the police and, ultimately, to end police brutality. We can be reached at 612-874-STOP(7867).*