



Planting the Seeds of a Police-Free Future (Toolkit)



MPD150 EDUCATOR TOOLKIT

MPD150 is an independent, community-based initiative challenging the narrative that police exist to protect and serve. In 2017, on the 150th anniversary of the Minneapolis Police Department, the group produced a performance evaluation of the MPD based on historical research and interviews with community members. Read the full report at www.mpd150.com.

We believe in the power, possibility, and necessity of a police-free future. This toolkit is for educators who understand the importance of critical thinking and imagination, especially in the context of the school-to-prison pipeline, mass incarceration, and police violence. This is for educators who understand that we need to tell a better story about justice, safety, and community, and that the next generation has a vital, central role in telling that story. We hope you will find something useful here.

MPD150 EDUCATOR TOOLKIT

This document contains a few readings, resources, and potential activities for teachers and other educators interested in introducing abolition to their students.

WHO IS THIS FOR?

The materials presented here are tools. If an educator is working with middle school students, vs. college undergrads, vs. some other group, that educator can make the call with regards to which materials to use, and how those materials might fit with their students and/or their pedagogical style.

We'd like this toolkit to be useful to educators from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds, but it will likely be especially relevant for:

- *Social Studies and History classes*, especially in the Twin Cities area, since the MPD150 report is largely about Minneapolis.
- *Language Arts, Speech, and English classes*, as the report is a useful example of persuasive writing, with a clear thesis statement, supporting materials, and call to action.
- *Any class with a Critical Thinking emphasis*. The MPD150 report is about a specific issue, but it's also about the larger idea of expanding our imaginations, challenging what is framed as "radical" or "common sense," and encouraging us all to interrogate dominant narratives about crime, punishment, and safety.

RESOURCES

- **MPD150's "ENOUGH IS ENOUGH" REPORT** is available in three formats:
 - An online version at www.mpd150.com/report/overview.
 - An audio version at www.mpd150.com/report/audio-report. The audio version is about an hour-and-a-half long, and features multiple voices reading the report aloud.
 - Physical copies are also available; we're happy to work with you to coordinate bulk orders. Get in touch at info@mpd150.com.
- **MPD150's "FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS" ZINE** is available at www.mpd150.com/frequently-asked-questions. We can also provide physical copies. The zine is potentially useful as "intro" material, since it's shorter and more easily digestible than the full report.
- **DOWNLOADABLE POSTERS**: Available at www.mpd150.com/downloadable-posters, this page contains eight downloadable posters featuring information pulled from the report. Feel free to print them out for use in interactive gallery spaces, or as visual aids for presentations and discussions.
- **ADDITIONAL READINGS AND RESOURCES**: We've tried to pull together a range of books, accessible online articles (including many local examples), and other toolkits at www.mpd150.com/resources. This can be a good starting point for students doing research projects. A few highlights:
 - The African American Intellectual History Society's Prison Abolition Syllabus contains a wealth of readings and a potential curriculum arc: www.aaihs.org/prison-abolition-syllabus-2-0.
 - Critical Resistance is a pioneer in this work, and their Abolitionist Toolkit contains readings, discussion questions, and more: www.criticalresistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/CR-Abolitionist-Toolkit-online.pdf

SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (ON AUTHORITY):

(Pulled from a bank of questions by Standing Up for Racial Justice - SURJ)

- What were you taught about rules? How did you know the rules, what was expected of you, what was appropriate or inappropriate?
- What happened when you broke the rules or acted out of what was expected of you? Were you punished? Did you see others being punished?
- What happened when people who were different from you acted out or broke the rules? ("different" can refer to race, gender or any other kind of difference).
- What happens now when you imagine getting in trouble or disappointing someone?
- What were your relationships like with adults growing up? with teachers? What were you taught about teachers? What were you taught respect looks like?
- Who had power in your community? In your family? How were you taught to behave in relationship to them?
- Who were you taught to see as an authority? How were you taught to behave in relationship to them?
- How did adults/people in power respond to you when you questioned authority?

SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (ON POLICING):

- When you hear the word "police," what do you notice in your body?
- What is your first memory of police?
- What were you taught about police? How were you taught to behave in relationship to them?
- What did you witness or experience that impacted how you feel about the police?

- Do you feel safe when police arrive on a scene? Have you ever?
- What is a lie/false narrative you were given about police?
- What truth that you hold dear does the current system/police/etc. violate/challenge?
- (For groups with some experience with police): What letter grade would you give your local police department? Why?

- What sustains life in our community? What keeps us healthy and safe?
- What will it be like to live in a world without police?
 - What do you see when you're walking down the street? Sights, smells, sounds?
 - How would you live or act differently?
 - What would be different about the city?
 - What are some examples of how people might treat each other?
 - Where would the police budget go?

SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (ON THE REPORT):

- What is the stated purpose of the “Enough is Enough” report? How did its writers go about fulfilling that purpose?
- If you had to summarize the report, what is the main argument that it makes about police and policing?
- Identify one moment from the “Past” section that stuck out or stayed with you. What was it? Why was it significant or interesting to you?
- Identify one quote or testimonial from the “Present” section that stuck out or stayed with you. What was it? Why was it significant or interesting to you?
- Identify one idea or proposal from the “Future” section that stuck out or stayed with you. What was it? Why was it significant or interesting to you?
- Identify the “dominant narrative” in the US regarding policing. How does the report push back against that narrative? What evidence does it present, or what arguments does it make?
- Can you imagine a world without police? What questions do you still have about it?
- Police abolition is not a “snap your fingers and all the cops disappear” proposition. What will it take to get our communities ready for a world without police? What can we start building today?
- How might you personally be able to contribute to that work? What would “plugging in” look like for you?

SAMPLE ACTIVITY: ENVISIONING A POLICE-FREE WORLD

This is an activity aimed at taking the sometimes abstract idea of abolition and making it real.

- Before the workshop, draw a grid on the board with four columns and five rows. In one column, write five problems/issues/situations (for example: mental health crisis, domestic abuse, theft, gun crimes, and traffic/speeding/car violations).
 - In the next column: "how police handle these situations"
 - In the next column: "other ways people could potentially handle these situations"
 - In the last column: "how do we prevent these situations in the first place?"
 - *It is good to prep example responses to every box in the grid, just in case a particular group is more quiet.*
- Start by doing one row together. For example, for traffic/speeding violations, walk through each column: how do police handle speeding violations? What other ways could we, as a society, handle them? How could we prevent those violations in the first place?
- For the other four issues/problems, break up into four small groups, having each each group focus on one. Use post-it notes to allow the groups to slowly fill in the grid.
- Process/discuss, group-by-group.
 - When we examine how police respond to problems, what common themes do you notice?
 - Were you surprised by any of the ideas that people came up with for dealing with problems? Were there any exciting or interesting breakthroughs?
 - A police-free world doesn't necessarily mean a perfect world. What new problems might arise? How might we tackle those?

SAMPLE ACTIVITY: WHAT KEEPS OUR COMMUNITIES SAFE AND HEALTHY?

This is a zine-oriented writing prompt.

- Check out the zine format detailed at www.zineopolis.blogspot.com/p/h.html. With one sheet of paper, students can make 8-page zines that are copyable, tradeable, and inexpensive.
 - Give your zine a cover/title; it can be the title of the prompt, or something else. For example, Keno Evol of Black Table Arts has a public art project called “*Instead of Police, We Need _____*,” with participants filling in the blank. It could also be something as simple as “*Where I’m From*,” mirroring the writing prompt that many poets and teaching artists use.
 - On each page of your zine, write or draw one thing that makes your community-- your neighborhood, your block, even your household-- safe and healthy. For example:
 - Natural: parks, trees, animals, other green features.
 - Cultural: music, art, food, etc.
 - Personal: specific friends or people you value.
 - Organizational: resources, groups, or places that do good work.
 - Intangible: feelings, ideas, memories, etc.
- After students create (and potentially share/trade their zines with one another), a potential discussion could emerge: do police make us safer? Did anyone include police in their zines? What will it take to invest in all the things that do make our communities healthy and safe? Are we making those investments now?

SAMPLE ACTIVITY: “ENOUGH IS ENOUGH” DISCUSSION

Aside from the discussion questions included earlier, this is just a potential way to structure a conversation (whether as a class, in small groups, or as individual writing prompts) about what students have read.

- *Summarize*: a collaborative summary of the report. What is the report? Who created it? Why does it exist? What did it say?
- *Validate*: What is your immediate reaction to the report? Without analyzing or judging it, what single word or phrase comes to mind after you’ve read it?
- *Question*: What questions do you still have based on your reading? A big collaborative list of questions can be fertile ground for continuing conversation, or continuing research!
- *Analyze*: Identify a particular argument, moment, or passage from the report that resonates strongly with you. Why does it?
- *Create*: Based on your reactions, your questions, and your analysis, what could you potentially create to “add on” to the report? Would it be more interviews? A deeper dive into the history? A similar project but with a different city? Or maybe a policy/lobby/organizing idea based on the report’s findings? Brainstorm what might come next.
 - Depending on the class, that “brainstorm” might become a project.