

[Boom! Lawyered: How to Defund the Police](#)

Imani Gandy: Hello, fellow law nerds! Welcome to another episode of Boom! Lawyered, a Rewire.News podcast, hosted by the legal journalism team that really sincerely wants everyone to know that, say it with me: Black Lives Matter. I'm Imani Gandy.

Jessica Pieklo: And I'm Jess Pieklo. Rewire.News is dedicated to bringing you the best reproductive rights and social justice news, commentary and analysis on the web, and the Team Legal Podcast is part of that mission. A big thanks to our subscribers and a welcome to our new listeners!

Imani Gandy: Jess, you're basically one of the smartest people that I know.

Jessica Pieklo: Oh, Imani. That's a nice thing to say.

Imani Gandy: Well, it's true!

Jessica Pieklo: Okay. Well, you're one of the smartest people that I know.

Imani Gandy: Oh, I know.

Jessica Pieklo: What?

Imani Gandy: Why bother with false modesty, right? It's safe to say that if you put us in a room, we're going to be some of the smartest people in that room.

Jessica Pieklo: Well, I mean, unless you put us in like the NASA control center or something, because we're not going to be much use there.

Imani Gandy: Okay. That's true. But like a regular room filled with non-rocket scientist people, but as smart as you and I are, we don't know everything.

Jessica Pieklo: Oh, certainly not.

Imani Gandy: Right now there's a huge societal discussion about something that we don't know a whole lot about, defunding the police.

Jessica Pieklo: That's right. There is a lot of talk right now about defunding the police or abolishing forces altogether. Some cities like Minneapolis are taking the first steps to radically rethink their community's relationship with policing. In fact, Colorado just passed a sweeping police accountability bill this week.

Imani Gandy: Amazing! But what would it mean to defund the police or to abolish the police altogether? These are big, important ideas. This week's episode, we're going to start to unpack them a little bit. Listen, we've established that Jess and I are very

highly intelligent people, but we've also established that police reform and abolition is not our wheelhouse.

Jessica Pieklo: Neither is rocket science.

Imani Gandy: Neither is rocket science. We're going to ignore rocket science for the time being and we're going to take some time to wrestle with the big questions surrounding these calls to defund the police, big questions like, are you fucking serious?

Jessica Pieklo: And what does that even mean?

[music]

Thanks to escalating police riots, more folks than ever are open to serious questions of criminal justice reform. Folks who had never even considered themselves abolitionists are now abolition curious, which is like this amazing moment to capitalize on.

Imani Gandy: I'm sorry. Did you just say abolition curious?

Jessica Pieklo: I did.

Imani Gandy: Like, they're in a sorority in college and they're in their bra and panties and they're just with abolition. [laughter]

Jessica Pieklo: Look, it might be a phase that they grow out of, you know, Imani, but maybe it will stick. Maybe they will give up the idea that we need police at all. They're abolition-curious.

Imani Gandy: Fair enough. Fair enough. Who among us hasn't been abolition-curious at one point or another?

Jessica Pieklo: I was.

Imani Gandy: It's perfectly natural. For abolition-curious listeners, we should give some basic history on policing.

Jessica Pieklo: That's a really good idea. Law enforcement is about protecting property, versus say people. It's intrinsically tied to chattel slavery in this country, which means that racism is baked into our policing cake.

Imani Gandy: Literally, modern policing has its genesis in the slave patrols of the South. There was a legally sanctioned system of law enforcement that permitted random ass white people to control the population of enslaved people to make sure that they weren't trying to get free. A lot of historians consider slave patrols to be the forefather of modern policing.

Jessica Pieklo: From that, the law from around policing has evolved and even over the last few decades to do things like give officers almost total legal immunity from doing bad things like, oh, I don't know, shooting black people for no real reason. Not surprisingly, Imani SCOTUS is poised to make this even worse.

Imani Gandy: Of course, they are. But can you explain how?

Jessica Pieklo: Unfortunately, yes, I can. That's what I do.

The court is sitting on a slate of qualified immunity cases that they could take up next term. I'm not going to get into the details right now, but these are the main things to know.

One, qualified immunity is the law that's helped make it nearly impossible to hold cops accountable in excessive force cases. Qualified immunity is a doctrine that started out as a way to protect cops against frivolous lawsuits, but it's basically been used by courts to shield them from any kind of legal liability when they assault or kill someone in the line of duty. That's the first point.

Two, next term, the Supreme court could crack that doctrine back open for review.

Three, if they do, the conservative majority could decide, "you know what? A national uprising against police brutality is just the moment that we should use to declare that cops killing someone in the line of duty is just fine." That's what's that shaping up to be.

Imani Gandy: Yeah. That's what they're going to do. That's what they're going to do. Right? Because the police are this sort of untouchable Forrest backed by this basically corrupt criminal police union that is really not at all like any other labor unions. They're just like their own little ... I swear someone needs to sue them under RICO or something. They're terrible.

Jessica Pieklo: That's a future episode.

Imani Gandy: That is a future episode. SCOTUS, can you just not. All right, let's go back to the programming.

Jessica Pieklo: Yeah, let's get us back to the programming. I took us to aside. I'm bringing us back.

Imani Gandy: Congress has made it possible to arm local law enforcement to the gills. In 1990, Congress enacted the National Defense Authorization Act. Part of that act allows the Secretary of Defense to transfer surplus department of defense gear, arms and ammunition to police agencies if those supplies can be used in counter drug activities.

Jessica Pieklo: That's bonkers.

Imani Gandy: Yeah, and let me just say a little bit more about that. The United States has been in this nonsense war on drugs since time immemorial, right? The war on drugs was actually caused by the United States government. It was caused by the CIA permitting cocaine to be flooded into the United States. There's a whole movie about this. Tom Cruise made a movie about this, it's called American Made. It's actually really good. It's about how he was essentially a former pilot, an airline pilot who the CIA tapped to begin doing recon missions for the CIA over central America. While he was doing that, he became involved in trafficking cocaine for the Medellin Cartel, and the CIA was like, "That's cool. As long as you're continuing to take us photos over Central America so we can fuck shit up with the Contras and the Sandinistas, we're all good with that."

Jessica Pieklo: Oh my God, what a mess.

Imani Gandy: Right? That's a thing that happened. That happened.

Jessica Pieklo: That's a thing that happened.

Imani Gandy: But I digress! According to a Newsweek article that was published by Taylor Wofford, the reason that law enforcement were outfitted with military equipment is because the US needed cops to be drug warriors. In order to be drug warriors in this war on drugs, they need to be equipped like warriors.

Jessica Pieklo: Oh, this is great. This is when they then start the war on drugs because they have all the gear to be warriors on the war on drugs.

Imani Gandy: Bingo.

Jessica Pieklo: None of this is good, Imani. In fact, it's all terrible. That's why people are calling for change, like defunding the police. There's a lot of consternation right now about that phrase, defunding the police. Is it a misnomer? What are folks even talking about when they say defund the police? Are they saying, abolish the police?

Imani Gandy: Did you know that the human head weighs eight pounds?

Jessica Pieklo: Wait, what?

Imani Gandy: That's what I always say when someone peppers me with questions. Did you know that the human head weighs eight pounds?

Jessica Pieklo: Imani, your pop references are killing me, but seriously, what's going on?

Imani Gandy: Well, let's talk about these questions because they're questions that a lot of Americans are struggling with right now, including me. I know that the current

policing system doesn't work. I know that cops are corrupt and they're violent, and they meet out punishment against marginalized communities. I know that communities of colors are wildly over-policed. I know that we need criminal justice police and prison reform, but what does that look like? Those are the questions that I have. Those are the questions that our listeners probably have, so let's get into that a little bit.

Jessica Pieklo: Is the phrase defunding the police a misnomer? Are we talking entirely about removing funds from the police when we ask it?

Imani Gandy: Well, I think that depends on who you talk to and where they're from. One of the biggest frustrations right now is that people who have been working on police and prison reform and abolition are being sidelined, while journalists, some like us to be frank, and politicians are attempting to pervert their message. Now, we're not trying to pervert their message because we're journalists of conscience, but there are journalists who are trying to say, well, when they say defunding the police, what they're really talking about is X, Y, and Z. These prison abolitionists and police abolitionists are like, no, we're not talking about X, Y, and Z. We're literally talking about defunding the police.

Jessica Pieklo: Okay, well, so what do you mean? I'm having a hard time tracking.

Imani Gandy: Defunding the police looks different depending on where you are. If you're in Chicago, versus Minneapolis, versus New York. Defunding the police, as a policy, sounds different based on whether you're an activist, or a politician, or a pundit. You'll notice right now that there are no politicians who want to come out in favor of defunding the police because that verbiage is a political nightmare.

Jessica Pieklo: But activists aren't particularly concerned about how politicians and establishment players view their abolition activism. Ultimately, they're just trying to move towards a world without police and that kind of freaks people out.

Imani Gandy: Exactly. That's the thing. So, we have conservatives who are trying to gin up fear and outrage by hysterical claims that every day will be like the purge if we defund, disarm, dismantle the police. For a while, I sort of started to fall into that framing. Thinking, well, what's going to happen if we don't have police, how are we going to order a chaotic society without police? Do we want to be talking about defunding the police when we're 147 days away from one of the most important elections of our time and Donald Trump is now using this defund the police clarion call as a soundbite to then talk about, all caps, LAW AND ORDER on Twitter.

Jessica Pieklo: Totally. He demonstrated this the other day when he tweeted that defunding the police would be great for robbers and rapists. Okay, so that begs the question, Imani, considering the fact that President Trump is both a robber and a rapist, shouldn't he be all in for defunding the police?

Imani Gandy: One would think. But as I was wrestling with this and reading about it, I came to this conclusion that when talking about police reform, there are actually three aspects of it. There's defunding, demilitarizing, and abolishing. Even within those categories, those things mean different things to different people. So, it's difficult to specific categories because they overlap. Some people who advocate for defunding the police aren't advocating for the abolishment of police altogether. There are patrols to reduce police budgets that don't end in a world with zero police and prisons. But as far as my research has taken me, activists and organizers in this area absolutely do equate defunding with abolition. Defund, disarm, dismantle, that seems to be their main message.

Jessica Pieklo: It's activists in this area that we should be turning to for guidance and information about what defunding would look like, what disarming would look like, what abolishing the police force would look like.

Imani Gandy: Right now, there are a lot of bad actors who are trying to strip this radical history from the call to defund police in order to make it more palatable for liberals who essentially want to pacify conservatives.

Jessica Pieklo: But conservatives are never going to be pacified.

Imani Gandy: Exactly. Once I realized that and started wrestling with it a bit more, I realized I was falling for right wing framing regarding language choices, so I decided to dig a bit deeper because ultimately, who gives a shit what white supremacists think about a white supremacist institution?

Jessica Pieklo: Seriously.

Imani Gandy: We should not be concerned. Why am I spending even a second worried that Trump's supporters are going to gin up some outrage about abolishing the police? Why do I give a fuck about them? Let's talk about what defunding the police would mean if we took the phrase literally as in to mean, remove funds from the police, what does that mean?

Jessica Pieklo: Ooh, I love this exercise. I bet people don't even really know how much money is poured into policing, so did a little research. Did you know the Los Angeles Police Department budget is 1.8 billion with a B dollars?

Imani Gandy: Sorry, I got something attack my throat.

Jessica Pieklo: Got some justice caught in your throat?

Imani Gandy: Got some justice caught in my ... 1.8 billion. My God.

Jessica Pieklo: That's half the city's general fund. The New York Police Department, 5.6 billion.

Imani Gandy: 5.6 billion!

Jessica Pieklo: The cost of policing in the United States is a cool \$115 billion, Imani.

Imani Gandy: I can't even. \$115 billion. Do you know how many social programs and community investment projects that \$115 billion could pay for?

Jessica Pieklo: Roughly a shit ton.

Imani Gandy: Yeah, a veritable shit ton. Yeah.

Jessica Pieklo: Let's address some questions that we both struggled with and that our listeners are probably struggling with, the first being, why defund the police? Why not just reform the police?

Imani Gandy: Essentially because police departments across the nation have tried reform for five, 10, 15 years, and it's not working, even as closely as the uprising in Ferguson. The Obama DOJ invested all this money in bias training and dash cams, and all of this shit. It's not...

Jessica Pieklo: -working, precisely. Professor Alex Vitale, who's a professor at Brooklyn College and studies police reforms was recently interviewed in Mother Jones, and he noted that there are millions of low level arrests that are basically the cops harassing the poorest and most marginalized communities, like existence offenses, camping in public, for example, those kinds of things. Now, that obviously leads to over-policing so that when there's an incident like the killing of George Floyd or Ahmaud Arbery, or Breonna Taylor, a deluge of rage is unleashed, and frankly, rightly so.

Imani Gandy: Right. Exactly. It is absolutely justifiable rage, especially when a lot of these places have already been through this "we should reform the police" nonsense, and I've seen that most of those reforms don't work because they involve throwing millions of more dollars at feckless fixes like limiting police use of force, or increasing police accountability, or investing in technology like dash and body cams, or even more uselessly, requiring cops to undergo bias training, as if a couple of group sessions is going to undo decades of ingrained systemic and personal bias.

Jessica Pieklo: Then there are consent decrees. The Department of Justice can essentially force a police department into court monitored reform, but that's a process that takes years, and in some cases, decades. Once the court monitoring is over, police departments are essentially free to go back to their same old shit.

Imani Gandy: Yeah, and that's exactly what happened in Pittsburgh, right? They were bound by a consent decree. It was lifted. The court said you're good Pittsburgh, and the Pittsburgh PD had to be bound by another consent decree later on because they still hadn't gotten their shit together. Another example, the LAPD spent \$300 million over the course of 11 years in response to the Rampart scandal, which I don't know if you ever used to watch the TV series, but do you remember this

series The Shield, which was basically just like crash gang unit that was going knocking on doors and planting drugs on people and stealing money and selling coke? It's basically like Training Day on steroids. Right?

Jessica Pieklo:

Yes.

Imani Gandy:

The point is, this sort of basic bitch police reform isn't working. It's just not working.

Jessica Pieklo:

Basic bitch police reform is fantastic phrasing.

Imani Gandy:

That's what it is.

Jessica Pieklo:

But it's why folks are advocating for defunding the police now. But what about abolishing police? There are people who advocate for that and it's causing a lot of feelings among people because it sounds frankly, outrageous to folks.

Imani Gandy:

It does. While defunding the police, which is diverting resources to other areas for social programs and whatnot, that has gone very mainstream very quickly. But a lot of folks were afraid of the sort of message that it sends, especially when you have Trump shouting about law and order on Twitter all day long.

Jessica Pieklo:

Well, so is the ultimate goal to abolish the police, what's the target here?

Imani Gandy:

Yes, abolitionists are dead-ass serious when they say they want to abolish the police. I get it. The very idea of that can sound bonkers. If there are no police, won't crime rates increase? Who do I call if my car gets stolen, what about rape and murder and other violent crimes?

Jessica Pieklo:

Let's tackle those questions one by one. First, let's talk about crime rates. We have a really good example that crime rates will actually drop.

Imani Gandy:

Wow. Tell me more, please.

Jessica Pieklo:

I know. Pour yourself a tall one. A 2017 study published by Christopher Sullivan and Zachary O'Keeffe examined the crime rates during the New York PD slowdown in 2014 and 2015. In late 2014 and early 2015, the New York Police Department staged a slowdown, hoping that fewer police would lead to an increasing crime, and then everybody would understand the glory and the importance of the police, and we'd have more TV shows about them and we'd throw more money at them.

Imani Gandy:

More propaganda. This slow-down was in response to the killing of Eric Garner, who was selling loosies, which is street term for individual cigarettes. Trust me, I didn't even know what a loosie was because I grew up in the fucking suburbs, so if you didn't know what loosie was, don't feel bad, but he was selling. It was essentially like a vendor issue, right? They have cops patrolling the streets,

cracking down on vendors. They cracked out on this guy who was selling cigarettes and he was killed when a police officer used an illegal chokehold. A chokehold that was already part of the reform, that is what was used that killed Eric Garner.

Jessica Pieklo: During that slowdown, the police continued to respond to calls and the arrest rate for major crimes remained constant, but there was a huge drop in arrest for non-major crime and drug offenses. There was also a huge drop in stop and frisk events.

Imani Gandy: This, in and of itself, is an indictment on the "broken windows" style of policing. It doesn't work.

Jessica Pieklo: Nope.

Imani Gandy: Broken windows is this philosophy that cops shouldn't wait for crime to be reported, but that they should be patrolling. Here's that word again, patrolling and maintaining order constantly through policing low level crimes.

Jessica Pieklo: That helps answer the question, what about the crime rates? They aren't likely to spike. Okay, so what about robbery and theft? What if I'm out here in Colorado, what if someone steals my mountain bike or my Subaru?

Imani Gandy: [laughter] That's classic. My mountain bike or my Subaru. [laughter]

Now I get to talk about one of my favorite people on Twitter. Her name is Mariame Kaba, and she goes by @prisonculture on Twitter.

Jessica Pieklo: Ooh, yes.

Imani Gandy: She did an interview with Chris Hayes back in 2019, and I recently listened to it and read the transcript multiple times, and it was positively brilliant. I have to say, she's probably single handedly responsible for me over the last week changing my thought process around prison abolition and police abolition. So, she's a prison abolitionist, activist and writer, and she advocates for community-based solutions. She gives an example, in this podcast, where she talks about, what if there's a drug addict in your neighborhood named Bill, and Bill breaks into your house and steals your TV.

You're not going to call the cops, right? You're going to call Bill, or you're going to call Bill's family, because this is a person who's known to you. Everybody knows that Bill is a drug addict. Everybody knows he keeps breaking into people's houses, and people are like, "Bill, get your shit together." You're going to call someone who knows bill to encourage Bill to get his shit together. Maybe go to rehab, what-have-you.

Jessica Pieklo: But what if I don't know Bill? What if Bill's a stranger?

Imani Gandy: Well, think about what would happen now. You go outside and be like, "Oh no, my Subaru's gone," and then you'd call the cops, but then what do the cops do about it? They come over, they take some notes, they write a police report and then they do fuck all. You never hear from them again.

Jessica Pieklo: Yeah.

Imani Gandy: Mariame Kaba wants to imagine a world in which, instead of calling the cops, there is a neighborhood association to deal with problems. This may sound ridiculous, "oh, we're going to have a neighborhood association that's going to deal with crime." It sounds ridiculous until you think about the ways in which cops respond to certain populations and what actually gets done when you call the cops, like you feel like you've been vindicated somehow. You call the cops, you make your report, you voice your outrage, you told on somebody. Somebody is going to get in trouble. But what has been accomplished? The person's going to get in trouble. You're never going to know what the root reason was for stealing the TV. Are they poor? Are they drug-dependent in some way?

That person gets funneled into a system. The system doesn't care about making about rehabilitating him or fixing the core reasons of the TV theft. It's just, you put somebody in jail, and then there's somebody else is going to come in the neighborhood and steal your fucking Subaru anyway.

Jessica Pieklo: Okay. No, that makes sense. It's a thing, right? I love my Subaru, but it's replaceable. That's not the case in murder or rape cases.

Imani Gandy: Yeah.

Jessica Pieklo: Those questions, right?

Imani Gandy: Those are rough. Those are rough questions. What do prison abolitionists say that, Jess?

Jessica Pieklo: Well, we've got some news there. Most murders go unsolved. Imani, people are literally out there getting away with murder. That's not just a phrase. It's a reality. Some folks want to say, "Well, what about murderers and rapists," without examining how the system really works now, and it doesn't work out so well now, does it?

Imani Gandy: It doesn't work well at all. The clearance rate for murder cases has decreased from 90% to 64%.

Jessica Pieklo: Wait, what does that mean? What's the clearance rate?

Imani Gandy: Clearance rate doesn't even mean the person who committed the crime got convicted. Clearance is essentially cop talk for a case that ends in an arrest, or a

case in which the perp identified without the possibility of arrest. For example, if the perp died.

Jessica Pieklo: That means that a third of murders never even lead to an arrest, let alone get solved. If you're murdered, there's a one in three chance that your killer will never be found. People watch entirely way too much law and order and think that the cops always find the culprit, and they just don't.

Imani Gandy: Okay, Jess, I totally get where you're going with this. You're saying that we should be out there murdering more people. Right? Because we're not going to get caught. That's what you're saying? Because I've got a list. I've got an Arya Stark list. We can just start going down the list, just knocking people out.

Jessica Pieklo: That is not at all what I'm saying, Imani. I am not saying that whatsoever.

Imani Gandy: Well, that may not be what you're saying, but that's what I heard. But seriously folks, what's interesting about Mariame Kaba is how she talks about people relying on the policing model that we have now, because it's all that they know.

Jessica Pieklo: It's true.

Imani Gandy: The idea is, we have to do something. We have to do something to deal with crime and criminals, and this is what we've been doing, so this is what we're just going to keep doing. Mariame's response to that is, "well, it's not working and it hasn't worked for 400 years, so maybe we should try something different." She goes on this, I don't want to call it a rant because I don't like saying that women of color rant, but she does talk about how frustrated she is when people get angry with her about her ideas of abolishing the police. She's like, "Don't get angry with me, get angry with the system that you've been upholding for 400 years, which doesn't work. Why are you mad at me when we could just get together, sit in a room and try and come up with some alternative solutions."

Jessica Pieklo: That means non-police solutions, so things like sending social workers for domestic violence, intimate partner violence related issues, sending counselors for substance dependency issues, mental health counselors for people with mental health issues, absolutely removing police from schools and focusing on counselors in that space. But I got to say something here. We cannot go back to sundown towns, because white people like to police their own communities, and when we do, we tend to chase out the brown folks.

Imani Gandy: Why don't you explain quickly what a sundown town is in case people don't know.

Jessica Pieklo: Yes, totally. As we've said, the history of policing is absolutely baked into sort of white identity in this culture, and sundown towns are literally places where I grew up, in States like Nebraska, Missouri, Arkansas, where, when the sun went down, you got the hell out of town if you were brown or black, because they

were patrolled by white patrols to keep the neighborhood integrity. Right? We hear this in modern day neighborhood zoning fights, right? Like neighborhood character fights and city things. That's all about all of that. As we are talking about community-based solutions to policing, I just really think it's important for the white folks to be like, "No, we can't go back to doing that bad thing again, because that's no good."

Imani Gandy: Right. We're not going to have a bunch of George Zimmermans patrolling areas, shooting kids for having iced teas and Skittles.

Jessica Pieklo: Exactly.

Imani Gandy: We're not doing that. People may scoff at the idea that we're going to have community-based solutions for violent crime, but Mariame Kaba notes, that if we're looking for accountability and harm reduction, if that's what the goal is, and that's what ... people who like advocate for prison systems say the goal is, well, we're trying to rehabilitate people and blah, blah, blah, and reduce harm and hold people accountable for their bad deeds. We've been going about it all wrong. I'm going to be paraphrasing her a lot, but honestly, you really ought to go back and listen to her speak to Chris Hayes, because it's truly amazing. April, 2019, his podcast is called, Why Is It Happening?

But, so, let's say you kill someone.

In our culture right now, the incentive is never to be like, you know what? I did something bad. I killed this person. What can I do to reduce that harm? It sounds ridiculous to be talking about killing people and reducing harm. The harm has been done. The person is dead, but the harm that you need to fix is the harm to the victim's family. A lot of times, what goes on with the prison system now, isn't what the victim's family wants. The victim's family doesn't necessarily want the person to get the death penalty, but they don't have a say. They're excluded from the process. If you have a system where you're not incentivizing people to come forward and be clear about what it is they've done, and then work with other communities to figure out how to fix that harm, to center the victim, then what are you doing?

You're just tossing people in jail, and then someone who does something bad is never going to come forward and say it because they know it's just always going to lead to this result, which means incarceration, loss of life, loss of liberty, loss of what-have-you.

Jessica Pieklo: What you're saying is that prison abolitionists like Mariame envision a world where we do away with that adversarial justice model and operate under what advocates call a restorative justice model.

Imani Gandy: Exactly. She talks a lot about restorative justice being a way to go about this shit by people with similar ideas, ideologies and visions. They want to envision a

world where you can interact with people when harm occurs, and that restorative justice is a process by which the people who were harmed can be centered. The harm can be seen, it can be valued, it can be talked about, it can be addressed, and then bystanders community members are called to be part of this sort of circle where you talk about this harm that the person did, and figure out how the best way is to go about fixing it. That means including the family members of the pap, the family members of the victims, the community leaders, whether it's church leaders, leaders of rec centers, whatever, mentors.

It's just a community-based solution, and it's a lot different than this adversarial system that we have now where harm occurs, the state intervenes, and then everybody else is left out of the process. That seems like, I don't know. What do you think?

Jessica Pieklo: I'm the white lady here, but doesn't that sound kind of woo-woo? I think that's the question that people are struggling with, the restorative justice model sounds just kind of woo-woo. Okay, how could that possibly work when it comes to serial killers, Imani? What? No.

Imani Gandy: Yeah, and I don't have the answer to that, and I'm not sure prison abolitionists have all the answers right now either. But when you think about it, they're trying to fix a world and develop a world that they envision with literally no funding. They have no way of implementing a lot of these strategies to see if they might work, because \$115 billion is going to the police and organizations that are working on police abolition can't even get \$100,000 grants. It's truly just the inequity in the solution in searching for solutions is really palpable. But the bottom line is, the current system is failing, people are getting away with murder, few rapists are convicted, among the few who are even reported and then arrested.

Certainly, if you're skeptical about restorative justice, I get it. I understand why you might think it's woo-woo, it's never going to work. We need cops, we need authority. But I would just put to you that restorative justice is something that you should maybe explore. It's something that we, as a society, should explore because what we have isn't working, and how does it hurt to explore alternatives?

Jessica Pieklo: Also, people who might think restorative justice is woo-woo have probably themselves engaged in restorative justice at times. If your neighbor kid threw a baseball through your window, you probably didn't call the cops on them. You went over to visit your neighbor's kid's parents and you asked for restitution. You worked it out.

Imani Gandy: Right. Hey, your kid threw a ball through my window. Can you pay for it? Okay. The end. Why do you need to call the cops for that? Prison abolition is a lot to wrap your head around. I certainly don't have all the answers, but spending \$115 billion on policing, only to have it come down to the fuckery that we're seeing in the streets right now that needs to change. It needs to change. We

can't keep going through these cycles where every five years we have ... this is clearly the biggest uprising I've seen in my lifetime. But prior to this, there was Baltimore and Freddie Gray, there was Ferguson, there was Rodney King, there was Watts, there's Tulsa, there's Rosewood. There's constantly racial strife surrounding policing of communities of color.

I'm just spending time reading about it, reading words from activists who have ideas and I'm wrestling with it. I'm sure you're wrestling with it. I'm sure our listeners are wrestling with it. I feel like that's okay.

Jessica Pieklo: Yeah, I am. There's really, there's no shame in that. These are hard ideas, and wrestling with it is exactly the kind of thing that we should be doing, but Imani, let's get real. Defunding the police sounds nice and all, but is anyone actually going to do it?

Imani Gandy: Bitch, they might. [laughter]

Minneapolis City Council announced last week that they were going to ban that city's police force. Details are really light right now on what that's going to ultimately look like, but it's actually not as radical a proposition as it might sound. Supporters are pushing for the council, the city council to take money from the police budget and invest it in social services and programs, while at the same time, launching a process for some of these creative alternative systems that would involve community input.

Jessica Pieklo: That's sexy as hell. I'm sorry.

Imani Gandy: Would you say it's as sexy as the APA?

Jessica Pieklo: Look, doing alternative models of policymaking in my world is absolutely a panty-dropper. I'm sorry. [laughter]

Imani Gandy: Jesus Christ.

Jessica Pieklo: I'm very excited about Minneapolis. Good job folks. [laughter]

Imani Gandy: That's really funny. The Minneapolis police department was eating up 30% of the city's budget. Let's use that money to invest in communities so that violent policing for petty crime isn't necessary, so Bill, the drug addict, can go to rehab instead of jail. You know what I mean? We need to get to the root reasons about why people are engaging in these petty crimes. If you get to that root reason, lack of mentoring, poverty, lack of afterschool programs, what-have-you, we might be able to solve this crime issue without beating the shit out of people.

Jessica Pieklo: Other cities have disbanded their police forces too. Camden, New Jersey did it in 2013 after a huge scandal involving their force. Now, that doesn't mean that

there are no cops in Camden, New Jersey now. That's not true. There's an alternative force that has come up and has been created, but the idea was basically that the rot went all the way to the core, and so doing reform wasn't going to work. You had to just start all over. Then we mentioned Colorado passed this week a huge police accountability bill with every lawmaker, but one voting for it. That's huge. Big shout out to representative Leslie Herod who's a black woman who spearheaded this effort. She really just got it done.

Among the items in it is that it has no qualified immunity for cops. That's very exciting. That means that if you are a police officer and you beat somebody up, people in Colorado can now sue you under Colorado law for that nonsense, and that's huge.

Imani Gandy: That is absolutely huge. That's brilliant. We've been talking about disbanding the police, disarming the police, dismantling the police, but barring that, because assuming we're not going to get to that, and I think that prison abolitionists would tell you that they don't expect to see that sort of abolition in their lifetime. Barring that, what kind of police reforms are actually helpful?

Jessica Pieklo: Well, so we know the reforms that aren't helpful. Those are the ones that involve spending more money on police. The technology reforms, anything that involves having the cops do their job better, we should be suspicious of because their job is bad. But we can support cops being required to do things like carry personal liability insurance right now until this qualified immunity situation is fixed. Why? That creates a financial incentive for them not to shoot people, for example.

Imani Gandy: Right. That just seems basic. We require people to have insurance if they're driving a car. We require doctors to have malpractice insurance. Cops should be required to carry personal liability insurance. That just is common sense to me, because what happens is they shoot someone, they usually get away with it. But on the off chance that they don't, and there's some sort of settlement, who pays for the settlement? The taxpayers. Not the cops, not the police unions. Also, I just want to point out that just recently, Joe Biden has released this new police reform plan that does exactly what shouldn't be done, which is he wants to throw \$300 million for better policing.

There's just no such thing as better policing under the rubric that we have right now. I just think that that's ... if there's one thing that I've learned over the last week and a half or so of studying this stuff and trying to wrap my head around it, it's that throwing more money at an already shitty system is not going to work. I say, let's keep a real close eye on whether and how any of these policies play out because frankly, the status quo is a goddamn tire fire. So, trying out some of these radical ideas, even if they seem a bit, woo-woo, it's good to me. Because we don't know what will work until we try something else.

Jessica Pieklo: With that, Imani, I think we have some people to thank, because ...

Imani Gandy: Yes, we have some people to thank! We have two new donors, Brian and Chad, thank you both for your generous donations. We truly, truly appreciate it.

Jessica Pieklo: Imani, we have three, count them, three new monthly donors!

Imani Gandy: Yes!

Jessica Pieklo: Valerie, Mackenzie, and Alan. We can't thank you enough for your support.

Imani Gandy: If you're someone with a little extra disposable income, who'd like to support us, please do. You can visit rewire.news/boomgive.

Jessica Pieklo: That's rewire.news/boomgive.

Imani Gandy: Or, since we're in the 21st century, you can text, BOOMGIVE, one word, B-O-O-M-G-I-V-E, to 44321. What? Text message giving? Wave of the future. We are forward thinking people. I'll just have to tell you that. Anyway, thank you all so much for listening. Thank you so much for donating when you can. Thank you so much for being part of the tubes team.

Jessica Pieklo: The what? I'm sorry, what?

Imani Gandy: I said the tubes team. You heard me.

Jessica Pieklo: We're getting a t-shirt.

Imani Gandy: We're getting a t-shirt. We're getting the band back together. It's called the tubes team.

Jessica Pieklo: I want a jersey. I want a soccer kit of the tube. [laughter] All right, that's it.

Imani Gandy: Look for our single on Spotify. Okay, I think that's enough for us.

Jessica Pieklo: That's enough.

Imani Gandy: If you want to talk to us about any of this, you can follow me @AngryBlackLady. You can follow Jess @Hegemommy, H-E-G-E-M-O-M-M-Y. But ultimately, I would truly encourage you to find some actual prison reform, police reform, police abolitionist, prison abolitionists. Find these people, Google it, look on Twitter and read what they have to say. There's so much great information on Twitter. People are doing these amazing threads. It's just a really easy lift for you to just educate yourself before you start freaking out about, oh my God, it's going to be chaos because nobody wants cops anymore.

I'm going to say that, and I'm also going to encourage you to join our Facebook group, Boom! Lawyered. Answer the questions. Just let us know that you're pro-people and not anti-people, I guess. Because it seems like, for some reason,

there are a lot of people who just don't want other people to exist, and I don't understand why that is, JK Rowling. Let's see. On that note, I guess we will just, what are we going to do, Jess?

Jessica Pieklo: We'll see on the tubes, folks.

Imani Gandy: We'll see you on the tubes, because we've got a tubes team.

Speaker 3: Boom! Lawyered is created and hosted by Jessica Mason Pieklo and Imani Gandy. Marc Faletti produces the show.