

Name: Shreya Daggolu

Age: 16

Location: Jackson Heights, NY

### **To Protect and To Serve All**

The motto ingrained in the honor code of each cop is “to protect and to serve.” It is the motto we need. It is the motto we demand. To protect and to serve does not mean to preserve those in power. It does not mean to attack the innocent, nor does it mean to ambush the voiceless. “To protect and to serve” all means to defend everybody in your nation, including the helpless minorities, including the poor that can’t physically repay the debt, including the people of all ethnicities. In the past, many faced fatal attacks. Who you may ask? Tamir Rice, a black boy who was shot dead by a cop. Breonna Taylor, asleep in the dead of night, yet shot by cops eight times. George Floyd, a cop put his knee on Floyd’s neck as he endlessly cried he couldn’t breathe and died. Jordan Edwards, a fifteen-year-old on the football team, was shot by cops and died. Eric Garner was choked and screamed “I can’t breathe,” and died in New York City. Their families, their souls must be screaming, “How can we be black in America? When our brothers and sisters are dying. When gun violence exacerbates. When the system that protects does not. When our lives are at risk. When we fear the world because we fear the system. Innocent lives are at risk, yet we must survive. We need a system that will help us survive.” Even children face this police brutality. Valentina Orellana-Peralta was a fourteen-year-old girl who was shot accidentally by the police in Los Angeles. Fanta Bility, an eight-year-old girl was accidentally shot by cops in Philadelphia. Seven-year-old Aiyana Jones was accidentally shot by the SWAT team. A four-year-old girl was unfortunately shot while toy shopping on Times Square. Their souls, their friends must be crying out, “How can we be kids in America?”

The Oath of Law Enforcement states, “On my honor, I will never betray my integrity, my character, or the public trust. I will always have the courage to hold myself and others accountable for our actions. I will always maintain the highest ethical standards and uphold the values of my community, and the agency I serve.” I hope the police understand that they must live up to their oath, that they are elected by the democratic principle, “by the people, for the people.” They are elected by the people to defend the people. The body of the community consists of people of all races, genders, and economic backgrounds. These are the people that police officers must serve regardless of their background. America is a melting pot of many different cultures, it is a melting pot that needs security.

How can citizens live peacefully in America, under the protection of the police, under the protection of the American system? Is there any way to prevent this spike of police-

involved shootings? Before recruiting new officers, screening for implicit bias against races and aggression is essential in maintaining peace within communities. Psychological testing among officers for abusive or violent traits should be advocated. In addition, it should be required to frequently test and teach officers about the tactics they should use in a specific situation. This will prevent persistent gun violence and police brutality. The systematic use of unnecessary police-civilian encounters for minor offenses should be prohibited in order to avert calamities.

The need for police reforms that foster a positive community is crucial. Policing can promote justice and equality by bridging the people and police together in order to defend each individual's rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Local police can work with communities to recognize the promise of our democracy by allowing better communication between the two through community immersion. The police can conduct regular neighborhood patrols and take part in community-building projects in order for the police to become more cognizant of the different cultural backgrounds. This will prevent unexpected bias and racist attacks. Police departments should rely upon collaborative approaches within the community in order to build community trust. Projects include using structural strategies to reduce crimes, such as adding lighting in isolated areas and securing abandoned buildings. Finally, the police should interact more affectionately and emotionally with the community, instead of simply giving commands. Positive body language and tone, active listening, and empathy of the officer can remove the community's fear of cops. Police should be aware and be respectful of the community's values, language barriers, economic status, religion, norms, background, authority, perceptions, beliefs, and cultural differences. Reevaluating communication models between the public and the police will seal gaps in public trust and eliminate racial tensions.

All in all, I am grateful that the police risk their lives every day for the good of the nation. I hope these ideas for implementing a safer community will be recognized in order to further protect the entire body of our country.