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## 21 Experts on What the Verdict Means — and Where to Go From Here

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The Chauvin verdict felt like a pivotal moment. Will it turn out that way?

“It is too early to know whether this verdict is a ... sea change.”

CHRISTY LOPEZ

As the jury’s verdict was read — guilty, guilty, guilty — millions of Americans breathed out.

Despite the widely circulated video capturing Derek Chauvin choking the life out of George Floyd on a Minneapolis street last May, it was never clear that the former police officer would be convicted of anything, let alone murder. Despite increasing attention to police violence, particularly against Black Americans, it’s still vanishingly rare for officers in the U.S. to be charged, let alone convicted.

So Tuesday’s verdict marked a big moment in the nation’s ongoing racial-justice reckoning, and in the push for more accountability from the police. But will anything more come of it?

POLITICO Magazine asked a select group of experts on race, policing and the law to comment on the verdict, including whether it suggests the system can work and where society needs to go from here.

Several said the verdict offers justice for Floyd but frustratingly little reason to think it signaled broader progress. “Year after year, police officers have killed Black and Brown people in this country with impunity. Many of those cases were also caught on video,” wrote historian Keisha N. Blain. Others noted, hopefully, that Chauvin’s conduct was condemned by some former colleagues. “The fact that several police officials — including Minneapolis’ chief of police — testified that Chauvin’s actions were unethical and criminal signals an important change,” said Chuck Wexler, executive director of Police Executive Research Forum.

The overwhelming sentiment echoed that of Yale’s Monica C. Bell, that the outcome is important but only one step forward: “As we exhale along with the Floyd family in the wake of this outcome, we must redouble our efforts to confront and root out racial injustice throughout our society.”

Their full responses are below.

‘This case has set the bar on what holding a police officer accountable in America should look like’

BY CHANDA SMITH BAKER

*Chanda Smith Baker is the chief impact officer and senior vice president of the Minneapolis Foundation.*

During this trial, I could not bring myself to hope, but today the justice system worked. I am clear that justice prevailed because Minnesota has an attorney general, Keith Ellison, who has moral clarity and a commitment to justice. Minneapolis has a police chief who, after viewing the video, immediately took action, firing those officers and later testifying that what happened was against the policies and training of the Minneapolis Police Department. This case has set the bar on what holding a police officer accountable in America should look like. This is not what we've seen in so many other cases. This verdict reminds us that justice has not prevailed for far too many and — without continued commitment — it will not endure.

The public witnessing of the public execution of George Floyd has brought a spotlight on the injustices of the criminal justice system, on the ways Black and Brown communities are engaged with by police and the consistent lack of accountability. This verdict brings closure to our community in this case. However, it should inspire us to continue to push for significant change in our criminal legal system and the system of policing.

In this instance, we are talking about the legal system working. For justice to really prevail, we would have never witnessed the death of George Floyd. We must continue to work to have public safety and policing that doesn't allow for this situation to happen in the first place. And while we are hopeful with this verdict, we should be clear that there's a long road to justice ahead of us. We need to remain steadfast on pushing for policies to change the many systems that have, for too long, adversely impacted Black and Brown people.

The world has been watching Minnesota, and I hope that we can become the epicenter for change, and what justice prevailing consistently looks like.

'No, the justice system did not work'

BY KWAME RAOUL

*Kwame Raoul is the attorney general of the state of Illinois.*

It is important to note that the justice system is not solely composed of proceedings that come after a crime. The justice system also includes proactive steps that are taken to avoid these tragedies in the first place. For instance, if Derek Chauvin had a history of complaints filed against him, should he have been in a position to commit murder in the first place? So if you look at the "justice system" as including taking action to address previous misconduct, then no, the justice system did not work. Ideally, the justice system should prevent death instead of reacting to it. With respect to this court proceeding, you can argue that the system worked.

I would emphasize that this is one case. The jury is still out on the long-term implications here. We still have so much to do in order to eliminate the systemic failures that allowed Chauvin to be on the police force for so long in the first place. Looking at just this verdict as a final answer is taking a "bad apple" approach to criminal justice reform instead of taking a holistic approach to the challenge of constitutional policing.

My fervent hope is that we go to a place where we can have honest discussions about the policy deficiencies that have existed over time, and the implicit bias that has allowed for these deficiencies to prevail for so long. Comprehensive police reform — not merely tinkering with

separate components — will go a long way toward allowing us to have honest and complex conversations such that Black and Brown communities do not fear the police, and police officers who are in communities doing their jobs the right way are not painted with a broad brush.

Mike James stands with a sign reading "Guilty" at the Texas Capitol in Austin, Tuesday, April 20, after the guilty verdict in the murder trial of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin was announced in the death of George Floyd. | Eric Gay/AP Photo

‘It is too early to know whether this verdict is a flash in the pan or a sea change’

BY CHRISTY LOPEZ

*Christy Lopez is a professor from practice at Georgetown Law.*

One aspect of the trial that was encouraging was the willingness of so many law enforcement officials to state unequivocally that Derek Chauvin’s use of force was unlawful and unnecessary. That was likely quite significant in the jury’s reaching the verdict it did, and it underscores the importance of law enforcement officers policing their own — not only to ensure that an officer is held accountable for wrongdoing after the fact, but also to prevent harm from occurring in the first place.

Still, it is too early to know whether this verdict is a flash in the pan or a sea change. Even if it signals a new willingness for prosecutors to bring charges against officers, and for juries to convict, holding an individual officer criminally liable does not fundamentally change the trajectory of policing. This verdict is significant and important. But it shouldn’t cause us to lose sight of the fact that Chauvin was more a symptom of policing’s current pathologies than a cause.

We need to move beyond conceptualizing criminal prosecutions as the solution to police misconduct. For one thing, prosecutions of police officers generally occur only after someone has been terribly harmed or killed. We need to do much more to *prevent* policing harm. This requires vastly different recruiting, training and accountability measures, but it also requires fundamentally rethinking the policing function. We have given police an impossible job — one that underprotects communities even as it needlessly provokes conflict. Unsurprisingly, it’s not going particularly well. No amount of after-the-fact prosecutions — even successful ones — is going to change that.

‘I’m left to wonder if justice in this country will always be synonymous with a prison cell’

BY REGINALD DWAYNE BETTS

*Reginald Dwayne Betts is a poet, lawyer and memoirist. He is also the director of the Million Book Project, an initiative out of Yale Law School, where he is a Ph.D. candidate.*

A friend of mine was once sentenced to life in prison for murder. My friend, then a 17-year old Black boy, had murdered another Black boy. Two decades later, I worked as a lawyer struggling to convince a parole board to free him. But I knew the family of the dead Black boy might believe freedom for the trigger man is an injustice. That for them, only life in a cell amounted to accountability. My view: Two decades in prison was enough.

I shouldn’t think back to my friend when I think of the Derek Chauvin verdict. But Chauvin’s eyes remind me of others I’ve seen struck with the sudden knowledge that decades in a prison

cell might await them. And so, when I ask myself where does society go from here, I really have no answers. Chauvin is another man going to prison for destroying a life and ruining his own. The verdict gives me some relief, I suppose — but on most days, I think about prison cells, what they can and can't do. The men I know condemned to die in prison for violence look more like me than Chauvin. The men I want to free from prison all look more like me than Chauvin.

If justice is a 40-year prison sentence for Chauvin, I'm left to wonder if justice in this country will always be synonymous with a prison cell. That's a troubling thought. Because prison cells have never made this country safer. I won't make this verdict an occasion for me to pretend that the criminal justice system is just and the rates of incarceration in this country don't profoundly worry me. The verdict makes me want to imagine a different United States, one where the undercurrent of so many lives isn't violence. Because I know when death comes, we all tend to want prison. And, sadly, maybe that's all we can want, even if at night prisons make none of us sleep any easier.

'This case is an outlier'

BY PHILIP M. STINSON

*Philip M. Stinson is a professor of criminal justice at Bowling Green State University and the author of Criminology Explains Police Violence.*

The criminal justice system worked with the jurors returning guilty verdicts on all three counts. The verdict, however, likely means little in terms of the long arc of holding police in America accountable for their actions. This case is an outlier. Most instances of police brutality are not captured on video, and most do not receive the level of media attention that the Derek Chauvin case has garnered.

I study police crime and police behaviors. Roughly the same number of people are killed by police officers every year in this country, and roughly the same number of police officers are charged with murder or manslaughter each year. Less than 2 percent of the on-duty police officers who kill someone are ever charged with a crime and held accountable in the criminal courts. While justice was served with the guilty verdicts against Chauvin, my fear is that it will not lead to meaningful reforms in policing.

There are more than 18,000 state and local law enforcement agencies across the country employing more than 700,000 sworn officers. The Chauvin trial will do little to change the culture of policing at many of those law enforcement agencies. That is because many police officers exhibit fear of Black men and Black boys. Until we deal with this core value of the police subculture, it will be difficult to change police behaviors.

'There is still so much work to be done'

BY JENNIFER COBBINA

*Jennifer Cobbina is an associate professor in the School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University and the author of Hands Up, Don't Shoot: Why the Protests in Ferguson and Baltimore Matter, and How They Changed America.*

Today we have seen accountability for one police officer's actions. We have witnessed some form of accountability take place, which was necessary. However, we should not be mistaken

that justice has taken place. Justice would have been George Floyd not being murdered. Every day that Black people worry whether they will be the next George Floyd is another day without justice. The one guilty verdict does not mean that the criminal legal system values Black lives. It took overwhelming evidence with unimaginable footage and witnesses to bring this case to trial and gain convictions.

Collectively, so many people were holding their breath waiting for the verdict. The fact that so many of us knew what the verdict should be but remained uncertain of what it actually would be speaks volumes about the state of our nation. Police are rarely held accountable. Hopefully this case will send a signal to every official within the criminal legal system that the tide is shifting.

There is still so much work to be done, which begins with acknowledging that structural racism is entrenched in policing, and we must continue to fight for systemic change to policing in America. We need to stop pretext traffic stops, stop reliance on fines and fees, end qualified immunity, restructure civilian payouts for police misconduct, limit the power of police unions and defund the police.

‘Prosecution of rogue cops has a role to play, but it isn’t enough’

BY WALTER OLSON

*Walter Olson is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute’s Robert A. Levy Center for Constitutional Studies.*

Police are not above the law. And yet it’s hard to get juries to convict an officer. Social respect for the job often sways the outcome toward acquittal where the facts are ambiguous. They weren’t ambiguous here, thanks to the video. “I feared for my safety” often works as a defense. Derek Chauvin couldn’t make use of it. Prosecutors and judges, no matter their integrity, thread a narrow path because they have to work with cops every day.

The eyes of the world were fixed on this courtroom. Now the question is what’s going to happen after the eyes of the world move on.

Prosecution of rogue cops has a role to play, but it isn’t enough. Around much of the country, attempts to separate bad officers from the force are hobbled by union power, reluctance to testify against other officers, and barriers to discipline like the “Law Enforcement Officer Bill of Rights” laws that prevail in more than a dozen states, including Minnesota.

What about civil lawsuits by surviving families against cities or individual officers? In all but the most egregious cases, these tend to be restricted by doctrines of “qualified immunity,” which often shelter both police and other government officials from being held liable for harms they commit under color of law. Those are judge-made rules, not found in the Constitution, and it’s quite right that they’re being rethought across the country.

‘It is critical that we do not allow this outcome to lure us into complacency’

BY MONICA C. BELL

*Monica C. Bell is associate professor of law and sociology at Yale University.*

My soul is pleased with the conviction of Derek Chauvin. At the same time, it is critical that we do not allow this outcome to lure us into complacency about the enduring injustice within and beyond our criminal systems.

As I watched the closing arguments, what stood out to me was how sharply the prosecutor focused the jury and public attention solely on the 9 minutes and 29 seconds that Chauvin spent with his knee on George Floyd's neck. This was an excellent legal strategy. Yet it underscores that this case was never about any of the myriad injustices that preceded those 9 minutes and 29 seconds: the aggressive, multiple-officer response to an incredibly minor incident; the immediate wielding of a gun against Floyd when stopping his car; the racist and dehumanizing lens through which officers viewed Floyd before he was in custody; the failure to take Floyd's mental health concerns seriously when he described his anxiety and claustrophobia. None of those injustices count as unreasonable uses of force, and Chauvin would not have been held accountable for any of them if he had not also murdered Floyd.

As we exhale along with the Floyd family in the wake of this outcome, we must redouble our efforts to confront and root out racial injustice throughout our society. That means, most fundamentally, at least three projects: investing in new ways to build safety in our communities, reducing the frightening and destructive presence of guns and other tools of violence in our communities, and deeply reckoning with historical and contemporary American racial inequity.

Policing is still broken

BY SIMON BALTO

*Simon Balto is assistant professor of history and African American studies at the University of Iowa and author of Occupied Territory: Policing Black Chicago from Red Summer to Black Power.*

I do not presume to speak for George Floyd's many loved ones. I hope that they find this outcome just and that it brings them peace. Derek Chauvin was clearly guilty of murder. I am glad for people who find relief in the jury's confirmation of that fact.

But the punishment system — which is really what we have in the United States, as opposed to a justice system — also served itself quite well through the verdict. Chauvin's conviction allows for those who are within or who support that system to say that it “works” — to claim that the verdict is proof of the system's supposed fairness and justness. But it doesn't work. It isn't fair. It isn't just. If it were, George Floyd would be alive. Daunte Wright would be alive. Adam Toledo would be alive.

The reality is that Chauvin's deployment of violence against Floyd was not an exception to the everyday rhythms of policing in the United States. Violence is central to the institution and the practice. American policing relies on the constantly existing threat of violence as a means of coercing cooperation. And that routinely, relentlessly escalates into worse forms of violence, such as what Chauvin did to Floyd. Those within or who support America's punishment system would like to claim that what Chauvin did was a “bad version” of police work. He was, nevertheless, doing police work, ever-reliant on violence as both threat and reality, as always in this country.

No one should stake a greater claim on this verdict as potentially transforming policing. Until people understand that the murder of George Floyd was the outcome of everyday police work, not an exception to it, this miserable system will remain as it is.

‘This could be a once-in-a-generation opportunity’ to reform policing

BY CHUCK WEXLER

*Chuck Wexler is executive director of the Police Executive Research Forum.*

The killing of George Floyd was an unspeakable tragedy, and today’s verdict does not change that. Ultimately, justice was served: Derek Chauvin was held accountable for his criminal actions.

These past few weeks, not just the defendant, but the profession of policing, has been on trial. And the fact that several police officials — including Minneapolis’s chief of police — testified that Chauvin’s actions were unethical and criminal signals an important break from what has been characterized as the “blue wall of silence.” That the testimony of Minneapolis police officers helped convict Chauvin was not lost on the policing profession. To fix policing requires change from within as well as outside, and this trial was an important turning point.

Over the 11 months between the killing of George Floyd and today’s verdict, all of us have watched the video of his death, reliving those horrific moments time and time again. That has exacted a mental toll on Americans throughout the country, especially people of color. It has also taken a toll on dedicated, hard-working police officers, who were just as horrified by what they saw. Justice takes time, and so will rebuilding our communities, the profession of policing and a strong relationship between the two.

Even after this verdict, neighborhoods across the country will continue to face challenges — crime and violence, homelessness, untreated mental illness and myriad others. Often, police remain at the center of each one of these issues. This could be a once-in-a-generation opportunity for communities and police to come together and try to find meaningful long-term solutions — and for police agencies to continue the path toward lasting reform.

‘We must not judge all police officers by Chauvin’s actions’

BY BOB WOODSON

*Bob Woodson is founder and president of the Woodson Center.*

This verdict ensures that Derek Chauvin will be held accountable for his actions. But just like we should not judge an entire racial group by the bad actions of a few, we must not judge all police officers by Chauvin’s actions.

Our justice system does not work perfectly, but it works better than that of any other multiracial society in the history of mankind, and Americans of goodwill are continually laboring to make it work better. The way to best improve it, however, is to shun inflammatory rhetoric, reduce polarization and work toward civil discussions of the best paths forward. If, as the presiding judge warned yesterday, the incendiary comments from public figures like Rep. Maxine Waters threaten this conviction upon appeal, it will clearly demonstrate the grievous harm that such rhetoric does to the rule of law and the cause of justice.

As I have said for decades — and as the work of anti-violence programs like the Woodson Center’s Voices of Black Mothers has shown — our solutions often lie in the same zip code as our problems. Thousands of community leaders whose work is overlooked by policymakers and media alike already have the answers we seek.

‘Justice is a world in which ... a guilty verdict would never have been in doubt’

BY JANAI NELSON

*Janai Nelson is associate director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Inc.*

There is no doubt that Derek Chauvin should have been convicted — and, thankfully, he was. As for whether Chauvin’s conviction equals justice: Justice is a world in which George Floyd’s death would never have occurred, a guilty verdict would never have been in doubt and the recurrence of a similar tragedy would be unfathomable. Sadly, the deaths of Breonna Taylor and, more recently, of Duante Wright and Adam Toledo, tell us that we have not achieved that vision of justice. That it took the traumatizing reliving of Floyd’s excruciating execution repeatedly through videos, still images and eyewitness testimonies indicates how severe and well-documented police violence against Black and Brown people must be to compel a conviction.

While there is undoubtedly collective, monumental relief that Chauvin was convicted for his horrifying role in Floyd’s death and held accountable for the brutality we have long seen and experienced without being believed, there must be a systemic overhaul of our approach to police accountability to account for the countless instances in which our legal system has historically failed Black and brown communities.

The trial of Chauvin may be over — even if an appeal looms — but the trial of our system of justice is ongoing. Moving forward, we must take transformative steps to hold police who commit misconduct accountable for their actions as we simultaneously build a new model of public safety that honors the dignity and humanity of all people, especially those who have disproportionately suffered the wanton will of police. As a first step, Congress must pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act and the Department of Justice should freeze all federal funding to police departments until it conducts an audit to identify any and all law enforcement agencies that are in violation of the anti-discrimination provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. These are vital steps in a long road toward true and lasting justice.

Ordinary Americans ‘have moved well beyond assuming that the police are always right’

BY ROSA BROOKS

*Rosa Brooks is a law professor at Georgetown and the author of [Tangled Up in Blue: Policing the American City](#).*

The justice system worked. In 1992, after several Los Angeles police officers beat Rodney King in an incident that was, like George Floyd’s death, captured on video, a nearly all-white jury acquitted the officers responsible. The jurors in the King case accepted the defense’s argument that they literally should not believe their own eyes, and that what appeared on the video to be a brutal, senseless beating of a helpless man was, if instead viewed frame by frame, a lawful, carefully calibrated use of force in response to ongoing signs of aggression from King.



Today, nearly 30 years later, a far different and more diverse jury had no trouble rejecting similarly tortured arguments from Derek Chauvin’s defense lawyer. Instead of falling for defense claims that Floyd continued to pose a sufficient threat to justify Chauvin keeping his knee on Floyd’s neck for nine minutes, the jury chose to believe their own eyes — and what they saw was a man who posed no threat to anyone having his life cruelly pressed out of him.

The guilty verdict in the Chauvin case suggests that police departments, prosecutors and ordinary Americans like those on the jury have moved well beyond assuming that the police are always right — a sentiment which, for decades, made it difficult to hold officers accountable for all but the most egregious abuses (and sometimes even in those cases, too). It also suggests that no longer are police leaders or ordinary Americans willing to accept that any failure to cooperate with police should be met with an immediate show of force regardless of the degree of threat posed by the suspect or the seriousness of the underlying offense being investigated. It suggests a healthy skepticism about the need for force, and puts police on notice that if they use force, the burden will increasingly be on them to demonstrate that no less coercive methods could reasonably have been used. Finally, the verdict suggests that Americans of all races increasingly understand the ways in which racial bias, whether conscious or not, can distort perceptions of threat — sometimes, as in George Floyd’s case, with lethal consequences.

Looking ahead, the verdict suggests that America may finally be ready to have a more thoughtful and sophisticated conversation about policing than we have had in the past. Slogans like “abolish” or “defund the police” are polarizing, but beneath the rhetoric, they raise vital questions: What do we want public safety to look like? Which kinds of problems require armed police, and which problems are better left to social workers, medics or mediators? Which kinds of “bad behavior” merit arrest and prosecution, and which are better addressed outside the criminal justice system? We won’t be able to transform our deeply flawed criminal justice system overnight, but asking these questions helps move us in the right direction.

‘The outcome of the Chauvin case is rare, and therein lies the problem’

BY KEISHA N. BLAIN

*Keisha N. Blain is an associate professor of history at the University of Pittsburgh, a 2020-21 Fellow at the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard University, and author of Set the World on Fire and Until I am Free.*

We can — and should — celebrate the verdict in Derek Chauvin’s trial. Very few officers are ever found guilty of killing unarmed Black people. The fact that Chauvin was found guilty on all three counts sends a powerful message to police officers across the nation that they are not above the law.

That said, we should not be so quick to praise the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. Year after year, police officers have killed Black and brown people in this country — many of those cases were also caught on video — with impunity. Countless families have had to endure the pain of losing a loved one while watching the justice system provide cover for members of law enforcement who participated in the killing. The outcome of the Chauvin case is rare, and therein lies the problem.

As we move forward as a society, we must demand that all officers face legal consequences in cases of police violence and for the murders of unarmed citizens. Now that Chauvin has been

found guilty, we can continue the difficult work of bringing an end to the systemic problem of police violence in the United States. We must join forces to denounce anti-Black racism and demand that police officers — and all Americans — recognize the value of Black lives.

‘There is a long way to go’

BY ERVIN STAUB

*Ervin Staub is the founding director of the Psychology of Peace and Violence Program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.*

Yes, the justice system worked in this case. But this was a very unusual case, with the shocking, heartrending video of the killing of George Floyd. In many police cases, the justice system has not worked. Violent police officers often have not been charged, or when they were, juries often didn't find them guilty. It's hard to understand why the officials and citizens of this country have historically been so reluctant to bring police officers to justice.

I am not confident there will be a real change in the justice system heading forward, but perhaps this will represent a new beginning, in that police officers and a police chief testified against Derek Chauvin. This is contrary to police culture, which requires that officers support each other no matter what. But again, the videos showing Floyd's murder were striking and difficult to dispute.

Where do we as a society go from here? One possible and hopeful direction is toward a transformation of police culture and police behavior. Many years ago, I developed a training for officers to become active bystanders who intervene to prevent or stop unnecessary, harmful behavior by fellow officers. We started implementing the training in New Orleans in 2015 and are now training more than a hundred departments, including the NYPD with its 35,000 officers; more departments are in line. The evidence so far suggests the training can change police culture and benefits citizen-police relations. It also benefits police officers themselves, by making them less likely to take actions that cause them to lose their jobs or be criminally prosecuted, and by making it less likely that officers will have to report bad behavior by their colleagues, which is anathema to police culture.

All of this is a hopeful direction for our society. But there is a long way to go, as there are 18,000 police departments in the country.

‘A step toward improving trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve’

BY MARK V. HOLDEN

*Mark V. Holden, the former senior vice president of Koch Industries, Inc., serves as senior vice president of Stand Together and chair of the board of Americans for Prosperity and Americans for Prosperity Foundation.*

Thankfully, reason prevailed. The 9-year-old girl who told the Minneapolis officers to “get off of” George Floyd was right: This never should have happened. The jury's unanimous verdict is a critical step in helping the country to move forward in a productive way.

As important as this case is in its own right, and as much as it represents a victory for the rule of law, it also highlights the need for more justice reform. Our country must now turn its focus to police reform that works for everyone, especially for those who have been marginalized for

generations. Smart reform can help our citizens, as well as the majority of law enforcement officers who work hard to do the right thing every day.

My hope is that this verdict begins a healing process and is a step toward improving trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve. Good policing and protecting communities should not be mutually exclusive. We need to continue working to make our justice system smarter on crime, and to make equal justice a reality for every American.

‘George Floyd did not die in vain’

BY COREY PEGUES

*Corey Pegues, a former New York Police Department commander and professor of criminology, is author of Once A Cop.*

The justice system has finally worked for Black people across America. More than 66 years ago, Emmitt Till was viciously murdered by a racist mob of white men, who were never held accountable for their actions. Today, the Derek Chauvin verdict represents “justice” for Emmitt and so many other Black people who have been unjustly murdered throughout American history. Since the inception of policing, including with slave patrols, law enforcement officers have been getting away with the murder of Black men and women with no accountability. The 12 men and women of the jury in the Chauvin case, which was made up of a rainbow coalition of citizens, took less than 11 hours to finally bring closure to a case that has stoked the emotions of people all over the world. The guilty verdict on all three charges shows that the criminal justice system can work when people honestly look at the evidence without tainted eyes.

This verdict should finally crumble the “blue wall,” and send a strong message to police departments around the country that the oath they take to preserve life and protect property is one they need to take seriously from the day they raise their hands. If not, they could end up in the same position as Chauvin — in cuffs. A new day is on the horizon. No longer will police officers be able to get away with murdering Black men and women with impunity!

As a society moving forward, we should be proud of the job the jury did in this case. Each one of us should have that same courage to do the right thing when called upon for jury duty. Hopefully, this will be a stepping stone to hold officers who commit crimes accountable for their actions. I also hope that this verdict can be the catalyst for the passing of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act in the Senate. That can be a start for broad change across America, but there is so much more to be done. Police officers are the “gatekeepers” of the criminal justice system, meaning they start the process. It is vitally important that we have officers patrolling our communities who have a true understanding of the phrase “Black Lives Matters.” George Floyd did not die in vain.

‘The first step in a long road to recovery’

BY CYNTHIA LEE

*Cynthia Lee is a professor of criminal law at the George Washington University Law School.*

Yes, the justice system worked in this case. This verdict is historic. For far too long, police officers have not been held accountable for their excessive uses of force — force that is often

aimed at Black and brown individuals. This verdict — guilty on all three counts — holds former officer Derek Chauvin accountable for his actions.

Granted, this is just one case and just one officer, but as George Floyd's girlfriend, Courteney Batya Ross, put it, the verdict can be seen as the first step in a long road to recovery. We need to hold officers accountable when they cross the line and abuse their authority. This verdict shows that is possible in America.

Still, we need to continue pushing for policing reform. We need to unite in passing laws like those recently enacted in Virginia, Connecticut and the District of Columbia that make clear that law enforcement officers must not use deadly force unless all other reasonably available options have been exhausted. We need to pass laws that encourage police to engage in de-escalation measures prior to using deadly force.

'Police will still be given the benefit of the doubt in future cases'

BY DAVID SAFAVIAN

*David Safavian is the director of the American Conservative Union Foundation's Nolan Center for Justice.*

The justice system worked in holding people accountable for their actions. The weight of the evidence was insurmountable. Combined with outside pressure from activists and politicians, that made the outcome a near certainty. The only question is whether the verdict is at risk on appeal.

Had Derek Chauvin been acquitted or had there been a hung jury, I think the message would have been very clear that it's nearly impossible to hold law enforcement accountable for wrongdoing. In the grand scheme of things, today's conviction is a small step toward accountability. But I think police will still be given the benefit of the doubt in future cases.

I hope Minneapolis can heal. But I'm doubtful it will happen anytime soon.

'Chauvin was held accountable for his actions [but] George Floyd is still dead'

BY ABDUL EL-SAYED

*Abdul El-Sayed, the former health commissioner of Detroit, is an epidemiologist and progressive activist. He is the author of Healing Politics.*

Justice was served in Derek Chauvin trial, and yet justice is far from having been served in America. It took 9 minutes and 29 seconds of agonizing video evidence, in which Chauvin choked the life out of George Floyd, to get a conviction. And despite that shocking evidence, the trial's outcome was nowhere near certain.

If this is the high-water mark for justice in police killings of Black people in America, this case should remind us how far we have yet to go. Because although Chauvin was held accountable for his actions, George Floyd is still dead. So is Adam Toledo, the 13-year-old boy murdered by Chicago police while he had his hands up. So is Daunte Wright, shot miles away from where Floyd was killed during a routine traffic stop. And those are just two of the people of color murdered since this trial began.

True justice will be served when we no longer have to wait anxiously to learn whether police officers who murder are going to be held accountable. It will be served when they no longer murder at all. The Chauvin verdict doesn't fix the system—it reminds us of the system's glaring failures. Today, one bad apple was picked. Perhaps it's time to rethink the tree that bore it.

'The terrain going forward will not be the same'

BY LAURIE O. ROBINSON

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The Chauvin verdict today represents an important milestone showing that America's justice system can work in holding police accountable. It was highly significant that policing leaders — including Minneapolis' police chief — took the stand in court on behalf of the prosecution. That is rare.

But going beyond the jury's action to find one individual guilty, this case is significant in other ways. It has dramatically penetrated public consciousness not only in this country but across the world, and with the verdict today it has reshaped the landscape in which policing will now have to operate in this nation.

The terrain going forward will not be the same. In that environment, there is a broad demand for racial equity and change. I hope policing leaders, both from management and from unions, will now be carrying the baton in advancing measured and honest discussion about how to change what is broken in American law enforcement.