

**ASHLEY:** Anger over cases of police brutality and racism have erupted nationwide with growing demands for major reforms. Can there be common ground between police critics and the police? We explore.

**RICHARD:** This is Let's Find Common Ground. I'm Richard Davies.

**ASHLEY:** And I'm Ashley Milne-Tyte.

**RICHARD:** We hear from Houston police chief Art Acevedo and civil rights advocate Maya Wiley. They have differences but also find some areas of agreement on how to respond to Black Lives Matter protests.

**ASHLEY:** First we spoke to Chief Acevedo, the Hispanic leader of one of the largest police departments in the country. He now serves as President of the Major Cities Chiefs Association.

**RICHARD:** We caught up with him during a very busy day on the job. His phone rang several times.

**ASHLEY:** So, Chief, just to kick off, what is your response to the Black Lives Matter protests against the police?

**CHIEF ACEVEDO:** Well, I was standing with Black Lives Matter, having press conferences with Black Lives Matter, supporting Black Lives Matter five years ago, well before it became sexy to stand with Black Lives Matter. So I absolutely feel their pain. I stand with them, and I look forward to working with Black Lives Matter and other civic and activist groups to make policing better and society better.

**RICHARD:** The protestors argue that racism is a huge problem in policing across the country. Do you agree?

**CHIEF ACEVEDO:** I think that disproportionality and inappropriate use of force disproportionately impacts communities of color and poor communities, including white poor communities to a lesser extent. Do we have racists in our midst? Absolutely, but I've been a cop for 34 years, and I can tell you that there's less racism amongst the law enforcement ranks today than there were 34 years ago, less sexism. It's interesting that the mainstream media loves to attack law enforcement, but my department is a minority majority department. We're reflective of this big melting pot we call Houston. Blacks, browns, Asians make up the majority of the department, including people from the Middle East than white males. So we are much more diverse and much more ahead in a lot of ways than the rest of society, and I think when it comes to systemic racism, it permeates other sectors including corporate 500 America, the top 500 companies, where there's a lot less opportunity for women and people of color. But we still have a long way to go in law enforcement.

**RICHARD:** Isn't Houston the most diverse city in the country?

**CHIEF ACEVEDO:** It's the most diverse big city in the country, yes. I love to call Houston... Houston is the City of Tomorrow. Houston is today looking like what the rest of the country's going to look in the next 20 to 30 years. This rich melting pot where over 110 languages are spoken in our school district will be what the rest of America looks like in the next 20 to 30 years because if you study what's going on with society, caucasian white folks just are having babies at the rate that we need to sustain and to grow a society. It's the other cultures and ethnicities that seem to be having the babies that will sustain our country. As a matter of fact, when you look at immigration, the only way that we're going to be able to remain a world power is through immigration because we're just not having babies in this country. And around the rest of the civilized world, we're seeing the birth rate on the decline, which is a real challenge for most industrialized nations.

**ASHLEY:** Broadening out for a minute to the rest of the country again, do you think police kill too many people across the U.S.?

**CHIEF ACEVEDO:** I think that Americans kill too many people. We're the most violent society on planet Earth. I find it interesting that we focus on law enforcement, and I support the fact on law enforcement. We should be under a microscope, but it is a little bit disingenuous for people to talk about police violence and not talk about just societal violence in this country. We are armed to the teeth in this country. We have mental illness that goes unabated in this country without sufficient treatment. We have addiction in this country. There are so many failures of society in this country that go well beyond law enforcement. I think the elephant in the room is that... Are there too many police shootings? Absolutely. There's too much violence in our society, period, and for every police shooting... People forget there are 800,000 police officers in this country. 800,000 with tens of millions, tens of millions of contacts. If you actually assess the percentage of those contacts that result in the use of force by police officers, they're miniscule. And if you look at how many times we use deadly force, they're even more minuscule. And if you look at the total number of times that people actually die at the hands of police, they're even more minuscule. But let's be real. We still look around the country, and we see incidents like the George Floyd death. That was sickening to watch. It makes me angry to think about a man calling for his mama. I'm a spiritual person so I felt like he was seeing his mom at that point as he was getting ready to transition from the flesh to the spirit. And we still have to do a lot of work, but we will be having this conversation two generations from now if we don't go and look beyond the challenges of policing and look at the societal shortcomings that we have yet to address in our country.

**RICHARD:** That said, the police... According to the data we've looked at, police across the country kill 1,000 people a year, and that number hasn't really changed much since 2013. Is that too many?

**CHIEF ACEVEDO:** I mean, one is one too many, but the question isn't how many we've killed. The question is how many we've killed that was not reasonable, that was not lawful, that was not necessary. What I always tell my men and women is that... We talk about the sanctity of life. We talk about the importance of operating in a manner that maximizes the potential for everyone to go home or where they're supposed to go. We talk about incidents involving use of deadly force have been inappropriate or controversial across the nation, and we talk about our expectations as a department. There's a lot of negligence out there, and as negligent as we can be and as egregious as we can be, when we add context to the conversation, we're going to find out we're not as good as we say we are, and we're certainly not as bad as some say we are. So there's a little bit of movement in terms of how we speak about these issues on both ends of that spectrum.

**ASHLEY:** What do you think of critics who say that America should defund the police, or at least allocate resources that currently go to the police elsewhere instead?

**CHIEF ACEVEDO:** Well, I think that that's a false equivalence. Why should poor communities that are disproportionate communities of color, why should they have to give up good policing and safety to pay for public health, public education, mental health, to create economic opportunities that they don't have compared to others? Law enforcement is being asked to do way too much because society and elected officials and all levels of government have failed to invest in our communities. But having said that, we're the only ones that are responding to the homeless person in crisis, to the drug overdose, and so I'd just say that we have to be very cautious because when I talk to my community, any time I try... I'm talking about communities of color, poor communities, high-crime area communities of violence. If I even try to close down a storefront which is a police presence, the backlash is quick, it's loud, and it's persistent. These communities don't want less policing. They want better policing, and they want less bad policing and better good cops. So I believe that what we learned with COVID, when COVID impacted all of society, all of a sudden the Congress has printed several trillion, with a T, dollars to address the needs of society including businesses. Imagine had they made those kind of investments on mental health, on criminal justice reform, on pre-K education, on public education, on work creation programs. I think if we make those investments, we will be able to cut the level of policing on the back end, but we got to fix it on the front end first.

**RICHARD:** Chief Acevedo, what is the most important thing that critics of the police don't understand about the work that you do?

**CHIEF ACEVEDO:** I think that depends on what critic you're talking about because critics go from the person that was stopped and the officer was rude to the person that was abused or to the person that's a professional critic that say, "The community demands this," and, "The community thinks this," and, "The community thinks that," when you find out, first of all, they don't know anything about the community they're talking about. Secondly, when you look closely, they don't even live in the community they're talking about, and thirdly, they truly don't have any idea about the relationship to the community that they're talking about. So I would tell the critics, "Let's put away our broad brushes, and let's actually go into going door to door in these communities to survey them," because I think what they're going to find out is that the communities they think they're representing support us a lot more than what they will have the rest of society believe.

**ASHLEY:** You've said that you support reforms of some... Can you just talk a little bit about what you do support in terms of reform?

**CHIEF ACEVEDO:** Well, lord, you're from across the pond [inaudible 00:10:36] there in far East Texas, and the American policing model, in my opinion, is the most ineffective model of policing in the free world because it's no different than the American political model. Do we really need 18,000 police departments? What I would like to see is some minimum standards across the national platform as it relates to policing. I mean, think about what happened in Minneapolis. I spent a lot of time with protestors the last month or so, marching for hours, and actually one night I disappeared for three and a half hours at night surrounded by thousands of people by myself. Needless to say, my team was not very happy, but I felt that it was important to hear directly from a community that's hurting. When you look at George Floyd's death, I have yet to find someone... Like I said publicly, if you look at that video and you don't believe that a crime was committed, that that at some level was a murder, then you are a part of the problem. Your heart's not in the right place. But they couldn't understand: why did they take a few days to make the arrest? Here's why. In 2020, in the year 2020, Minneapolis PD still allows you to put your knee on the neck of an individual. So what that tells you is we have got to have some minimum standards as it relates the manipulation of the neck for control holds. We have to have a national conversation to at least have standards. Instead of 18,000 standards across the country, we should have, at a minimum, 50 states doing everything statewide the same.

**RICHARD:** What about this problem of officers who have complaints against them transferring from one police force to another? How do we deal with that?

**CHIEF ACEVEDO:** Well, we are promoting and we are actually advocating for a national database that will have information on complaint information and separation information for officers. And in Texas, you get two dishonorable discharges before you lose your peace officer license. You have to be licensed in all states. That doesn't make sense to me. Now let me tell you the flip side of that because there's a lot of pressure

that say, "Hey, cops shouldn't have unions. There shouldn't be so many rights for them." But the reason that we created some of these civil service laws is, if you look at the history of policing, people are right; it's an ugly history. We were used during the slave days to go out and capture slaves and bring them back. We've been used for the victimization of societies, especially communities of color, throughout our history. During the Civil Rights movement of the '50s and '60s, we were used to be part of putting down those peaceful protests led by the late Dr. Martin Luther King. So one of the reasons that you want to make sure that we have some rights and some protections is you don't want police departments to turn into the political arm of unscrupulous politicians across the country, especially when you have 18,000, many in small cities.

**ASHLEY:** There was a quote from the former police chief of Camden, New Jersey recently in an article, and he said, "Culture eats policy for breakfast." He was basically referring to the fact that a local police culture will kind of nix any policy that comes down from on high. Would you agree with that?

**CHIEF ACEVEDO:** No. I'll tell you why. Culture will destroy policy if you don't hold people's feet to the fire for adherence to that policy. Most cops are pretty smart. The problem isn't cops. The problem is police chiefs that say that, "Hey, we're going to hold you to the standard." Then, when somebody lies, guess what happens? They don't fire you. The culture that exists is the culture that's allowed to exist by the leadership. We have set a standard here where we have made it very clear: here are the consequences. If you do A, B, or C, you're going to get fired, and when A, B, or C occurs, guess what we do. We fire you. Then, when I got to Texas in 2007, the union there in Austin was joking about, "Oh, yeah, when you fire somebody, they have a right to arbitration, and arbitration, it's a 50/50 proposition that they'll get their job back." Well, I've been in Texas now since 2007. Sadly, I've had to fire a lot of officers. When they've appealed, our success rate's about 975 when we fire people. We rarely lose, and the reason that is is because we make our expectations very clear, and we're very consistent in our application of the standards of conduct in our department. So I think that culture cannot change unless you enforce the standards, and I think when it gets eaten, it's because the chiefs are allowing them to be eaten. When I say, "You lie, you die," I mean it.

**RICHARD:** So, "You lie, you die," just to be clear, that means you lie, you get fired.

**CHIEF ACEVEDO:** Yes, sir. Yep.

**RICHARD:** Are there circumstances where the police are too heavily armed or too militarized? You often see video footage of the cops in the streets. They look like they're dressed for battle.

**CHIEF ACEVEDO:** Well, look, we have so many active shootings in this country from people going crazy and shooting and just being pure evil, going into high schools,

elementary schools, churches, theaters, restaurants. You name it, we have them, and they happen on a regular basis. Again, everybody's talking about police violence, but they forget that police violence is morphed compared just violence period in this country. Think about Dayton, Ohio, a little over a year ago. I think it was Thanksgiving weekend. It's not about the equipment. It's about use of that equipment, the circumstances under which it's being used. It's about proper policy, procedure, and training. It's about proper supervision, and, ultimately, it's about command and control. People hate those MRAPS. Remember those big MRAPs, those big old things that we paid for that came back from Iraq. They looked like tanks, but their only offensive capability is the ability to run over somebody. But what it does have is it has a high-water rescue capability, where we can actually go out and rescue people in a world of global warming. Right now, here in Houston, we're about ready to activate all of our surplus military high-water rescue trucks that we use, that the only vehicles that can get to people are those vehicles. So we have to be real careful. Again, I don't believe that everything that departments are getting they should get, but I think that most of the stuff we're getting we certainly are using appropriately, and we just [inaudible 00:17:40]. I have time for one more question because we have a huge storm coming in. We're activating our EOC. These surplus military vehicles are all we have to actually rescue people. So I have time for one more question.

**ASHLEY:** Richard, I was going to go for the qualified immunity question. What do you think?

**RICHARD:** Go for whatever you want.

**CHIEF ACEVEDO:** Ladies are always... If women ran the world... We saw what happened in New Zealand. A woman is running New Zealand, a premier there, the prime minister is a woman. And who eradicated COVID first?

**RICHARD:** New Zealand.

**ASHLEY:** I know.

**RICHARD:** They did a great job there.

**CHIEF ACEVEDO:** A country led by a woman. We need more women leaders. We need a woman in the White House.

**ASHLEY:** That's going down into a whole other podcast. We'd be delighted to take you up on that another time. Well, let me ask you just this one last question. Qualified immunity: first, could you just do a quick line on what it is? Because I think not everyone will know. Then do you think that that's an obstacle to getting serious about some of the individual police people who have been violent?

**CHIEF ACEVEDO:** Qualified immunity, I'm not the lawyer, so I'm probably not the right guy to explain it. But qualified immunity provides a lot of protections for law enforcement and government and government entities as it relates to the ability of an individual to sue, and even, for criminal cases, there's some immunities, especially for federal agents. You think that local law enforcement has immunities? Check out the federal agents. So it's a theory of law that's been around and a law that's been around for a long time. I can tell you as the President of the Major Cities Chiefs, which is the 69 largest police departments in the country, our initial position is we are opposed to getting rid of the qualified immunity, but we recognize that we have to have a thoughtful and detailed debate as to: is it time in 2020 to make an adjustment to that area of the law. It's a balance.

**ASHLEY:** Thank you so much for doing this.

**CHIEF ACEVEDO:** Yeah, you're very welcome. Thanks for your work.

**ASHLEY:** Houston police chief Art Acevedo. We'll speak with Maya Wiley next on Let's Find Common Ground.

Our podcasts are brought to you by Common Ground Committee.

**RICHARD:** Its public events inspire citizens and leaders to make progress on the issues through civil public discourse.

**SPEAKER 4:** Bringing light, not heat to public discourse—that's our motto. We put forums together where we bring panelists from opposite sides of a tough issue.

**SPEAKER 5:** Please welcome Secretary Condoleezza Rice. Please welcome Secretary John Kerry; Chris Wallace; Maggie Haberman; Barney Frank; Larry Kudlow.

**BARRY KUDLOW:** But I would give you a lot of running room on the personal tax side if you give me my 15% corporate tax rate, large and small [crosstalk 00:20:39].

**BARNEY FRANK:** With the right tradeoff, we could do that.

**BARRY KUDLOW:** I mean that. I mean that. I think there's a deal to be had.

**RICHARD:** Watch full events online at [CommonGroundCommittee.org](https://CommonGroundCommittee.org) or on our Common Ground Committee YouTube channel. We're back with Maya Wiley, who responds to what we've just heard from Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo.

**ASHLEY:** Maya is an MSNBC legal analyst, a civil rights activist, and former Board Chair of New York City's Civilian Complaint Review Board. She spoke with us from New York.

**RICHARD:** Do you think that Black Lives Matter protests have changed minds and the debate about racism?

**MAYA WILEY:** I think the protests have absolutely opened up minds and gotten more feet in the street, including from people who weren't in the street on the issues of police reform before. It's been nothing short of transformational. It is the first time in my life, in my life, that I have seen polls that show the majority of Americans, whether Democrat or Republican, whether white or Black, say that racism is a systemic issue that we have to address. That is from the demonstrations.

**ASHLEY:** We spoke with Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo, and he agrees that reforms to policing are needed. But he also says, and I'm quoting here, "It's a little bit disingenuous to talk about police violence and not talk about societal violence." Do you agree with that?

**MAYA WILEY:** We do live in a violent society that is a violent society born out of slavery and racism and genocide against Native Americans. In the context of today, the violence that we are seeing in communities of color are absolutely driving a policing focused on containment and control of entire communities because of the color of the skin of the people who live there. That is because society is fearful of those of us who look a certain way. So policing is functioning as part of the violence of society. Is it bigger than policing? Sure, but ask yourselves this: who has more power in society over the lives of average, ordinary people if not the police, if not the people with the badges, the guns, and the laws stacked in their favor to be believed and to be protected when they engage in violence? So it is true, and it is not enough to say, "Look at society. Don't look at us."

**RICHARD:** Chief Acevedo also says that law enforcement has to do way too much, and he says, "We're the only ones who respond to homeless people in crisis or a drug overdose." Is he right?

**MAYA WILEY:** Chief Acevedo is right, and this is exactly why we have tens of thousands of protestors just in New York City alone, are protesting to say: shrink the size of the police force so that they are not the people we call when someone is having a mental breakdown on the street or when someone in a hospital room is delirious from pneumonia and won't stay bed and the hospital is having trouble getting that person under control. We should have someone to call other than the police. If students are in a school building and there is a disciplinary issue, teachers should have someone to call other than the police. That's what these demonstrations are saying. What Chief Acevedo has said so importantly underscores the demand for transformation about how we think about policing and what its role is and how we shrink its footprint so we are investing in psychologists, social workers, the kinds of services that give people a place to call for an intervention that is not requiring a criminal justice response.



**RICHARD:** What happens, though, in a case where someone is in extreme distress and has a gun and is threatening his partner or his wife, or someone else is possibly a real danger to the people who are with them? Do you send someone in who is not armed?

**MAYA WILEY:** Well, here is the reality of what we have seen in policing videos. Let me give you one example, and this is an actual video that went viral. There was a man. He was white. He was clearly angry and unstable. He was wielding a machete, and a white police officer had his hands up in the air and was not moving in on that man, and he was not pulling his gun. He did not shoot him. It's part of what we are seeing a need to change and shift is whether you even need to pull your gun.

**ASHLEY:** Are there police forces in the country that have instituted reforms that you admire, that you look to as being something that others could emulate?

**MAYA WILEY:** I think we have seen important examples that get at parts of what have to be reformed. Glendale, Arizona, storekeepers calling repeatedly because they're having property crime, disorderly conduct, small issues, relatively speaking, but problems. Police piloted a problem-oriented approach where instead of just doing sweeps and coming in and trying to find out who to arrest, they just paid attention to what was happening around the convenience stores. What they were able to do is tell store managers, "You know what we see as police? We see that you don't have enough staff in the front of your store at key hours of the day, and if you did, you wouldn't see the petty theft or the disorderly conduct. We see that you have ways to move these displays you have in the front of the store to a different part of the store." They dropped the rate of police calls by 44% by assessing the problem and telling the storekeepers what they could do to prevent them. The issue that we have in this country is we have examples like these. We've never insisted that they be taken to scale, and we have never quite acknowledged the other important piece of this, which is that the vast majority of calls to the police -- in fact, recent studies said that literally only 5% of calls that goes to the police department are for serious crime. What that tells us is we don't need as many as we have, and we should be investing in problem-solving not in containment and control policing.

**RICHARD:** Do you think it's a good idea for there to be fewer cops on the beat, fewer police on patrol around the city or around the country?

**MAYA WILEY:** Policing in this country has been oriented around fear. In a containment and control model, when you're just afraid of people, particularly people who are Black and Latino, what you do is you patrol their neighborhoods. We don't need the number of uniformed officers walking up and down the streets because they are not walking there because of constant crime. They are walking there because there's a fear that there might be.

**ASHLEY:** One of the things Chief Acevedo mentioned to us was that he said there is actually more support for policing in poor communities than many outsiders realize. What's your view on that?

**MAYA WILEY:** The important thing here is that Black communities, Latino communities want to be safe. In a society where we tell people the only way they can get safety is with a blue uniform and a badge, they're going to ask for the blue uniform and the badge at the same time that they're filing the complaints about the fact that the blue uniform and the badge are throwing them up against the wall and searching them for no cause. So communities of color are also complaining that they're not being treated with respect and the way that they see white communities being treated by police. Do they want safety? Absolutely. Do they want it with human dignity and with an appreciation that they are people, not problems? Absolutely.

**RICHARD:** Chief Acevedo pointed out that there are thousands, many thousands of police departments across the country, and he then also said that's part of the problem of policing in America. He believes there should be some minimal standards that are passed as a result of federal legislation. Do you agree?

**MAYA WILEY:** I certainly agree we need to be very clear as a country, and it should be universal about what is appropriate force and what is not. We know from Camden, New Jersey that they had to essentially shut down their police department and eliminate the union as a barrier to reform and then go to a county model in order to get to a place where they could have an 18-page excessive force policy. And that 18-page excessive force policy is exactly the kind of policy that has reduced police violence in Camden. It is also what police unions often organize against. They want more discretion, not less. A national standard would help get there. We have to address that we want fair labor practices, including for our police officers, but it cannot become a blue shield against being held accountable for constitutional violations.

**ASHLEY:** Maya, you've said that in many cities there are unfair disciplinary systems for police officers, that they can end up getting away with something they shouldn't. Can you explain how that works?

**MAYA WILEY:** One example is: imagine that you are arrested for a crime. Say you are accused of robbing a store. You don't get to wait to be interviewed by police. Yes, you get an attorney. You can demand that an attorney be present, but you don't get to see the evidence in advance that they have against you before you answer any of their questions. That's an example of some of what police have gotten in the name of due process. That's not due process. None of us get that because all that does is give them a way to figure out how they're going to mount a defense that's going to prevent them from being accountable for something they may have done wrong, including organize their stories if there's more than one police officer that was on the scene.

**RICHARD:** What do you think about qualified immunity for police officers? Does that need to be taken away or reformed?

**MAYA WILEY:** It absolutely needs to be transformed. So qualified immunity at its root, at its historical root, just meant public servants should not be hauled into court because someone just disagrees with a decision a public servant was allowed to make. It was to protect public servants from having to be called into court so often they couldn't do their job. It was never intended to enable a public servant to avoid accountability for doing something they shouldn't have been able to do.

**RICHARD:** Do you think that more police officers need to come from the communities they serve instead of living outside the city or in a county miles away?

**MAYA WILEY:** Yeah, I think Chief Acevedo is right. Part of what we're looking for from police is an understanding of the communities that they are serving, and what we have in many cities, and certainly in New York City, are police officers who don't necessarily have any background to understand the communities they're in. We do have police officers, also, who live in the city but live in neighborhoods that are all white. Then they get dropped into a Black neighborhood. Well, how do they develop, and how are they supported to develop relationships? But more importantly, how do we get more people able to participate in transformative policing from the communities that have a deep sense of what they need, what has been wrong, and what will work for them?

**RICHARD:** Our podcast is called Let's Find Common Ground. You are clearly a critic of many police practices now. When you're in the same room with a police chief, where do you find areas perhaps not of agreement but of discussion where you can move forward in a constructive?

**MAYA WILEY:** I have been fortunate to be in those rooms, both with police commissioners when I served as Council to Mayor Bill de Blasio, but also as Chair of the Civilian Complaint Review Board, where we had former police officers on the board with us, and we also were looking at cases of misconduct. We agree that people need to be safe, and the question becomes: are we going to agree on what's transformative of those relationships, and how police make people of color less safe, and how changing our view of communities of color and what makes them safe also makes police officers safer? We should be able to agree that there should be significant shifts in our budgets so that we are resourcing what prevents police from being put in situations they themselves don't think they should be in.

**ASHLEY:** When you're in these conversations, is there any difference in the conversation you have between African-American police officers and everyone else?

**MAYA WILEY:** The short answer is no community is a monolith. I've had amazing conversations with police officers who are white. I have sometimes had disturbing

conversations with police officers who were not. But I will say, on the whole, police officers who are Black and Latino did have different perspectives. They were less likely to have positive views of their police union and to feel that they were being served by their police union. They were deeply committed to community policing and to figuring out how to do that. I had one police officer, Black, had been in a uniform for over a decade, he did not tell his son that he was a police officer. He told his son that he was in security because he was afraid his son would walk in his footsteps and because he told me that the racism within the department was so rampant. He gave me a very poignant example about how he was trying to support training a white patrolman he was partnered with as the more senior officer. He was saying, "When you're in a low-income community of color where people are in overcrowded housing with no air-conditioning, and it's summer, and they want to have a beer, guess where they're going to have it: on the front stoop because it's hot in the apartment, and there are too many people in the apartment." This Black officer says, "Guy's just having a beer on his front stoop because it's too hot in his apartment." White police officer jumps on to the property, rousts the man off his stoop, "Show me some ID. That's an open carry. I can arrest you for that. Oh, and here's a summons, by the way, and you're going to have to show up in court now with a misdemeanor summons that gives you, potentially, a court record if you're forced to plea or to be forced to pay a fine you can't afford." That is exactly the kind of difference that I hear police officers talking about who understand what they're looking at is a societal problem, not a crime problem.

**RICHARD:** A final question: are you hopeful in this moment of change that there will be genuine reforms in the future?

**MAYA WILEY:** Absolutely hopeful and energized and excited about the transformational possibility we have around policing and, more importantly, around problem-solving racism. I say that because demonstrators have made it so. Demonstrators have changed public perception in a way we haven't seen in generations. Demonstrators have called the question, and it is not for reform; it's for transformation. And what it takes is for leaders -- that includes leaders in police departments, and I think Chief Acevedo has demonstrated someone who's going to come to this conversation with an open mind and an open heart, but also political leaders -- who no longer stand in fear of police unions and no longer stand in fear that if they transform the way we think to problem-solving, that then we will face a crime problem. We've been reducing crime dramatically over the past three decades, but we've been increasing police budgets even though the research shows that there's no relationship between the two. So it's time to be brave, and demonstrators are demanding bravery. That's my hope, and that's also my commitment, is that we all participate in being brave.

**ASHLEY:** That's a great way to end.

**RICHARD:** Thank you very much.

**ASHLEY:** Yes, thank you.

**MAYA WILEY:** Thank you.

**RICHARD:** Maya Wiley on Let's Find Common Ground. If you liked what you heard, please subscribe to our podcasts. Reviews and downloads also help us to grow our audience.

**ASHLEY:** Find out more about our mission and our events at [CommonGroundCommittee.org](http://CommonGroundCommittee.org). Thanks for listening.