

Too Soon

Rohan Palavali

Rohan Palavali is a 17 year old student at Coppell High School. In addition to his hobbies, Rohan runs Pal O'Valley Inc. with his sister. Pal O'Valley Inc. sells art and donates all proceeds towards the NAACP and Doctors Without Borders (MSF). More information can be found on Instagram at [@palvalley_cards](https://www.instagram.com/palvalley_cards) or their website at palvalley.wixsite.com/cards.



While many of us, myself included, look at the fight for Black lives from a place of privilege we must viscerally understand that too many lives in the United States are directly implicated by the very structures that grant us privilege. For many, the very people sworn to protect them have denied them the most unalienable right of them all: the right to life. As citizens of this nation and the world, we must all fight to have the voices of our Black brothers and sisters be heard and to stop the racism and blatant disregard for life that our officers display sickeningly often.

We must hold our officers accountable for their crimes. Civilian review boards need to be established in cities so that police departments can be transparent to whom they serve. Federal oversight of police departments needs to be increased so that if a police department shows a pattern of violence or excessive force, the federal government can take legal action against them. Laws need to be passed to ban chokeholds, require warnings before shooting, wear body cameras at all times, and ensure complete transparency. More extensive training should be implemented so that officers aren't entrusted with the lives of their communities after mere weeks of police academy.

Sometimes, however, it's not the fault of police officers or their departments. They are simply tasked with too much. Armed officers are not equipped to handle mental health crises, drug addiction charges, school safety, or the many other things they are forced to do just because they are expected to. We need to defund police departments and redistribute this money to mental health services, health care, better educational opportunities, and forces for good in our communities.

Our brothers and sisters murdered at the hands of police departments across the country should never be forgotten. We must always remember who they were - bright people who were taken from us far too young. They all had families who mourned for them. Families who had to bury vibrant, beautiful people just like any of us. I chose to frame George Floyd's face in flowers to reflect this. He was an active member of his community who strove to do the right thing. We must remember him not as a criminal, but as a caring individual with his whole life ahead of him. The best way to memorialize the fallen, however, is not to hold vigils or draw memorials to them. The best way to memorialize the fallen is to avenge them—bring their killers to justice, and make sure no one else is unjustly murdered at the hands of their supposed protectors. This happens through using our voices to fight in the streets and the policy chambers.