



Justice on the Land: Responding to Police Violence

landstewardshipproject.org

The Land Stewardship Project has been actively committed to advancing racial justice since 2008. Our current five-year plan (<https://landstewardshipproject.org/long-range-plan>), developed by over 500 members in 2019, explicitly elevates racial justice as one of our top strategic initiatives. The plan articulates that we will:

Grow and deepen LSP's understanding, relationships, and work to advance economic, racial, and gender justice.

Racism, patriarchy, and economic injustice are powerful structural barriers that stand in the way of LSP achieving its mission. LSP will work to dismantle these forces in our organization and our society in order to achieve our mission. Collectively, we will do this by incorporating racial, gender, and economic justice in all of LSP's work and operations.

- We will invest in relationships with organizations led by indigenous people and people of color, especially those whose members are living in rural areas of our region.
- We will welcome and encourage people of all races and identities to join LSP.
- We will develop an organizational culture, internal processes, and relationships among staff and members that reflect our core values of stewardship, justice, democracy, health, and community, and also addresses racial, gender, and economic injustice so that we may create the world we seek to live in.
- We will provide training for LSP member-leaders and staff, as well other white-led organizations in the movement, on racial, gender, and economic justice.

Why It Matters

The Land Stewardship Project believes every person — of any race, rural or urban, old or young — has value that can't be earned or taken away. We believe healthy rural communities and sustainable agriculture are not possible without addressing racism and racial disparities in our communities and valuing the wisdom and contributions of people from all backgrounds. While everyone may experience systems of oppression differently — for example, through job discrimination, through the effects of corporate consolidation, or through lack of childcare for working parents — these systems of oppression exist to extract from our communities and divide us.

It is only by standing in solidarity with people who are targeted by these systems and by actively engaging in the dismantling of all types of oppression that we can achieve the regenerative and just food and farming systems that we want and need.

One area of oppression that we have struggled to come to terms with in recent years is the epidemic of police violence against Black, brown, and Indigenous people, particularly here in Minnesota.

Fielding Tough Questions

Because LSP is identified in the public eye as a “sustainable farming” organization, we are at times second-guessed by others about our involvement in issues such as racial justice. Following are a few questions we get when issues like police violence arise, along with suggestions for responding.

White people are getting killed by the police, why aren't we speaking up about that?

Yes, white people are getting killed by the police. Since 2000, the majority of people killed by law enforcement in Minnesota have been white, which is unsurprising because Minnesota's population is

83% white. However, a disproportionate number of people killed by law enforcement in Minnesota are Black, brown and Indigenous. No-knock warrants are one example of how systemic racism in this country continues to target people of color at alarming rates. We must work to dismantle these systemic systems so that we can improve the lives of everyone. The resources below highlight the reality of police violence:

- **Mapping Police Violence.** This website contains illuminating graphics and statistics around police violence: <https://mappingpoliceviolence.org>.
- **Every Police-Involved Death in Minnesota Since 2000.** This *Star Tribune* newspaper database records the over 200 police-involved deaths in the state since 2000, with brief details about the events: <http://strib.mn/3t8mMcF>.
- **The Marshall Project on Police Reform.** This website curates articles on police reform efforts taking place across the country: <https://bit.ly/3skb53s>.

LSP needs to stay in its lane. What does this have to do with farming?

We get asked this a lot, and working for racial justice is not as straightforward as advocating for cover crops. Since its inception, LSP has stood up for farmers and the land against extractive and oppressive systems. Our understanding of these oppressive systems has grown in depth and breadth. Systemic racism has been a part of agriculture in this country since day one. The ramifications of stolen land and stolen labor continue to impact our food and farming system and the disparities that are inherent. We must work collectively to dismantle these oppressive systems and be explicit that racism is directly connected. Check out these resources for a better understanding of the interconnectedness of systemic racism and agriculture:

- **This Land Was Our Land**, by Vann R. Newkirk II. This article details how racist policies and practices have dispossessed 98% of Black agricultural landowners: <https://bit.ly/3vjK14M>.

- **Seeing Whiteness Part 5 — Little War on the Prairie**, with John Biewen. This podcast explores the conflicts between settlers and Plains Indians and the mass execution of 38 Dakota warriors in Mankato, Minn., in 1862: <https://bit.ly/3slhHys>.

- **There are No Healthy Communities without Racial Justice**, by LSP farmer-member Laura Frerichs. In this blog, Laura emphasizes how all of us have an interest and stake in racially equitable communities: <https://bit.ly/3JZeHxU>.

- **What Makes a Welcoming Community?** by LSP member Sam Streukens. In this blog, Sam connects the stories of LSP members and highlights how building welcoming, just, and safe communities for everyone is key to invigorating rural economies and relationships: <https://bit.ly/3vj4JTD>.

I agree with all of this but I just don't know what to do about it!

You are not alone, this is a common feeling. However, you, your voice, and your actions are needed. Showing up takes practice and intention. We encourage you to spend some time building up your muscles to get more involved. It will be hard and you will make mistakes, but you are important. Check out the resources below to start building those muscles:

- **Telling a personal story around race.** This is a helpful worksheet for practicing talking about race and how it has impacted your own life: <https://bit.ly/35wbZAY>.

- **Not Racist is Not Enough. Putting in the Work to be Anti-Racist**, by Eric Deggans. This radio segment encourages steps toward active work to fight racism in our communities: <https://n.pr/3Hn9rSL>.

- **Where Do We Go After George Floyd?** by Clara Sanders. In this *Land Stewardship Letter* article, LSP members and allies reflect on their different experiences and how racism is connected to agriculture: <https://bit.ly/3JUNps9>.

If I even try to bring this up in my community, I get shut down with common talking points around public safety and I don't know how to respond.

This happens all too often. As a society we have shifted way from dialog and understanding to debate and holding our ground. If you have relationships within your community to create space for dialog, you will be successful in feeling heard and respected. Here are some tips and inspiration:

- **Re-railing Race Talk**, by Autumn Brown and Danielle Sered. This resource can help you reorient conversations on race and keep focused: <https://bit.ly/35vXBsb>.
- **Racism Has a Cost for Everyone**, by Heather McGhee. This brief TED talk highlights how racism costs all of our communities and how we all stand to benefit from addressing racial injustice: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaCrsBtiYA4>.

Other Resources

→ A couple songs to inspire:

- **A Beautiful Noise**, by Alicia Keys and Brandi Carlile: <https://bit.ly/3JY8GBu>
- **Resilient**, by Rising Appalachia: <https://bit.ly/3JR3oYi>
- **Innocent Lives**, by Bobby Alexandre and Mark Alan Schoolmeesters: <https://bit.ly/3M3VgFN>

→ Other organizations to follow & support:

- **HEAL Food Alliance**: <https://healfoodalliance.org/>
- **Midwest Farmers of Color Collective**: <https://midwestfarmersofcolor.org>
- **Voices for Racial Justice**: <https://voicesforracialjustice.org>
- **A Growing Culture**: <https://www.agrowingculture.org/>

- **Hmong American Farmers Association**: <https://www.hmongfarmers.com>
- **Marshall Area Peace Seekers**: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/marshallareapeaceseekers>
- **Big River Farms**: <https://bigriverfarms.thefoodgroupmn.org>
- **Latino Economic Development Center**: <https://www.ledcmn.org>
- **4 Directions Development**: <https://www.4directionsdevelopment.com>
- **White Earth Land Recovery Project**: <https://www.welrp.org>
- **SURJ Twin Cities**: <https://www.surjtc.org>

More Information

The Land Stewardship Project's **Justice & Stewardship web page** has resources related to working for justice in your community. On that page, you can subscribe to *Amplify!*, LSP's racial justice e-letter. There are also a series of **Rural Voices for Racial Justice Videos** made by LSP members.

Check it out at <https://landstewardshipproject.org/social-justice-stewardship>.

Contact a Land Stewardship Project staff member about our racial justice work:

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