The idea behind "Defund the Police" is to reimagine ways to make us safe that don't necessarily involve traditional law enforcement. **Who could argue with the concept of re-thinking how to address a problem??? We used to call that Yankee ingenuity (but we're not using it for most of our problems).**

Here's an example of how defunding has worked in practice. In the 1990s, both the United States and Portugal were struggling with how to respond to illicit narcotics. The United States doubled down on the policing toolbox, while Portugal followed the advice of experts and decriminalized the possession even of hard drugs. So in 2001, Portugal "defunded the police" for routine drug cases. Small-time users got help from social workers and access to free methadone from roving trucks. Heroin users there fell by three-quarters and the overdose fatality rate was the lowest in Western Europe. Meanwhile, after decades of policing, the United States was losing about 70,000 Americans a year from overdoses. In effect, Portugal appeared to be winning the war on drugs by ending it.

Police in the U.S. are killing far more people than law enforcement in other developed countries like the U.K., Japan, and Germany. **In the first 24 days of 2015, U.S. police shot and killed more people than police in England and Wales had in the past *24 years*.** According to the Washington *Post*, since 2015, police have fatally shot approximately 1,000 people a year, and the rate that police kill black people is more than twice the rate of white people.

Many (including me) believe that investing in communities would act as a better deterrent to crime by directly addressing societal problems like poverty, mental illness, and homelessness — issues that many police are poorly equipped to handle, and yet are often tasked with. According to some estimates**, law enforcement spends 21 percent of its time responding to and transporting people with mental illnesses**. Police are also frequently dispatched to deal with people experiencing homelessness, causing them to be incarcerated at a disproportionate rate.

Even some cops resent society's overreliance on them. "We're just asking us to do too much," said former Dallas police chief David Brown in a 2016 interview. Policing was never meant to solve all those problems." And the outcome can be deadly: In 2015, the Washington *Post* found that one in four people killed by a police officer suffered from a serious mental illness at the time of their death.

The amount of money the United States spends on policing is bigger than nearly every other country's military budget. Defunding proposals would reallocate a fraction of that over time.