CLIMATE VANGUARD

Police in the US have killed at least 638 people so far in 2026.

One of whom was **Corey Ruiz**, murdered by police in Madison, Wisconsin on July 22nd.



Source: *Mapping Police Violence (2026).* ***Image:*** *Scott Olson, Getty Images.*

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Corey Ruiz

Corey was a 38-year-old Black and Latino Madison resident and beloved father, son, brother, and friend. Those closest to him describe him as caring, funny, and creative.

Corey, like so many people in the richest country in the history of the world, struggled with mental health, poverty, and homelessness in a cruel system that denies people's basic needs and treats those pushed to the margins as disposable.

Like the murders of George Floyd, Michael Brown, and countless others, Corey's death reflects a broader system that criminalises poverty and mental illness while disproportionately directing state violence against racialised communities.

Source: *McGroarty, The Cap Times (2026).*

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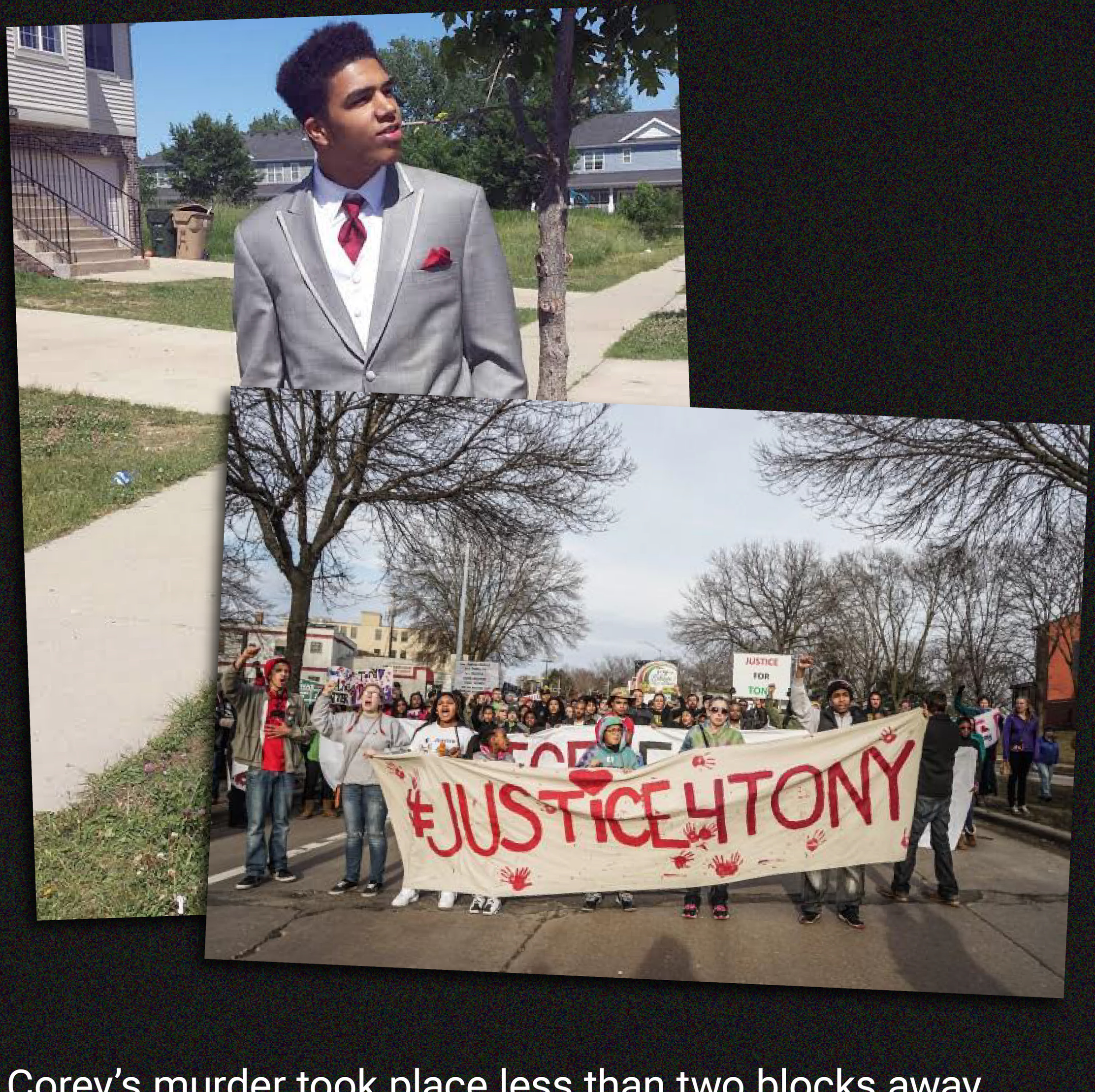


Execution in Broad Daylight

In the early afternoon of July 22nd, officers of the Madison Police Department (MPD) confronted Corey Ruiz after reports of someone trying car door handles. Officers chased him on a bicycle before taking him to the ground in the middle of an intersection in a busy downtown neighbourhood.

Numerous bystanders witnessed what happened next: after being tased and slumping to the ground, Corey was shot three times in the head at point-blank range by MDP officer Kiel Peterson, surrounded by three other officers.

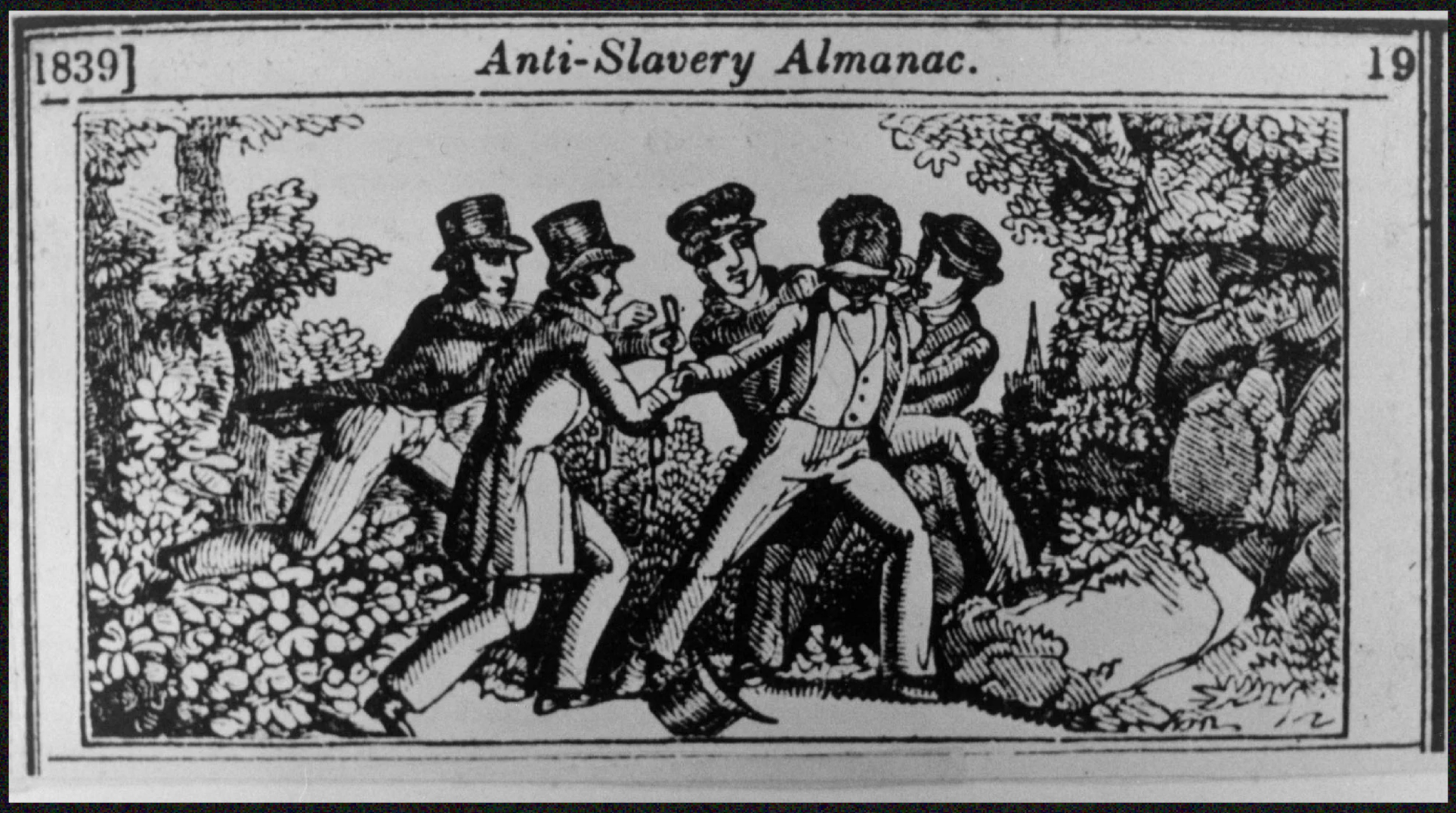
Source: *Planas et al, The Guardian (2026).* ***Image:*** *ABC News.*



Corey's murder took place less than two blocks away from where 17-year-old Black teenager Tony Robinson was killed by the MPD in 2015. Tony's killing sparked mass protests and demands for accountability, yet more than a decade later, the same oppressive structures continue to produce fatal outcomes for poor Black and Brown people.

Images: *Andrea Irwin; Marissa Haegele.*

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Modern policing cannot be separated from the US's history of chattel slavery and capitalist development.

In the US South, some of the earliest police forces evolved from slave patrols that hunted down escaped enslaved people and violently suppressed revolts. While in the North, early police departments were established to protect private property, discipline workers, and break strikes.

The role of policing has always been to violently maintain an unequal social order.

To this day, state violence disproportionately targets poor and racially minoritised communities. In 2025, US police killed 1,202 people. Black Americans made up 24% of those killed, despite representing just 12% of the US population.

Sources: *NAACP.org, The Origins of Modern Day Policing (n.d.); Mitrani, The Rise of the Chicago Police Department (2015); security.org, Police Violence (2026).* ***Image:*** *Anti-Slavery Almanac (1839).*

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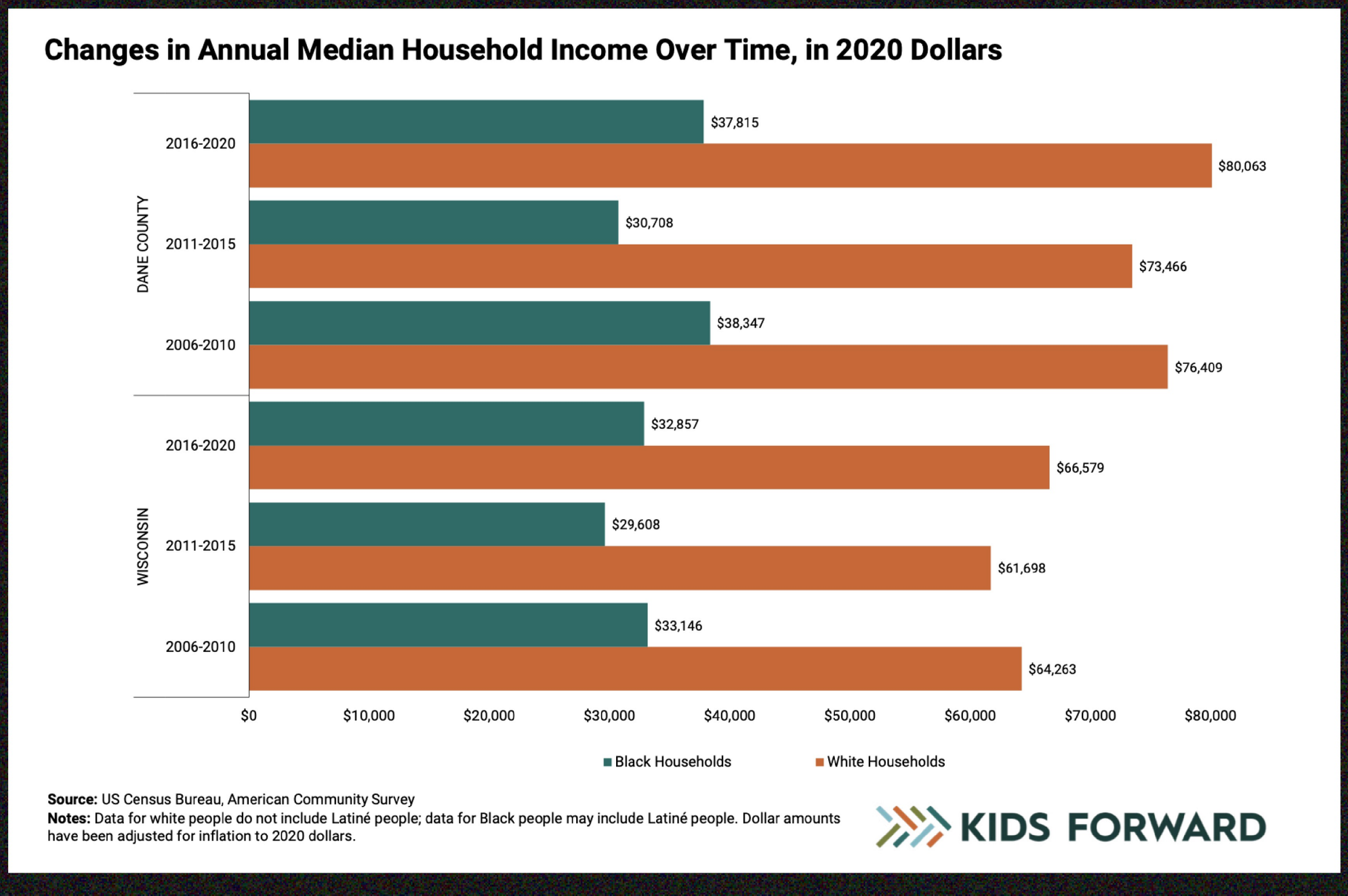
Capitalism simultaneously creates and criminalises poverty.

In capitalist society, access to basic needs depends on having enough wealth and income to pay for food, housing, healthcare, and other essentials. Those who cannot afford them are systematically denied the necessities of life.

Faced with poverty and insecurity, many people are drawn into the criminal legal system simply for trying to survive. Rather than guaranteeing people's basic needs, the capitalist state responds with policing and imprisonment.

Sources: *ACLU, Captive Labor: Exploitation of Incarcerated Workers (2022); Tolin, The Georgetown Environmental Law Review (2025).* ***Image:*** *azcentral*

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Corey's murder cannot be understood through the lens of either racial or economic oppression alone.

Capitalism produces inequalities along racial lines, while racism shapes who is most likely to experience poverty and state violence.

In 2023, the median household income for Black residents of Dane County, where Madison is located, was less than half that of white residents ($37,815 compared to $80,063). They were also 3x less likely to have health insurance, and only 6.4% of Black eighth graders are proficient in math, compared to 46.9% of white students.

Source: *Miota, Kids Forward (2023); Perez, Channel 3000 (2020).*



The Community Response

Enraged Madison residents immediately gathered at the intersection where Corey was murdered, declaring there would be no peace in Wisconsin's capital until justice for their slain neighbour was won.

Within hours, it had been transformed into a site of communal mourning and resistance, known now as the Corey Ruiz Autonomous Zone.

The following day, organisers established an encampment, placing barriers around the site, erecting tents, distributing food and water, and providing services including mental health support and a People's Library. More than a memorial, the occupation has become a space where grief is catalysing solidarity, community building, and collective action.

Image: *@owen_ziliak*

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The Movement's Demands

As the movement grows, the question of what justice for Corey should actually look like becomes more complicated. While there is no single vision or strategy for how to achieve it, several core demands have emerged, including:

- → **Accountability:** Arrest and prosecute officer Kiel Peterson.
- → **Reparations:** Provide material support and long-term reparations for Corey's family, especially for his 13-year-old daughter.
- → **Social transformation:** Invest in non-police emergency response, housing, mental healthcare, and community services instead of policing and criminalisation.

Source: *Ozier, Substack (2026).* ***Image:*** *@disposable.information*

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Justice Requires Organisation

Corey's murder was not an isolated tragedy. It was the predictable outcome of a society that puts property above all else, especially Black and Brown lives.

Winning justice must entail holding his murderer accountable and ending policing as we know it, but it requires far more. It means building a socialist society where housing, healthcare, education, and meaningful work are guaranteed to all; where poverty is abolished rather than criminalised; and where communities have democratic control over the institutions that shape their lives.

That future will only be won by organised communities building collective power. The response to Corey’s murder shows that this struggle is underway.

Image: *@humanizingthroughstory*