

## By Meredith O'Harris, Editor-in-Chief

At our recent #Law4ThePeople National Convention, NLG President Elena Cohen pointedly noted that our country is facing dual pandemics: COVID-19 and state-sanctioned racism and violence against minorities. Keynote speaker Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor expounded on these social disasters: “We are living in a period of unpatrolled crisis in the United States. A glance at any source of news on any given day makes that plain. Indeed, language fails to capture the social unraveling, the stark revelations, the cruelty of the naked class power that is being flexed at the expense of the lives of ordinary people that feel as if they are precariously hanging in the balance.” As members of the Guild, we all feel an urgent need for immediate change.

Demonstrating ways to confront these problems, this issue of the *NLG Review* presents two concrete examples of legislative reforms that have had an immediate, *positive* impact on working class and minority communities, while simultaneously reducing the effects of government classism, oppression, and naked violence. While the specific endeavors presented in this issue may appear small in our grand pursuit of transformational justice, they are significant steps forward and worth celebrating in such unprecedented times of struggle.

In *Starving the Beast: Practical Abolition in Atlanta*, Che Jonson-Long offers a unique insight into the years-long prison abolition and police divestment movement in Atlanta. Johnson-Long explores, in wonderful detail, how community organizers representing numerous stakeholders bridged important gaps between abolition in *theory* and abolition in practice, in order to institute a myriad of community investment and carceral divestment measures in the city. This movement demonstrates how abolitionist reforms can be more than just goals in themselves, but steps towards the greater, ultimate goal of true abolition. And Atlanta's important achievements in these areas also offers us a path to create similar changes in our own cities, while taking advantage of, and building on, the current national

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## Preface, Continued....

climate around police divestment happening right now. It's an inspiring and essential read.

Similarly, in *The Wheels on the Bus: The Statutory Schemes that Turn Traffic Tickets into Financial Crisis*, Spencer K. Schneider critiques drivers' license suspension regimes, which disproportionately torment and oppress the working poor and have an immediate impact on their financial stability—with appurtenant shockwave effects in their communities at large. Schneider convincingly argues that these types of revocation programs violate several key constitutional rights and he provides numerous examples of how various municipalities' have attempted to make improvements to—or, better yet, outright repeal—such programs. These reforms are an important facet of any movement towards class and racial equality, starting from one of the most immediate concerns in our lives: how to get to work. As with Johnson-Long's article in this issue, Schneider offers helpful ideas for how we can implement reforms on this basic, yet essential, issue.

In a time of terrific and necessary social upheaval, these thoughtful articles offer us hope—and a roadmap to creating progress in our own communities. They reflect important parts of our fight towards broad social, racial, and economic equality, more pressing now than ever.