

As a former chairperson of the NLG's Anti-Racism Committee, past President of the NLG-NYC Chapter, and past member of the NEC, I am writing in favor of the Resolution Supporting the Abolition of Policing.

In 2015, the NLG adopted a resolution declaring itself to be an organization committed to the abolition of jails, prisons, and all forms of detention. The Resolution Supporting the Abolition of Policing further deepens the Guild's commitment to tear down the apparatus of oppression and state violence that is the backbone of policing in the United States.

Since the fall of 2017, I have lived in Portland, Oregon, where the reality of the limits and counterproductivity of "reformist reforms" of the Portland Police Bureau ("PPB") has become more and more exposed with every night of violent suppression of Black Lives Matter demonstrators. An overwhelming white police force (that includes officers with ties to fascist and white supremacist organizations) has engaged in over 125 nights of unrestrained brutality against protestors, medics, journalists, and Legal Observers. The same police officers do all that they can to protect Proud Boys and Patriot Prayer supporters who waive guns at and physically attack anti-fascist counter-demonstrators. Our Mayor refused for months to ban the PPB's use of CS tear gas, which the police have used indiscriminately and which has saturated neighborhoods in gas. State legislation was passed restricting the use of tear gas to situations when police had officially declared a "riot" - unsurprisingly, the PPB has found almost any excuse to declare the existence of a riot and to gas demonstrators since the law went into effect.

Before the most recent uprisings that began with the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, the PPB had a long and horrific history of shooting and murdering Black men and women and engaging in aggressive racial profiling and harassment of BIPOC communities. While many people across the county were rightfully outraged by the violent tactics of Trump's federal police in downtown Portland, far less attention has been paid to our unaccountable, brutal, and racist local cops.

The power of the Resolution is that it requires a reckoning within the Guild that will require many of us to radically rethink our ideas about what a world free of violence and oppression and filled with genuine peace, care and liberation can look like. The examples of reforms that the Resolution calls on us to stop actively supporting

are almost entirely measures that at the end of the day, increase the funding, size, and/or scope of police forces whose primary purpose is to uphold white supremacy and the power and wealth of the ruling capitalist class.

As radical criminologist Alex Vitale puts it in his article "The Answer to Police Violence is Not 'Reform'. It's Defunding. Here's Why" (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/may/31/the-answer-to-police-violence-is-not-reform-its-defunding-heres-why>),

"The alternative is not more money for police training programs, hardware or oversight. It is to dramatically shrink their function. We must demand that local politicians develop non-police solutions to the problems poor people face. We must invest in housing, employment and healthcare in ways that directly target the problems of public safety. Instead of criminalizing homelessness, we need publicly financed supportive housing; instead of gang units, we need community-based anti-violence programs, trauma services and jobs for young people; instead of school police we need more counselors, after-school programs, and restorative justice programs."

The Resolution is already provoking necessary debate and discussions about such important issues as use of the U.S. criminal justice system to prosecute killer cops. As Mariame Kaba and Andrea J. Ritchie explained in their article, "We Want More Justice for Breonna Taylor than the System that Killed Her can Deliver"

(<https://www.essence.com/feature/breonna-taylor-justice-abolition/>), "Turning away from systems of policing and punishment doesn't mean turning away from accountability. It just means we stop setting the value of a life by how much time another person does in a cage for violating or taking it – particularly when the criminal punishment system has consistently made clear whose lives it will value, and whose lives it will cage."

Although I do not believe that "community or civilian oversight boards for police" are always reforms that "extend the life or the scope of the prison industrial complex", I agree with the vast majority of the statements and recommendations of the Resolution. I do not believe that my difference of opinion on this one reform measure (or other Guild members' differences of opinions on perhaps any other single reform listed in the Resolution) should mean that someone should vote no on the Resolution. We are living in momentous, extraordinary and (hopefully soon) revolutionary times, where many of the leading organizations in the struggle for Black Liberation are demanding the defunding and dismantling of agencies of state violence and are

calling for a radical reconceptualization of community safety. Reforms that feed the beast by directing more money, technology, and resources to police forces are at odds with revolutionary reforms that weaken the wealth, power, influence and scope of policing. This Resolution enables the Guild to think more boldly about the forms of our opposition to an institution that has always been engaged in a genocidal war against BIPOC communities and has been the main armed force deployed to maintain class rule.