

Pro Statement for the *Resolution Supporting the Abolition of Policing*

- Submitted by Kira Kelley, VT NLG chair and ARC co-chair

Police are an imminent, pervasive, lethal danger to Black people, indigenous people, and other people of color, as well as people who are transgender, gender non-conforming, disabled, poor, and intersections of those identities. This should be enough justification to call for abolition without needing to go into details about how police harm everyone, not just people with marginalized identities. If police don't help *everyone*, they don't help *anyone*. However, this resolution is too important to risk not passing it because some of us who still see the need for police have yet to fully explore the way that all of our fates are tied together.

Centuries of copoganda tell us that we *need* police to keep us safe. For those like me (white and financially stable) who didn't have to learn to de-escalate police as a basic survival skill growing up, who cops usually treat kindly in passing, this false reality can be hard to see through at first. But kindness does not equate to safety. Kindness and brutality are two tactics that police are trained to deploy in order to serve their fundamental purpose: to protect accumulated wealth. Using police-approved negotiating tools to work towards minimizing the violence in these tactics drains our resources while only further legitimizing the institution of police. No amount of accountability, sensitivity training, body camera footage, or any other reforms will save us when the very existence of police is the root problem and by pretending otherwise we ourselves participate in copoganda.¹

We must reflect on the crucial difference between harm reduction and false solutions. If we can take power, resources, and legitimacy away from the police, to remove their ability to murder and assault Black people with impunity, this reduces harm and takes us further towards abolition. I really appreciate conversations with other Guild members who took the time to explain to me how certain strategically brought civil lawsuits can accomplish these goals. The exception for *Monell* and § 1983 claims in the resolution reaffirms the value in harm reduction.

However, certain other reforms actually redirect even more resources towards police and give their violence more credibility. One example of this is calling for the prosecution of

¹ For example, a critique of the reforms proposed in #8cantwait: <https://harvardcrcl.org/why-8-wont-work/>

murderous cops. Claiming that putting murderous cops in jail achieves justice reinforces the illusion that cops, prosecution, and jail are any kind of remedy for the systemic problems - cops, prosecution, and jail - that cause police violence in the first place.

Most NLG members seem to be on board with police abolition in theory, but many are unwilling to call for these changes right now because they think that severing our reliance on police without first finding alternatives will leave gaps in our safety. I would first encourage anyone who is hesitating to read and learn more about abolition from the movement itself and its leaders. Many great resources exist online, e.g. criticalresistance.org, survivedandpunished.org, abolitionjournal.org.

If we want a safer society, abolishing police will *immediately* accomplish this, even if we make no other changes or implement no alternate security mechanisms. Nor would we, by abolishing police immediately, subject ourselves to any greater danger from each other. Copoganda and racial capitalism created the concept of a “dangerous criminal” to scare people into thinking that we need police. In reality, the reasons that people cause harm to each other are because of systemic resource deprivation and inequality - which system would not exist without the cops to legitimize the elite’s ability to exploit the rest of society and natural ecosystems for profit.

Besides officers’ direct contribution to violence through police murders and assaults, and besides their institutional role in preserving a socio-economic system that requires ongoing violence and exploitation to exist, police also have no effect on preventing interpersonal violence within our communities. The best that a cop can ever do is show up after violence has occurred to write people’s names down. This can be retraumatizing and often fatal to whoever happens to be there when the cops arrive.

Nor do we need to devise and impose a community-based safety system for the whole country before we call for abolition. Many communities and targeted groups have already developed safety systems that do not rely on police, more will emerge organically when people are deprived of the toxic and dangerous but for many all-too-convenient way of searching for safety.

Police protect the ability of the elite upper class to gather and hoard resources at everyone else's expense. They do not keep us safe, we keep us safe. And in order for the NLG to earn and build trust with the movements we exist to support, we must be unequivocal on this stance.