



Amped about abolition?  
Want to talk about it with your  
community but don't know how?

This zine is a how-to guide for starting  
conversations about abolition in your  
community or on your campus.

*A production of the UC Cops off Campus coalition  
For use on campuses & in communities anywhere*



## WHAT IS 'COFFEE NOT COPS'?

Coffee Not Cops is a way to introduce strangers and friends to the basics of abolition! In this zine we will learn how to talk to people about:

- **what** abolition is
- **why** it is necessary
- and **how** to organize toward an abolitionist horizon!

## WHO DO I DO THIS WITH?

Think of your Coffee Not Cops crew as an affinity group: a circle of friends who understand themselves as an autonomous political force. People who already know and care for each other are in a good position to try things out together. Any group of 3-5 friends can make things happen!

## FIND A COMMON LANGUAGE

Get to know what each other is good at. Then, read and discuss abolitionist texts together. A good study guide is at [abolitionjournal.org/studyguide/](http://abolitionjournal.org/studyguide/). Once you've established a common language, you're ready to go into action!

*Don't be afraid to do this if you're not fully prepared  
The best way to build experience is on the ground  
Try shit! Dare to fail! You can get better at this.*







Decide who you're going to talk with...

**Strangers:** Pick a well-trafficked area near/on campus, with campus orgs, community centers, places of worship, etc.

**Friends:** talking to people in your classes, clubs, social networks, etc. through backyard conversations

**Decision Makers:** campus leaders, faculty, vice chancellors, regents



# SOME USEFUL TIPS



## **1. Follow COVID safety guidelines!**

## **2. Don't lecture at people:**

Ask lots of questions and find opportunities to direct the conversation. Have a good opening question, but don't be afraid to ask and to share personally: how did you arrive at an abolitionist position? Often, good entry points are personal and build onto the systemic.

## **3. Agitate, Educate, Inoculate, Organize:**

Follow the AEIO steps to move people from passion to understanding, to counter-arguments, and finally, towards having an ask (how can they get involved after the conversation?)

## **4. Meet people where they are!**


Not everyone will walk away convinced. Remember you are seeding the conversation, not trying to convert people. Have 2-3 conversational routes prepped: 1 for brief (5 min) conversations, 1 for sympathetic folks, 1 for skeptics. Have different aims: to have skeptics leave with a better understanding of abolition; to bring allies into organizing!

## **5. GIVE OUT ABOLITIONIST SWAG**

Have zines and materials to distribute & a sign up sheet to follow up! Hand out well-researched local alternative numbers to call instead of 911.

## **6. Rinse, repeat, regularly!**

## **7. Have fun, and don't talk to the cops. Ever.**





# "Starting the Conversation"

Questions you can ask to get conversations going:



What makes you feel safe?  
Who do you go to when you've been harmed?



Have you ever called the cops and why? Did they help or hurt?

\*Get a sense of someone's starting position: are they suspicious of cops? Trusting? Meet people where they are and move at the speed of trust. Once there is common ground, start talking about abolition!

## 1. What is abolition?

It's helpful to have a definition you can put in your own words. You also have the option to reference other scholars and organizers as the conversation goes along.

Here are some helpful framing thoughts from abolitionist thinkers:

MARIAME KABA:

I am actively working towards abolition, which means I am trying to create the necessary conditions to ensure a world without prisons.



RUTH WILSON GILMORE:

Abolition is not only about "absence" (efforts to dismantle death-making institutions) but about "presence" (building life-affirming and life-enabling communities in their place).



ANGELA DAVIS:

Abolition strives to create "a new conceptual terrain for an array of alternatives that will require radical transformations of many aspects of our society."

CRITICAL RESISTANCE:

Abolition is about "building a world without prisons, police, military bases, and detention centers, and it is about "building a world with community safety, healthcare, guaranteed jobs, (and so forth).

**CRITICAL  
RESISTANCE** 

Write your own  
definition here:

Abolition is...



## II. WHY ABOLITION, NOT REFORM?

Not everyone will agree that we don't need cops. Many will say we just need major reforms. It's key to help people think about how killer cops and racialized violence are not exceptions, but rather are *foundational* to policing institutions. Here are three possible arguments:

The police are institutionally racist.



In the US, the first police forces originated in slave patrols. They were formed to enforce slave laws, apprehend fugitives, & punish and threaten those not complying with the slave system.

Westward expansion was also contingent on policing. In the mid 19th century, law enforcement enacted state-sanctioned violence to expropriate Native land and consolidate white economic interests.

STOLEN

A hand-drawn outline of the United States map. The word "STOLEN" is written in capital letters across the center of the map.

### **"But wasn't that a long time ago?"**

Modern policing draws its logics from slave catching through: racialized surveillance; stop and frisk; racialized, not 'criminal' identification; the 13th amendment has preserved slavery in the institution of mass incarceration



In 18th century Europe, the police originated in times of crisis to control the supply of grain during food shortages and to protect private property. In the US, from post-Civil War into the late 19th century, city police departments increasingly turned their attention to strike-breaking and brutally suppressing uprisings. Invite people to consider global examples of policing regimes such as in Chile, Colombia, India, Hong Kong where the police have brutally cracked down on peasant and Indigenous protests against neoliberalism.

The police are a class institution



The police are non-democratic

Finally, invite people to consider how the police have become the answer to a whole range of activities that take power away from communities to build democratic forms of self-reliance and participation. Cops *claim* that they are the answer to everything from sexual assault to mental health episodes, but actually increase trauma for victims. What if instead, we had democratically-constituted neighborhoods and cities where people had control over how to keep each other safe?





# Crime vs. Harm

At some point, most folks will worry: "we still need *some* cops or *some* kind of enforcement to keep us safe; there are still rapists and serial killers out there." This is a good opening to point to the differences between crime and harm.

**CRIME:** Acts and behaviors that have been criminalized by the state. Historically and socio-politically constructed to protect ruling class interests. Crime is not a fixed object: Behaviors that are criminalized are often linked to forms of racist state social control and political repression. Criminalization is the exercise of state power to enact social control within the context of profound injustice.

**HARM:** Concept comes out of Black feminist traditions. Thinking about harm opposed to crime shifts our gaze to interpersonal, intra and intercommunal, and structural behaviors that produce suffering and violence.

**Many acts cause harm but are not crimes! Conversely, many acts that are criminalized do not cause harm!**

For e.g.: building a giant pipeline that desecrates Indigenous land and then ruptures and poisons the water supply & life on earth is often not considered a crime, even though it causes incalculable harm. On the other hand, an unhoused person squatting or living in a building that they do not own is considered criminal trespass, even though it causes little to no harm.

**If we want to build a just society, we need to focus on harm reduction, not crime.**



## "WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE TO FOCUS ON REDUCING HARM, RATHER THAN ON CRIME?"

This is a good question to pose, even to skeptics. To imagine a world without police, we have to imagine a world with caring relations that attends to harm at their root causes.

Instead of increasing the resources and budget for policing, what if we committed to reparative public goods: education, healthcare, housing, free tuition, food for all?



Instead of responding to drug and alcohol violations with punitive citations, what if we had community resources for harm reduction?

Instead of responding to reports of sexual assault with armed police officers that worsen trauma for survivors, what if we worked to create strong, supportive communities that provide long term care for survivors, and community accountability for those who do harm?



**What if instead of looking to cops, we built the caring communities that keep each other safe?**





### III. "OK. I SEE WHY ABOLITION MAKES SENSE. BUT HOW DO WE MAKE IT HAPPEN?"

Break down how we might organize towards police abolition with...



#### Disarm



How are the police armed? With what? According to what process or procedure are weapons manufactured, acquired, distributed, etc.?

#### GENERAL TRENDS:

Over the past several decades, local police have become increasingly militarized. Federal programs that provide surplus military equipment to police depts that far exceeds need. SWAT units, once used only for the most extreme situations, are deployed regularly.



#### CAMPUS POLICING TRENDS AND EXAMPLES:

(substitute these facts with research from your own campus or context!)

UCPD has been given assault rifles - for the cost only of the shipping price - from the federal government, and have received military-style training run by an arm of the Department of Homeland Security in the past.





# Defund



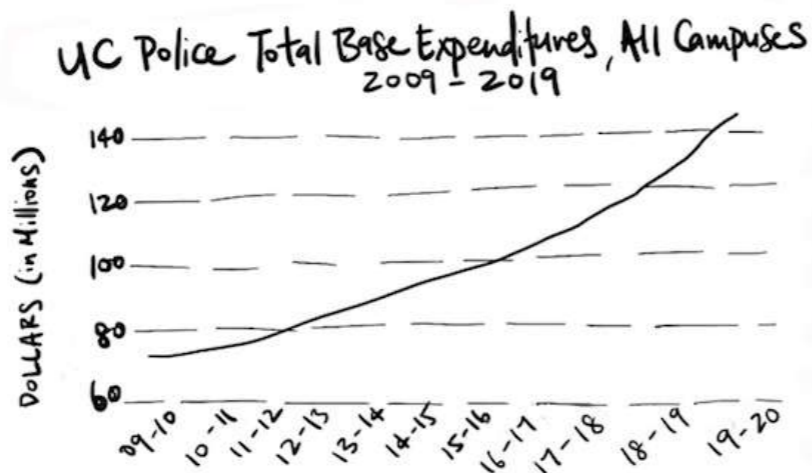
How are the police funded? How much is the budget? If all that money went to public services, how would our communities flourish?

In the past 40 years, cities have grown safer, but police budgets have steadily increased - from 1.2% of average city expenditures in the late 1970s to 7.8% today.

Your city's police budget as a % of total spending is: \$\_\_\_\_\_.

The University of California PD budget has gone up over the years on all campuses, while state funding for UC goes down. Plus, the legal arm of UC pays for police grievance lawsuits, taking your tuition money to pay for the violence of the police. For e.g., such money has funded paid leave for cops accused of sexual assault and battery.

Your campus's police department or private security budget is: \$\_\_\_\_\_.



Campus	FY2009-10	FY2019-20	% Increase
UCB	\$14.3 mil	\$24 mil	68.2%
UCLA	\$12.6 mil	\$22.1 mil	74.5%
UCR	\$4.4 mil	\$9.3 mil	110.4%
UCD	\$8.5 mil	\$14.1 mil	65.1%
UCI	\$5.3 mil	\$17.1 mil	226.2%
UCM	\$2.0 mil	\$6.3 mil	207.8%
UCSD	\$6.8 mil	\$14.2 mil	110%
UCSF	\$11.6 mil	\$21.2 mil	83%
UCSB	\$5.4 mil	\$10.2 mil	90%
UCSC	\$4.2 mil	\$7.3 mil	75%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$75.1 mil</b>	<b>\$148.5 mil</b>	<b>80.4%</b>



# Divide



How are police tasks understood to "protect and serve?" How could communities be protected and served instead?

Policing is typically organized into four main functions: **enforcing laws, preventing crimes, responding to emergencies, and providing support services.**

Why does one agency serve all of these needs? What if these functions were disaggregated and allocated to separate institutions?

## EXAMPLES:

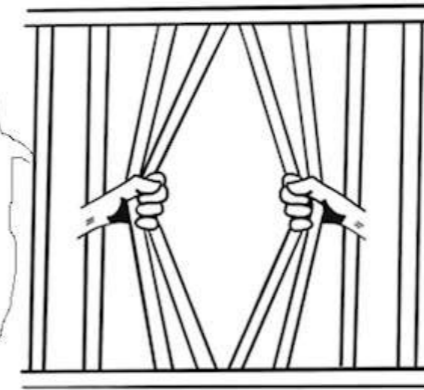
70-80% of "crimes" dealt with by UCPD, (for e.g. at Berkeley, UCSD, and UCSD,) were about liquor and drugs. Not only does UCPD spend minimal time dealing with violent crime, they have also been cited for violations in handling such minor drinking cases as crimes (a recent Clery act review process at Berkeley led to them being fined over 2 million). Rather than policing drinking, what if non-police entities in the school/dorm structure (e.g. RAs) had harm reduction training? What if social workers responded to cases of sexual harm?





# Decriminalize

The more things that are criminalized and deemed against campus policy, the more police appear to be necessary. Can decriminalization render the police obsolete? How have processes of decriminalization impacted policing in the past?



## EXAMPLES:

The movement for marijuana decriminalization reduced arrests of Black folks by almost half in many counties. More recent moves to decriminalize drugs like psilocybin could have the same effect.

In Minneapolis-St. Paul, fare evasion on public transportation is currently a crime. It requires a licensed police officer to write a ticket. In Feb 2020, MPD requested more overtime hours and more camera surveillance technology to help prevent fare evasion. This would add an estimated \$850,000 to overtime pay for Transit Police, raising the total to \$1.8 million/year. What if this money was used to simply make public transportation free for all users?

## UCPD EXAMPLES:

On campus, close to 50% of UC arrests are for drug and alcohol violations. Yet arrests for public intoxication don't do very much at all to keep students safe from alcohol poisoning or overdoses. What if those violations were decriminalized, and we approached drug and alcohol use through a harm reduction lens, where the budget for the UCPD could be put towards hiring student workers to provide rides home, adequate water, carbs, 'care monitors' at parties, naloxone, and harm reduction training?





# Democratize

Who controls the police? How are decisions made? By whom? What is the level of actual community oversight and control? What is the relationship between the PD and the Police Union?



## GENERAL EXAMPLES:

Some organizers have argued for more civilian control, giving communities direct power to abolish, restructure, downsize, or otherwise reconstruct their police departments. Civilian boards would have direct control over hiring and firing, and the prerogative to set community priorities and objectives for harm response.

## UCPD TRENDS AND EXAMPLES:

While in cities, we vote on council members, mayors and county sheriffs that all have a say in what money and leeway the local police get, the UC has no such system, except for the little representation that we get on the Regents with student reps.

The UC is aware of >200 recent incidents involving police use of force, yet only 2 case files have been released publicly despite several requests. Cases being withheld include individuals suffering from broken limbs after being pushed by an officer, individuals suffering from abrasions and bleeding in the mouth from officers, individuals being jabbed and trampled by officers.

What if students had oversight over campus policing? Even better, what if students had a say over what keeps their community safe, through bystander trainings, community defense, and mutual aid? How might we re- envision a university where we keep each other safe?





# REFORMIST REFORMS VS. ABOLITIONIST STEPS IN POLICING

We know that we aren't going to get to a world without cops or prisons tomorrow. So what can we do in between? The distinction btwn reformist and non-reformist reforms can really help folks understand the stakes of pursuing certain reforms.

**Reformist Reforms** continue or expand the reach of policing. **Abolitionist** or **non-reformist reforms** work to chip away and reduce the overall impact of policing.

Here, via the org Critical Resistance, is a handy chart to help folks discern which reforms reduce policing and which increase it:

DOES THIS...	reduce funding to police?	challenge the notion that police increase safety?	reduce tools / tactics / technology police have at their disposal?	reduce the scale of policing?
<b>BODY CAMERAS</b>	NO. More \$ will go to PD budgets	NO. Perpetuates idea tt policing can be 'done right'	Increases. Gives police more tools, more surveillance, more power	Increases. Police turn of cameras, & footage is used to surveil.
<b>COMMUNITY POLICING</b>	NO. Advocates argue for hiring more cops to be in the community	NO. Based on belief that there is 'breakdown of trust' tt can be restored	Increases. Cops get trained in more tactics & approaches	NO. More community police = increased policing in Black & Brown neighborhoods
<b>"JAIL KILLER COPS": PROSECUTE POLICE WHO HAVE KILLED AND ABUSED CIVILIANS.</b>	NO. Does not lead to changes in funding or resources for cops	NO. Individualizes police violence; does not challenge policing as systemic violence	NO. Media attention in high profile cases often lead to more resources and tech	NO. Reinforces the PIC and the idea that prosecution and prison serve real justice
DOES THIS...	reduce funding to police?	challenge the notion that police increase safety?	reduce tools / tactics / technology police have at their disposal?	reduce the scale of policing?
<b>WITHDRAW PARTICIPATION IN POLICE MILITARIZATION PROGRAMS</b>	YES. Increases community-based budgets rather than spending on war	YES. Challenges notion that police need military-style training in the guise of 'safety'	YES. Weapons training scales up policing infrastructure and shapes policiing tactics & tech	YES. Stops police from increasing their legitimacy, reduces their reach over our lives
<b>PRIORITIZE SPENDING ON COMMUNITY HEALTH, EDUCATION, AFFORDABLE HOUSING</b>	YES. Decreasing police funding will decrease resources	YES. Prioritizing funding community creates space to make resources that actually create wellbeing	YES. If we decrease funding for policing, we will decrease the expansion of tech investments	YES. Moves funding away from policing, decreases size, scope, and capacity of police systems



# NOW WHAT?

It's important to end the conversation with an ask - a way to mobilize those who are on board with abolitionist goals, and bring them from allies into accomplices!

## **Here are some ways you can end the conversation:**

- Ask to stay in touch and gather an email list
- Continue the conversation by starting reading groups
- Invite them to your weekly organizing meetings
- Invite them to the next cops off campus protest
- Hand out zines and other materials. We prepared a half-sheet with phone numbers for community alternatives to 911 (a great resource is @whocanically on Instagram)

## **BUILD CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER MOVEMENTS!**

In what ways can you use the 5 D's in other movements?

**Sex work:** how does decriminalization of sex work help keep our communities safe?

**Mental health:** how does police abolition connect to mental health? How do we avoid reformist solutions like diverting funds from police to social workers who may replicate state policing?

**Climate and environmental justice:** how is the demand of defunding the police similar to the strategy of divesting from fossil fuels?

**Reproductive justice:** how does reproductive justice, defined as the right to have (or not have) children and to safely parent, connect to abolitionist politics?



# ABOLITION SEEKS TO CHANGE ONE THING: EVERYTHING.

Let's get cops off campus  
and off the planet!  
Get out there and have fun.  
We have a world to win.

**Find us on twitter,  
instagram & Facebook  
@ uc\_ftp**

