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Tyranny of the Task Force: Police Abolition and the Counterinsurgent Campus

DYLAN RODRÍGUEZ

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Tyranny of the Task Force: Police Abolition and the Counterinsurgent Campus

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ESSAY CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: (ANTIBLACK) DOMESTIC WAR, COUNTERINSURGENCY, AND THE CONDITIONS FOR ABOLITION	573
I. COUNTERINSURGENCY (STATESIDE)	580
II. COUNTERINSURGENCY CAMPUS, PT. 1: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, A CASE STUDY.....	582
A. CASE 1, DUMB FAITH: THE ACADEMIC SENATE’S “RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UC POLICING”	584
B. CASE 2, AUDIT, WASH, AND REPEAT: THE AFTERMATH OF THE UCOP TASK FORCE ON UNIVERSITYWIDE POLICING	586
C. CASE 3, TYRANNY OF THE TASK FORCE: UC RIVERSIDE (2020–2021) 590	
II. COUNTERINSURGENCY CAMPUS, PT. 2: “TO ENCOURAGE GROWTH OF A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT”	596
A. THE CHIEF AND THE CHANCELLOR: ADMINISTRATION AS POLICE..	598
CONCLUSION: DEFINITION AND DEPARTURE: REFORM, REFORMISM, AND THE ABOLITIONIST IMPERATIVE	599
POSTSCRIPT (JUNE 2021).....	601



Tyranny of the Task Force: Police Abolition and the Counterinsurgent Campus

DYLAN RODRÍGUEZ *

INTRODUCTION: (ANTIBLACK) DOMESTIC WAR, COUNTERINSURGENCY, AND THE CONDITIONS FOR ABOLITION

The surge of rebellions against the normalized antiblackness of United States policing continues to catalyze—even necessitate—widespread engagement with the conceptual, political, and cultural praxis of policing and carceral abolition. Here, I follow Paulo Freire’s enduring definition of praxis as “*reflection* and *action* directed at the structures to be transformed.”¹ I work within a dynamic conceptualization of “abolition” that encompasses creative, collective forms of radical, transformative, Black liberationist, and revolutionary opposition to the state-sanctioned social and cultural violence of criminalization, incarceration, and police power (violences hereafter understood to be constituted in antiblackness as a logic of ontology, epistemology, and sociality/social formation).² Proliferations of intensified, militant rebellion against antiblack and colonial systems have a way of exposing the fraudulence of prevailing (liberal-to-progressive) assumptions regarding the limits of historical change. Abolitionist praxis nourishes such uprisings by cultivating autonomous, dynamic redefinitions of the horizons

* University of California, Riverside, President of American Studies Association (2020–2021), 2020 Freedom Scholar. Rodríguez prefers to make use of the lower case “i” when making first person reference in an attempt to follow the political example and echo the epistemic disruptions fostered by Black Radical, anticolonial, and other literary traditions that challenge the implied ascendancy and assumptive coherence of the first-person subject in communication. Exemplified by such revolutionary practitioners as Assata Shakur in *Assata: an Autobiography* (1987) (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2001), the use of “i” suggests a first-person identification that departs from notions of the free-willing, self-determined, rational (white and Western) modern subject, and instead gestures toward the historical forces of subordination and degradation that form practices of “human being” and “identity” as confrontations with genocidal racism, racial colonialism, human chattel, and displacement.

¹ PAULO FREIRE, *PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED* 107 (Myra Bergman Ramos trans., new rev. 20th-anniversary ed. 1993).

² Dylan Rodríguez, *Abolition as Praxis of Human Being: A Foreword*, 132 *HARV. L. REV.* 1575, 1575–76 (2019). For conceptualizations of anti-Blackness, see generally JOÃO H. COSTA VARGAS, *THE DENIAL OF ANTIBLACKNESS: MULTIRACIAL REDEMPTION & BLACK SUFFERING* (2018); *ANTIBLACKNESS* (Moon-Kie Jung & João H. Costa Vargas eds., 2021); FRANTZ FANON, *BLACK SKIN, WHITE MASKS* (Richard Philcox trans., 1952); LEWIS R. GORDON, *BAD FAITH AND ANTIBLACK RACISM* (1999); TIFFANY LETHABO KING, *THE BLACK SHOALS: OFFSHORE FORMATIONS OF BLACK AND NATIVE STUDIES* (2019); ZAKIYYAH IMAN JACKSON, *BECOMING HUMAN: MATTER AND MEANING IN AN ANTIBLACK WORLD* (2020).

of freedom, collective safety and self-defense, and shared commitments to bodily and spiritual integrity.

This contribution to the *Connecticut Law Review* attempts to situate contemporary police and carceral abolition as a complex, urgent historical imperative that clarifies and radically confronts the state-sanctioned violence of asymmetrical, domestic war. I am especially concerned with recent and widespread institutional efforts to pacify the global revolts against antiblack policing that saturated the summer months of 2020. I argue that attempts to pacify and dissemble these moments and geographies of revolt—which often take the shape of “task forces” appointed by state, university/college, and other institutional executives and administrators—form a strategy of *counterinsurgency* that relies on reform-and-triage based responses to radical, abolitionist, and proto-abolitionist critiques of—and rebellions against—antiblack police terror. This reformist counterinsurgency is not merely inadequate to the task of slowing, interrupting, or ending policing, carceral capture, and fatality. To the contrary, it works to sustain and relegitimize police power while extending the parameters of policing as a layered political and pedagogical infrastructure of state and state-condoned violence.

Reform-based responses to “mass incarceration” and policing tend to be *counter-* and *anti-*abolitionist, to the extent that they defer, caricature, trivialize, or even criminalize direct, critical engagement with the historical and institutional foundations of antiblack domestic war and racial-colonial dominance.³ Reformist paradigms and methods rest on the tacit ahistorical assumption that police, jails, prisons, and punitive carceral state violence against criminalized places/people/bodies are *necessary, if not inevitable*, components of modern social forms and geographies across scales, from college campuses and small towns to large cities and rural landscapes.⁴ The brittle, assumptive structure of reformist thought/ideology radically contrasts with the rigorous analytical premises of contemporary abolitionist scholarship, grassroots study, and activism—that policing, criminalization, and incarceration are the institutional and systemic expression of long, historical relations of domination and normalized (state and extra-state) violence, sustaining as they extrapolate the modernity-shaping logics of antiblackness (via transatlantic chattel trafficking, hemispheric slavery,

³ See DYLAN RODRÍGUEZ, *WHITE RECONSTRUCTION: DOMESTIC WARFARE AND THE LOGICS OF GENOCIDE* 176, 184–85, 203–04 (2021) (discussing the centrality of hemispheric and domestic war to the normalized condition of the United States).

⁴ See Léopold Lambert, *Making Abolition Geography in California's Central Valley: Interview with Ruth Wilson Gilmore*, 21 *FUNAMBULIST*, Jan.–Feb. 2019, at 14, 14–19 (discussing the carceral geography of the California Central Valley); Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Abolition Geography and the Problem of Innocence*, in *FUTURES OF BLACK RADICALISM* 225, 225–27, 239–40 (Gaye Theresa Johnson & Alex Lubin eds., 2017) (discussing the pitfalls of reformist analyses and explanations of carceral statecraft).

apartheid, eugenics, etc.); gendered sexual violence; bodily denigration and immobilization; racial capitalism; land conquest; and colonial occupation.⁵

The asymmetrical, targeted, genocidal, and proto-genocidal violence of policing and incarceration has pushed increasing numbers of people and organizations to embrace the political and academic identity of “abolitionist.” (Here, i am following a scholarly activist tradition that conceptualizes and addresses “genocide” as a logic of gendered antiblack and racial-colonial evisceration that exceeds the formal juridical definition in the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.)⁶ On the one hand, such voluntaristic identifications with abolition are an encouraging indication that the last quarter century of abolitionist pedagogical, cultural, and political work has created a compelling curricular and organizational framework for transformative social movement.⁷ On the other hand, such assertions of abolitionist identity sometimes appear to be facile, underinformed, and disconnected from communities of abolitionist praxis and thus provoke significant ethical questions regarding the responsibilities, risks, obligations, and collective accountabilities that accompany atomized gestures and assertions of abolitionist self-identification. The neoliberal logic of identity suggests that “abolitionist” is as open to appropriation, distortion, and individuation as

⁵ See CEDRIC J. ROBINSON, *BLACK MARXISM: THE MAKING OF THE BLACK RADICAL TRADITION* 2–5 (The Univ. of N.C. Press rev. and updated 3d ed. 2020) (1983) (reviewing the origins and historical formation of racial capitalism); BETH E. RICHIE, *ARRESTED JUSTICE: BLACK WOMEN, VIOLENCE, AND AMERICA’S PRISON NATION* 2–4 (2012) (explaining the violent convergences and systemic intersections of gendered antiblack and sexual violence with normalized state violence); DOROTHY ROBERTS, *SHATTERED BONDS: THE COLOR OF CHILD WELFARE* vii–ix (2002) (discussing the logics of antiblack and racist state violence in the formation and everyday operation of child welfare protocols); DIAN MILLION, *THERAPEUTIC NATIONS: HEALING IN AN AGE OF INDIGENOUS HUMAN RIGHTS* 3, 6–7, 31–32 (2013) (discussing the coloniality of United Nations human rights and political structures); ROXANNE DUNBAR-ORTIZ, *AN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES’ HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES* 1–2, 5–6 (2014) (reviewing the long historical archive of settler colonial occupation of Indigenous ecologies and land in what has become the United States); LUANA ROSS, *INVENTING THE SAVAGE: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF NATIVE AMERICAN CRIMINALITY* 2–4 (1st ed. 1998) (discussing the colonial and genocidal points of origin for modern criminal law, including and especially the criminalization of Native Americans).

⁶ G.A. Res. 260 (III) A, Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Dec. 9, 1948). I offer a rigorous critical engagement with the juridical and academic discourse on genocide in Dylan Rodríguez, *Inhabiting the Impasse: Racial/Racial-Colonial Power, Genocide Poetics, and the Logic of Evisceration*, 33 *SOC. TEXT* 19 (2015).

⁷ Perhaps the most prominent example of such a turn has been the personal change of perspective publicly articulated by author Michelle Alexander. While she was explicit in expressing reform as the outer limit of her conception of collective action against the carceral regime in her widely read 2010 text, MICHELLE ALEXANDER, *THE NEW JIM CROW: MASS INCARCERATION IN THE AGE OF COLORBLINDNESS* 223–24 (2010), she has more recently stated, “I consider myself a prison abolitionist, in the sense that I think we will eventually end the prisons as we know them.” Brentin Mock, *Life After ‘The New Jim Crow’*, BLOOMBERG CITYLAB (Sept. 30, 2016, 6:19 PM), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-09-30/mass-incarceration-can-t-be-fixed-by-legislation-alone>. For further context, see John Washington, *What Is Prison Abolition?*, NATION (July 31, 2018), <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/what-is-prison-abolition>.

any other political subjectivity.⁸ How, then, might abolitionist praxis encompass dynamic, well-debated, constantly formed ethical *demands* on those who claim affinity with its audacious visions of militant revolt, radical transformation, and speculative (queer, feminist, Black, Indigenous, liberated) futurity?

Put another way, it seems ethically necessary to reflect on some guiding principles of abolitionist praxis (and “identity”) that resist static ideological litmus tests or sectarian political “lines,” while robustly obligating self-identified abolitionists to (1) cultivate engagement with *and accountability to* formations of potentially abolitionist communities, and (2) embrace a shared sense of historical responsibility that is informed by constant study, reflection, and collective forms of action including artistic, mass political, paramilitary/self-defensive, health-nourishing, and other mobilizations. Abolitionist principles of engagement, accountability, and historical responsibility resist the neoliberal, opportunistic, and individualizing tendencies of superficial political identity claims. Such ethical principles become especially important when navigating compartmentalized forms of professional opportunity that may derive from such identity claims including increased academic and artistic currency, access to resources governed and disbursed by the nonprofit industrial complex, and perceived enhancement of individual clout in public-facing activist and social media venues.

While the ethical demands of abolitionist praxis on its communities of engagement are under constant discussion in a wide variety of settings, it is possible to identify one primary stream of historical inheritance that flows across identifiable, dynamic principles of abolitionist responsibility and obligation: abolition is a living archive of radical, revolutionary, and liberationist praxis, centrally located in what Cedric Robinson has named the Black Radical Tradition.⁹ A historical continuity of Black (queer, feminist, trans, diasporic) radical and revolutionary labor provides critical analytical and practical guidance for contemporary abolitionist activism, organizing, research, and collective study; and it includes the scholarly and grassroots work of Sylvia Wynter, Frantz Fanon, Ujimaa Medics, Miss Major, Malcolm X, Assata Shakur, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, the Civil Rights Congress, Angela Y. Davis, Rachel Herzing, George Jackson, Ruthie Gilmore, João Costa Vargas, Clyde Woods, Sarah Haley, Masai Ehehosi, Mariame Kaba, and many others.¹⁰ This Black radical scholarly activist

⁸ On neoliberal appropriations of political identity and social subjectivity, see JODI MELAMED, REPRESENT AND DESTROY: RATIONALIZING VIOLENCE IN THE NEW RACIAL CAPITALISM (2011).

⁹ ROBINSON, *supra* note 5, at 3–4, 167–71.

¹⁰ See Sylvia Wynter, *Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument*, 3 CR 257 (2003) (positioning the abolition of “Man” as the violently oppressive normative template for human being); FRANTZ FANON, THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH (Richard Philcox trans., Grove Press 2004) (1961) (emphasizing the need for creative destruction of the world order as it has cohered through conquest, colonial domination, and

genealogy constantly generates as it contests the conceptual, theoretical, practical, and methodological terms of abolitionist praxis and, in so doing, obliterates the national-to-global development narratives of United States and Western modernity.

To conceptualize the abolitionist archive as *collective living praxis* is to demystify the naturalized, canonized ensemble of police, criminal justice, and incarceration that purports to secure social order, protect national-to-global political stability, and ensure the (fraudulently universal) personal safety of citizens and other inhabitants of modern civil societies. A stream of abolitionist analyses and narratives illuminates the antiblack,

antiblack violence]; *About Us*, UJIMAA MEDICS, <https://www.umedics.org/about-us> (last visited Apr. 19, 2021) (discussing creative, grassroots, Black feminist community based practices of care and emergency response that directly address the normalized antiblack and racist state violence of policing and 911 emergency protocols); MAJOR! (What Do We Want Films & Floating Ophelia Productions 2016) (detailing the life of Miss Major, who exemplifies a trans conceptualization and praxis of abolition that apprehends normative sexuality as a foundation of carceral and policing state violence); MALCOLM X, FEBRUARY 1965: THE FINAL SPEECHES (Steve Clark ed., 1992) (discussing the emergence of a latter-20th century diasporic Black radicalism that departs from, and in fact radically opposes the reformist maneuvers of the liberal racial state, in and beyond the United States); ASSATA SHAKUR, ASSATA: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY (Lawrence Hill Books 1999) (1987) (examining the inseparability of the chattel slave relation from succeeding forms of state and cultural power in the American hemisphere); IDA B. WELLS, CRUSADE FOR JUSTICE: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF IDA B. WELLS (Alfreda M. Duster ed., 1970) (discussing the importance of journalistic and archival labor as forms of sustained abolitionist praxis); C.R. CONG., WE CHARGE GENOCIDE: THE HISTORIC PETITION TO THE UNITED NATIONS FOR RELIEF FROM A CRIME OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AGAINST THE NEGRO PEOPLE (William L. Patterson ed., 3d ed. 1952) (positioning the United States as an antiblack genocidal state and civil formation); ANGELA Y. DAVIS, ARE PRISONS OBSOLETE? (2003) (reviewing the mounting empirical and archival evidence that indicates the need for a complete reevaluation of the existence of prisons, jails, and other forms of incarceration as primary institutions in modern nation-states); *Black Liberation and the Abolition of the Prison Industrial Complex: An Interview with Rachel Herzing*, 1 PROPTER NOS 62 (2016) (discussing the rise of abolitionist movements in the late-20th and early-21st centuries); GEORGE L. JACKSON, BLOOD IN MY EYE (Black Classic Press 1990) (1972) (discussing the conceptualization of racial capitalist reformism as an emergent form of asymmetrical fascism); Rachel Herzing, *Standing Up for Our Communities: Why We Need a Police-Free Future*, TRUTHOUT (Mar. 7, 2017), <https://truthout.org/articles/standing-up-for-our-communities-why-we-need-a-police-free-future> (presenting the practical and historical premises of police abolition); RUTH WILSON GILMORE, CHANGE EVERYTHING: RACIAL CAPITALISM AND THE CASE FOR ABOLITION (Naomi Murakawa ed., forthcoming June 2021) (examining the theoretical and practical frameworks for abolitionist social movement and transformation in the present and future); VARGAS, *supra* note 2 (arguing the inseparability of antiblackness, carceral state violence, policing, and the logics of genocide); CLYDE WOODS, DEVELOPMENT ARRESTED: THE BLUES AND PLANTATION POWER IN THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA (1998) (discussing the continuities of abolitionist Black creativity, community, and cultural production in the making of post-emancipation Black geographies); SARAH HALEY, NO MERCY HERE: GENDER, PUNISHMENT, AND THE MAKING OF JIM CROW MODERNITY (2016) (presenting the criminalization and incarceration of Black women as a foundation of United States modernity as an apartheid Jim Crow society); *Political Prisoner Updates & Prison Organizing* (KBOO July 15, 2019, 6:30 PM), <https://kboo.fm/media/74298-political-prisoner-updates-prison-organizing> (discussing the global grassroots movement to recognize and free unrecognized Black, Puerto Rican, Native American Chicana, and other United States political prisoners and prisoners of war); MARIAME KABA & SHIRA HASSAN, FUMBLING TOWARDS REPAIR: A WORKBOOK FOR COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY FACILITATORS (2019) (offering collective tactics and strategies for creating community practices of justice, accountability, and safety that do not rely on the violence of policing and criminalization).

colonial, and generally (proto-)genocidal premises on which state formations rely for the fabrication of their ostensible social-political legitimacy.¹¹ Further, the living abolitionist archive thoroughly and devastatingly illustrates how the antiblack foundations and infrastructures of modern policing—as well as the primary role of police power in securing the militarized borders of formal/de facto U.S. apartheid and the overlapping conquest/settler colonial project—should be conceptualized as foundational conditions of modern social formations, rather than corollary corruptions of or momentary aberrations from them.

Policing *as* nation-building constantly produces the lived, collective conditions for abolitionist revolt, and it has done so since the inception of the modern police through slave patrols, white (male) citizens' militias, the Frontier Army, etc.¹² The uprisings of 2020 are not merely expressions of collective, repressed rage against the “systemic racism” of “police brutality” and the extrajudicial, state-sanctioned killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and hundreds of ordinary Black people in recent times. Rather, the revolts are direct expressions of a Black liberationist lineage, guided less by a particular ideology or discrete political agenda than by a refusal to concede to the normality of antiblack U.S. *domestic war*. In this sense, it would be a dire misestimation to compartmentalize the 2020 rebellions as contingent, situational manifestations of collective anger against a discrete set of antiblack police atrocities. Further, it is neither useful nor feasible to characterize these recent, ongoing revolts through a singular political category—such as anarchist, Black nationalist, civil rights reformist, abolitionist, multiracial progressive, etc.—since their grounds of irruption and mobilization are locally nuanced, contested, and constantly changing. It is possible, however, to situate these dynamic insurgencies against antiblack police violence as contributing to an emergent *abolitionist narrative continuum* that posits a shared recognition of the continuities of domestic war in the present tense.¹³

¹¹ In addition to the works mentioned in the previous citation, see ANGELA Y. DAVIS, *ABOLITION DEMOCRACY: BEYOND PRISON, TORTURE AND EMPIRE* (2005); LIAT BEN-MOSHE, *DECARCERATING DISABILITY: DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION AND PRISON ABOLITION* (2020); CAPTIVE GENDERS: TRANS EMBODIMENT AND THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX (Eric A. Stanley & Nat Smith eds., expanded 2d ed. 2015); *ABOLITION J.*, <https://abolitionjournal.org/> (last visited May 24, 2021).

¹² See generally SALLY E. HADDEN, *SLAVE PATROLS: LAW AND VIOLENCE IN VIRGINIA AND THE CAROLINAS* (2001) (discussing the origins of the modern police in slave patrols and white citizens' militias); VINE DELORIA, JR., *CUSTER DIED FOR YOUR SINS: AN INDIAN MANIFESTO* (Univ. of Okla. Press 1988) (1969) (recounting the emergence of modern United States government and governmentality through frontier conquest and sustained colonial violence); DAVID E. STANNARD, *AMERICAN HOLOCAUST: COLUMBUS AND THE CONQUEST OF THE NEW WORLD* (1992) (detailing the origins of the United States nation-state in land conquest and multifaceted, genocidal displacement and neutralization of Indigenous presence).

¹³ See generally WARFARE IN THE AMERICAN HOMELAND: POLICING AND PRISON IN A PENAL DEMOCRACY (Joy James ed., 2007) (describing the various histories, theorizations, and practical definitions of normalized domestic warfare in the United States context of policing, criminalization, and incarceration).

Policing is a primary technology of everyday asymmetrical violence, forming a condition of terror, occupation, and asymmetrical casualties that Black radicals, revolutionaries, and abolitionists have long addressed in the terms of domestic war.¹⁴ Here, I am concerned with examining *counterinsurgency* as a specific strategy of domestic war that reproduces and renormalizes policing, principally—though not exclusively—as an infrastructure of antiblack terror. Reflecting the U.S. military’s curriculum on global counterinsurgency, U.S. domestic counterinsurgency cultivates a symbiosis between (1) the state’s militarized repression and juridical criminalization of rebellions against police violence, and (2) institutional rituals of police reform that generally take the form of task forces, review boards, thinktank conferences/symposia, and academic research initiatives, among other analogous assemblies of administrators, elected officials, organizational leaders, professional intellectuals, and community representatives.¹⁵

To focus on the second form of domestic counterinsurgency is to consider several analytical questions:

- How do the institutional rituals of police reform (the “task force,” etc.) seek to secure police power at the very same time that they appear to subject police practices to critical scrutiny?
- What are the practical implications of reformist reactions to abolitionist analyses of policing, particularly for those targeted by the gendered antiblack logics of normalized state violence?
- How do police reform initiatives attempt to reassemble consent to (reformed, respectable) police power?
- How does abolitionist praxis encompass creative projects of community, collective safety, and self-defense that demystify and potentially extinguish oppressive and repressive (state and extra-state) violence?

¹⁴ See generally SAFIYA BUKHARI, *THE WAR BEFORE: THE TRUE LIFE STORY OF BECOMING A BLACK PANTHER, KEEPING THE FAITH IN PRISON & FIGHTING FOR THOSE LEFT BEHIND* (Laura Whitehorn ed., 2010) (detailing the rise of the Black Panther Party and Black Liberation Army as collective forms of Black self-defense and liberation from dense antiblack state violence); MARSHALL “EDDIE” CONWAY & DOMINIQUE STEVENSON, *MARSHALL LAW: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF A BALTIMORE BLACK PANTHER* (2011) (discussing the state’s targeting of Conway as a leading figure in the Baltimore chapter of the Black Panther Party, and the egregious legal deceptions that facilitated his effective political imprisonment in Maryland); MARSHALL “EDDIE” CONWAY, *THE GREATEST THREAT: THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY AND COINTELPRO* (2009) (explaining the FBI’s use of the Counterintelligence Program to nurture widespread, deadly counterinsurgency against the Black Panther Party and other Black liberation organizations).

¹⁵ David H. Petraeus & James F. Amos, *Foreword*, in *HEADQUARTERS, DEP’T OF THE ARMY, FM 3-24, MCWP 3-33.5, COUNTERINSURGENCY* (2006), <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=468442> [hereinafter COUNTERINSURGENCY].

I. COUNTERINSURGENCY (STATESIDE)

The U.S. Army's *Counterinsurgency* field manual, revised in 2006 for the War on Terror, defines "insurgency" and "counterinsurgency" in terms befitting the current domestic moment in the United States.¹⁶ Interpreted within and against its own narrative and political grain, the manual posits a statecraft of nontraditional, politically and culturally directed warfare for the early 21st century.¹⁷

Joint doctrine defines an *insurgency* as an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict. Stated another way, an insurgency is an organized, protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority while increasing insurgent control. *Counterinsurgency* is military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency.¹⁸

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the text's extended definition of "insurgency"¹⁹ affirms an abolitionist conceptualization of policing as a condition of domestic war. In fact, there is nothing in the field manual to suggest that its contents cannot be applied to the "internal" affairs of the United States: "Insurgency is typically a form of internal war, one that occurs primarily within a state, not between states, and one that contains at least some elements of civil war."²⁰

The scope and focus of U.S. domestic war encompasses the long historical power relations of conquest; genocidal colonial occupation; and gendered anti-Indigenous cultural, ecological, and bodily violence.²¹ While domestic war *as antiblackness* is constituted by these logics of terror, displacement, and colonization—particularly in relation to the racial, colonial, and conquest origins of the transatlantic trafficking of captive and enslaved Africans—antiblackness is not reducible to a corollary expression of racial-colonial power.

¹⁶ *Id.* paras. 1-1, 1-2.

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Id.* para. 1-2 (citations omitted).

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *Id.* para. 1-5.

²¹ See STANNARD, *supra* note 12, at 269–70 (discussing the foundations of the United States nation-building project in genocidal warfare and sustained colonial land and ecological conquest); NICK ESTES, *OUR HISTORY IS THE FUTURE: STANDING ROCK VERSUS THE DAKOTA ACCESS PIPELINE, AND THE LONG TRADITION OF INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE* 9–10 (2019) (describing the long continuities of Indigenous movements for self-determination, autonomy, and ecological protection against United States settler colonial violence).

Rather, antiblackness is a foundational, perpetual mandate of domestic war, and it is central to the nation-building protocols of the United States and other modern nation states in and beyond the American hemisphere. The compulsory, paradigmatic, and densely *assumptive* declaration of long historical war on Blackness (Black people, Black geographies, Black cultural and symbolic ecologies, etc.) relies in significant part on the peculiar positionality of what George Frederickson calls “the Black image in the white mind.”²² He writes that, after the 1830s:

[w]idespread, almost universal, agreement existed on the following points:

1. Blacks are physically, intellectually, and temperamentally *different* from whites.
2. Blacks are also *inferior* to whites in at least some of the fundamental qualities wherein the races differ, especially in intelligence and in the temperamental basis of enterprise or initiative.
- ...
6. It follows from the above propositions that a biracial equalitarian (or “integrated”) society is either completely impossible, now and forever, or can be achieved only in some remote and almost inconceivable future. For all practical purposes the destiny of the blacks in America is *either continued subordination—slavery or some form of caste discrimination—or their elimination as an element of the population.*²³

Frederickson, Winthrop Jordan, Audrey Smedley, Denise Ferreira da Silva, Fanon, Wynter, and other scholars of the historical formation of racial meaning have constructed a rigorous and exhaustive account of antiblackness as the foundational conceptual structure on which “race” and the power relations of “racism” are premised.²⁴ While most of this scholarly work does not explicitly utilize the terms of warfare to elaborate the material mobilizations of antiblack discourse, thought, and meaning, the antiblack implications of the civilizational “racial” imaginary are devastatingly expansive and inseparable from the cultural, institutional, and juridical infrastructures of contemporary policing.

²² GEORGE M. FREDERICKSON, *THE BLACK IMAGE IN THE WHITE MIND: THE DEBATE ON AFRO-AMERICAN CHARACTER AND DESTINY, 1817–1914*, at 1 (1971).

²³ *Id.* at 321 (third emphasis added).

²⁴ In addition to previously cited works, see generally DENISE FERREIRA DA SILVA, *TOWARD A GLOBAL IDEA OF RACE* (2007); AUDREY SMEDLEY, *RACE IN NORTH AMERICA: ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION OF A WORLDVIEW* (2d ed. 1999); WINTHROP D. JORDAN, *WHITE OVER BLACK: AMERICAN ATTITUDES TOWARD THE NEGRO, 1550–1812* (2d ed. 1968); FANON, *supra* note 2.

João H. Costa Vargas radically expands the conceptual and practical definition of antiblackness by addressing the pitfalls of contemporary mobilizations of “multiracial coalition.”²⁵ Drawing from an archive of Black movements, communities, and historical figures—most prominently, longtime Los Angeles-based grassroots organizer and former Black Panther, Michael Zinzun—Vargas contends that antiblackness permeates the conceptual, political, and organizational premises of such coalitional forms by subsuming the (abolitionist) destructiveness and creativity of Black liberation to fraudulent promises of radical “anti-racist” inclusivity in civil society. His conceptualization of “oblique identification” identifies the insidious continuities of antiblackness in the political desires and practical agendas of multiracial coalitions, suggesting that their expressions of anti-racism, social justice, Black solidarity, and other progressive-to-radical activist intentions are paradigmatically structured in abstractions and effective disavowals of Black being:

The focus on oblique identification is useful because it explains how nonblacks, when addressing the excesses of the antiblack, violent, and corrupt empire-state, assume and/or suggest a familiarity with Black suffering. . . . [S]uch assumptions of familiarity with Black suffering, and blackness more generally, are integral to the people-of-color concept, a critical component of the multiracial bloc. . . . [T]hese assumptions also serve to disavow the acknowledgment of antiblackness as a foundational, structural, ubiquitous, transhistorical, and present fact.²⁶

Building on the analytical insight of scholars like Frederickson, Vargas, and others, I suggest that domestic war is not only premised on the ontological, epistemic, cultural, and political-economic violence of antiblackness but also on the mobilization of peculiar forms of antiblack *counterinsurgency* that articulate through liberal-to-progressive reformism. This is to argue that police reform is counterinsurgency, and counterinsurgency is primary to the waging of domestic war.

II. COUNTERINSURGENCY CAMPUS,²⁷ PT. 1: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, A CASE STUDY

Collective expressions of opposition to antiblack policing have recently flourished among University of California (“UC”) faculty, employees, and students in organic connection to the 2020 uprisings, including the

²⁵ VARGAS, *supra* note 2, at 250.

²⁶ *Id.* at 241.

²⁷ I borrow the title of this section from the book chapter, “The Counterinsurgent Campus.” NICK MITCHELL, *DISCIPLINARY MATTERS: BLACK STUDIES, WOMEN’S STUDIES, AND THE NEOLIBERAL UNIVERSITY* (Duke Univ. Press, forthcoming 2021) (ms. at 119–63) (on file with author).

abolitionist Cops Off Campus campaign led by the UC systemwide group UCFTP (of which i am an active member); the creation of the Divest/Invest collective at the UCLA campus; the abolitionist organizing of the UC Student Association; and numerous other mobilizations of campus-based groups including labor unions, student organizations, and research centers. These actions have been accompanied by dozens of public statements from departments, university administrators, and police chiefs expressing varieties of concern, outrage, sympathy, and disgust over recent police killings of Black people.²⁸ This climate of crisis has mirrored a broader, intensified national scrutiny of antiblack police violence and “systemic racism” that has yielded a spectrum of responses seeking a reformist restoration of law-and-order, political stability, and respectable policing. In this historical moment, UC provides an accessible context for a real-time case study of institutional reaction to widespread revolts and demonstrations that magnify what i have referred to as “the abolitionist historical imperative.”

For the sake of transparency, i should disclose that i served as the faculty elected Chair of the UC Riverside Division (UCR) of the Academic Senate from September 2016 through August 2020, and i am in my twentieth year as a faculty member at UCR. A central responsibility of the UCR Senate Chair involves regular participation in the deliberation, consultation, and decision-making processes of the statewide UC Academic Council, which includes faculty Senate representatives from all ten UC campuses. This leadership position also requires attendance at numerous meetings each week with administrators from every corner of the Riverside campus, including Deans, the Provost, the Chancellor, and various Vice Provosts and Vice Chancellors. I draw heavily on my learned fluency of the UC administration’s institutional customs, protocols, operational assumptions, and policing methods in the critical reflection that follows.

²⁸ See UC Cops Off Campus, FACEBOOK (Sept. 28, 2020, 2:22 PM), <https://www.facebook.com/UCFTP/> (discussing the concepts, principles, and practical arguments supporting the abolition of police presence at the University of California); Cops Off Campus (@ucftp), TWITTER, <https://twitter.com/ucftp> (last visited May 27, 2021) (detailing the various forms of abolitionist collective action, public education, and mobilization at North American college and university campuses); Cops Off Campus (@ucftp), INSTAGRAM, <https://www.instagram.com/ucftp> (last visited May 27, 2021) (displaying police abolition mobilizations and grassroots forms of abolitionist organizing on and near university and college campuses in California); *Divest/Invest: Organizing the Abolition University*, UCLA LUSKIN INST. ON INEQ. & DEMOCRACY, <https://challengeinequality.luskin.ucla.edu/abolition-repository> (last visited Jan. 15, 2021) (detailing the movement by faculty and students at UCLA to redistribute funding from the UC police department to vital, underfunded or unfunded educational and student needs); Press Release, Varsha Sarveshwar, U.C. Student Ass’n President (June 2, 2020), https://ucsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/UCSA-Statement-Anti-Blackness-Police-Violence-6_2.pdf (explaining the fundamentally antiblack logic that animates the historical practices of University of California police); Thao Nguyen, *Coalition Launches Campaign to Remove Police from UC Campuses*, DAILY CALIFORNIAN (Sept. 6, 2020), <https://www.dailycal.org/2020/09/04/coalition-launches-campaign-to-remove-police-from-uc-campuses> (discussing the emergence of the UC Cops Off Campus movement).

A. *Case 1, Dumb Faith: The Academic Senate's "Recommendations for UC Policing"*

The UC Academic Council, acting as the leadership body of the faculty Senate, generated one of the UC system's earliest expressions of affinity with the 2020 rebellions. After extensive discussion and debate, the Council approved a set of systemwide "Recommendations for UC Policing" and conveyed them to the UC Office of the President in June 2020.²⁹ Widely circulated among UC faculty, the recommendations reflect some of the tensions between conservative/pro-police, reformist, abolitionist, and proto-abolitionist members of the Senate's Academic Council. While there were strong reactions from a few Council colleagues against demands for a comprehensive reassessment of the size, purpose, and very existence of UC police departments ("UCPD")—in fact, a small minority advocated the *expansion* of campus police forces in response to contemporaneous events—the resulting document articulates the historical stakes of the discussion through a framing that resonates abolitionist analyses of policing. From the preamble:

[T]he very foundation of modern American policing is structured in anti-Black repression and criminalization. This legacy remains embedded in mainstream police culture

. . . .

. . . Decades of efforts at police reform, including various forms of "community policing," police advisory and review boards, de-escalation and implicit bias training, body-worn cameras, and federal intervention via consent decrees, have failed to address the underlying legacies of racialized violence that lie at the heart of American policing.

Our campus police agencies are not exempt from these legacies and imperatives.³⁰

Alongside several faculty colleagues, i participated in shaping the Council debate and drafting this missive to the UC President. This was one of the few moments in the history of the UC Academic Senate in which the Council substantially discussed UC's role in producing and sustaining antiblack *police terror* as a paradigmatic condition of the modern public research university's educational and work climate. The Recommendations for UC Policing read as follows:

- 1) Substantially defund general campus police and redistribute those resources to the study and development

²⁹ Letter from Kum-Kum Bhavnani, Chair of the Assembly of the Acad. Senate & Fac. Rep. to the Regents, Univ. of California, to Janet Napolitano, President, Univ. of California (June 29, 2020), https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/_files/reports/kkb-jn-recommendations-uc-policing.pdf.

³⁰ *Id.* at 2.

of alternative modes of campus safety that minimize and/or abolish the reliance on policing and other criminalizing responses.

- 2) Invest in resources that promote mental and physical wellbeing of the campus community, specifically support services for Black students as well as for other marginalized student groups who have been historically targeted by police violence.
- 3) Ban firearms as standard equipment for police on the general campus.
- 4) Dissolve any existing partnership or cooperation agreements with non-UC law enforcement agencies and terminate any agreements to allow non-UC law enforcement agencies access to campus facilities or property.
- 5) Assemble groups at both the campus and systemwide level to discuss these recommendations and how to begin implementing them within a three-year period. In doing so, these groups should prioritize the participation of those who have traditionally experienced violence and mistreatment at the hands of police. Similar steps should also be considered at the health campuses to address the policing issues identified above, recognizing the higher security needs in these environments.³¹

This modest attempt at institutional intervention is characterized by a significant tension between the first and fifth recommendations. The first concisely outlines a proto-abolitionist approach to transforming the university's infrastructure of personal and collective safety, prioritizing the need to create concrete, effective alternatives to UC's cultural and material institutionalization of policing and criminalization. A growing curriculum of resources generated by grassroots organizations, abolitionist scholars, and globally respected activists is readily available to any institutional leaders who take seriously the responsibility to consider notions of "security" and "safety" that prioritize a transformative, rather than triage, approach to some of the primary expressions of antiblackness and asymmetrical endangerment, fear, and trauma in the university setting, including food insecurity, housing insecurity, (mental) health insecurity, and economic insecurity.³² (I will revisit this abolitionist curriculum below).

³¹ *Id.* at 3.

³² Data culled by the University of California Global Food Initiative in its 2017 report revealed that 44% of undergraduate students and 26% of graduate students reported experiencing food insecurity, with 5% of students stating that they experienced homelessness at some point during their enrollment. UNIV.

In contrast, the fifth recommendation is premised on an unspoken faith in the capacity and willingness of the University of California Office of the President (“UCOP”) to “[a]ssemble groups” of campus constituents that are empowered to *implement* a comprehensive plan to minimize/abolish the campus police presence; support Black students and others historically targeted by police violence; immediately disarm UC police; and end cooperative relationships with outside police and sheriff’s departments.³³ As of this writing, UCOP has not responded to the five recommendations, and it has instead continued to endorse a *consultative* process that is structured by an absence of accountability to anything beyond the consultative process in and of itself. This institutional tactic creates a self-reproducing tyranny that materializes in the form of the administrative task force

B. *Case 2, Audit, Wash, and Repeat: The Aftermath of the UCOP Task Force on Universitywide Policing*

Former UC President Janet Napolitano (who left the post in August 2020), the Secretary of Homeland Security under President Barack Obama, exemplified the logic and function of such police reform task forces in her creation of the UC Presidential Task Force on Universitywide Policing in 2018. Charged with examining the police complaint process, use of force policies/training, “post-incident review processes for use of force,” and “other significant events and community engagement,” the task force was chaired by a Senior Vice President and Chief Compliance and Audit Officer.³⁴ A subsequent implementation plan was issued in June 2020, led by the “Systemwide Implementation” co-chairs, the Chief Financial Officer of UC Irvine and the Chief Campus Counsel of UC Merced.³⁵

While it is beyond the intent of this Essay to thoroughly detail the content and outcomes of its full report, it is worth emphasizing that the Presidential Task Force was solely concerned with improving the UCPD’s internal efficiency and restoring its institutional legitimacy in the aftermath of multiple prominent incidents of police violence against students during the 2010s. While Lieutenant John Pike’s pepper spraying of UC Davis students during a nonviolent demonstration in 2011 was the most notorious of such spectacles, examples of the UCPD’s proclivity for physical and

OF CAL. GLOB. FOOD INITIATIVE, GLOBAL FOOD INITIATIVE: FOOD AND HOUSING SECURITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA 5–6 (2017), https://www.ucop.edu/global-food-initiative/_files/food-housing-security.pdf.

³³ Letter from Kum-Kum Bhavnani, *supra* note 29, at 3.

³⁴ RONALD S. CORTEZ & ELISABETH R. GÜNTHER, UNIV. OF CAL. PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE ON UNIVERSITYWIDE POLICING, IMPLEMENTATION REPORT 4 (2020), https://www.ucop.edu/policing-task-force/uptf-final-implementation-report_june-2020.pdf. [hereinafter UC PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE REPORT].

³⁵ *Id.* at 2.

chemical violence against campus and community members abound.³⁶ Yet, of the task force’s twenty-eight recommendations, none alluded to this archive of violence as cause to reconsider the campus policing paradigm. Instead:

- Fifteen recommendations focus on data “transparency” and the rationalization of processes for filing and investigating complaints against the UC police;³⁷
- Seven recommendations address “use of force” protocols and police training for “procedural justice, implicit bias, mental health, de-escalation, cultural sensitivity, sexual orientation[,] and trauma-informed interviewing,” as well as “educational and awareness presentations or classes for students, staff and faculty”;³⁸ and
- Five recommendations outline the need for campus-based “independent advisory boards” alongside measures to improve the UCPD’s “community engagement.”³⁹

The twenty-eighth recommendation is to create the implementation plan itself.⁴⁰ While Napolitano’s task force completed its work in 2019, it seems clear that the variously titled UC “campus safety” task forces created since June 2020 have drawn from her administrative blueprint.

As the UC Regents announced their selection of Michael V. Drake to succeed Napolitano as UC President in July 2020, the mandate for a renewed, public-facing round of police reform seemed clear.⁴¹ Under the authority of Chancellor Cynthia Larive, the UCPD violently repressed the graduate student-led cost of living adjustment (“COLA”) wildcat strike at

³⁶ For examples of such violence, see Dylan Rodríguez, *Beyond “Police Brutality”: Racist State Violence and the University of California*, 64 AM. Q. 301, 303 (2012); Gabe Schneider, *UC Campuses Have Disclosed Virtually No Records Under Police Transparency Law*, VOICE SAN DIEGO (May 12, 2020), <https://www.voiceofsandiego.org/topics/public-safety/uc-campuses-have-disclosed-virtually-no-records-under-police-transparency-law>; Tyler Kingkade, *University of California Campus Police Have History of Excessive Force Against Protesters*, HUFFINGTON POST (Dec. 9, 2011, 7:01 AM), https://www.huffpost.com/entry/california-campus-police-clash-with-protesters-ows_n; Paul D. Thacker, *Shock and Anger at UCLA*, INSIDE HIGHER ED (Nov. 17, 2006), <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2006/11/17/shock-and-anger-ucla>; Lauren Hernández & Sarah Ravani, *Students Protest UC Berkeley Police Arrests They Say Were Racially Motivated*, S.F. CHRON. (Mar. 20, 2019, 7:36 PM), <https://www.sfchronicle.com/crime/article/Students-racially-profiled-brutalized-by-13701947.php>.

³⁷ UC PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE REPORT, *supra* note 34, at 7–13, 44–50.

³⁸ *Id.* at 14–19, 37–43.

³⁹ *Id.* at 20–36.

⁴⁰ *Id.* at 51.

⁴¹ Univ. of California Off. of the President, *Michael V. Drake to Become 21st President of the University of California*, U.C. (July 7, 2020), <https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/press-room/michael-v=drake-become-21st-president-university-california>.

UC Santa Cruz in the early months of 2020.⁴² After the police killing of George Floyd, the Los Angeles Police Department (“LAPD”) prevailed on an agreement with the UCLA administration to convert Jackie Robinson Stadium into a temporary outdoor jail for people arrested during mass demonstrations throughout Los Angeles.⁴³ At the time of the incoming UC President’s appointment, widespread condemnation of UC administrators’ history of sanctioning such state violence seemed to mesh with his poignant account of his own encounters with police harassment:⁴⁴ “It’s been a part of American life for all too long, and it’s something that needs to stop and we need to find better ways of being able to keep our communities safe.”⁴⁵ Widely acclaimed for his impressive academic and administrative credentials, Drake is also the first Black President of the University of California.⁴⁶

During the latter part of 2020, chancellors at individual UC campuses convened various task forces and advisory boards as part of an urgent administrative attempt to navigate the crisis of police legitimacy.⁴⁷ Revealing of the UC administration’s acute anxiety over such criticism is UC Davis Chancellor Gary May’s ambitious naming of his “Next Generation Reforms to Advance Campus Safety” task force.⁴⁸ Without exception, these campus-based task forces have replicated the UCOP script of institutional virtue-signaling via conspicuous declarations to thoroughly review police protocols and policies, while promising to be responsive to the

⁴² *Campaign Timeline*, PAY US MORE UCSC, <https://payusmoreucsc.com/campaign-timeline> (last visited Apr. 4, 2021).

⁴³ Nina Agrawal, ‘Violation of Our Values,’ *UCLA Chancellor Says of LAPD’s Use of Jackie Robinson Stadium*, L.A. TIMES (June 4, 2020, 12:31 PM), <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-06-04/ucla-chancellor-calls-lapd-use-of-jackie-robinson-stadium-to-process-arrests-a-violation>.

⁴⁴ See Lachlan Summers & Kathryn Gougelet, *Whose University? When Police Pass the Baton to Campuses*, SOC’Y FOR ANTHROPOLOGY WORK 2 (Dec. 1, 2020), <https://saw.americananthro.org/pub/w-hose-university-when-police-pass-the-baton-to-campuses/release/1> (discussing the UC administration’s mobilization of massive police force to repress the graduate student cost of living adjustment strike at the University of California, Santa Cruz in early 2020); Agrawal, *supra* note 43 (discussing the UC police department’s cooperation with local police departments to facilitate detention of people participating in mass demonstrations and protests); *Statement on LAPD Using Jackie Robinson Stadium*, UCLA NEWSROOM (June 4, 2020), <https://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/ucla-a-violation-of-our-values> (publishing UCLA Chancellor’s public disavowal of the LAPD’s use of Jackie Robinson Stadium to detain/incarcerate people protesting the police killing of George Floyd).

⁴⁵ Teresa Watanabe, *UC President-Elect Michael V. Drake Knows Firsthand About Harsh Police Tactics*, L.A. TIMES (July 8, 2020, 3:44 PM), <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-07-08/uc-president-elect-michael-v-drake-knows-firsthand-about-harsh-police-tactics>.

⁴⁶ Braktkton Booker, *Michael Drake Will Be the 1st Black President in U.C. System’s 152-Year History*, NPR (July 8, 2020, 1:28 PM), <https://www.npr.org/sections/live-updates-protests-for-racial-justice/2020/07/08/888945992/michael-drake-will-be-the-first-black-president-in-u-c-systems-152-year-history>.

⁴⁷ Angela Davis, Melina Abdullah & Robin DG Kelley, *California Must Lead the Way in Abolishing School and University Campus Police*, SACRAMENTO BEE (Jan. 31, 2021, 9:36 AM), <https://www.sacbee.com/opinion/op-ed/article248636275.html>.

⁴⁸ Letter from Gary S. May, Chancellor, Univ. of California Davis, to Colleagues (June 11, 2020), <https://www.ucdavis.edu/sites/default/files/news/campus-news/2020/jun/charge-letter-20200611.pdf>.

localized, campus-specific concerns of (Black) staff, faculty, students, and surrounding communities.⁴⁹

The task force and advisory board appointees are culled from campus administrators, including UC police chiefs, Provosts, Deans, Vice Chancellors, and campus counsel; students; faculty; staff; alumnx; and affiliated community members. A central operative assumption of these consultative groups is the *guaranteed* existence, public funding, and generalized institutional futurity of the UCPD—a rare luxury of entitlement for any non-academic campus unit in the face of COVID-19 pandemic-induced budget austerity.⁵⁰ Indicative of the relative invulnerability of UC policing to budgetary contingencies is a table from the UC President’s July 2020 report to the UC Regents, which indicates a projected *increase* in UCPD funding for the 2020–2021 fiscal year:⁵¹

Table 2: UC Police Department Budget

Campus by Campus Brief Summary Table: Police Department Budget

	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21 (projected)
UC Berkeley*	\$13,872,000	\$15,741,000	\$15,793,000
UC Davis	\$11,979,000	\$13,393,000	\$15,121,000
UC Irvine	\$15,200,825	\$17,640,793	<i>In progress</i>
UC Los Angeles	\$21,094,516	\$21,663,372	\$22,182,739
UC Merced	\$4,353,804	\$4,638,542	\$4,852,023
UC Riverside	\$7,971,153	\$8,325,720	\$8,690,839
UC Santa Barbara	\$9,241,303	\$9,641,701	<i>In progress</i>
UC Santa Cruz	\$6,171,219	\$6,965,349	\$6,965,349
UC San Diego	\$14,875,000	\$14,044,000	\$13,921,000
UC San Francisco	\$22,100,000	\$24,100,000	\$25,100,000

To the extent that campus safety task forces help sustain the institutional legitimacy, cultural normalization, and everyday presence of police power (violence/terror) in the university, the projected increase to the UCPD budget is but one empirical reflection of an insidious tyranny.

Co-workers, students, and surrounding publics form the assumptive audience of campus-based consent to such task forces’ expedited

⁴⁹ Davis, Abdullah & Kelley, *supra* note 47.

⁵⁰ See, e.g., Dan Fost, *UCSF Task Force Recommends Holistic Approach to Creating a Safe Campus Environment*, U. CAL. S.F.: CAMPUS NEWS (Nov. 13, 2020), <https://www.ucsf.edu/news/2020/11/419026/ucsf-task-force-recommends-holistic-approach-creating-safe-campus-environment> (exemplifying the insulation of campus police from discussion of substantial budget cuts or elimination); UNIV. CAL. IRVINE: PUB. SAFETY ADVISORY COMM., <https://psac.uci.edu> (last visited Apr. 3, 2020) (demonstrating the presumption of fully funded police force as the premise of campus public safety protocols); Letter from Gary S. May to Colleagues, *supra* note 48 (exemplifying how university administrators seek to defend the legitimacy and robust institutional presence of campus police by advocating piecemeal reforms, trainings, and public-facing town halls).

⁵¹ UNIV. OF CAL. OFF. OF THE PRESIDENT, REPORT TO MEMBERS OF THE COMPLIANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY SAFETY 6 tbl.2 (July 29, 2020), <https://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/regmeet/july20/c6.pdf>.

assessment, re-legitimization, and piecemeal reform of campus-based policing. These presumed constituencies can and must be understood as actual and potential *subjects of abolitionist insurgency* whose capacity for collective mobilization, strategic disorder (protest, labor and scholar strikes, solidarity actions, etc.), and shared critical analysis poses a danger to the university administration's conception of "campus security"—that is, localized law-and-order.

C. *Case 3, Tyranny of the Task Force: UC Riverside (2020–2021)*

Upon forming the UC Riverside Campus Safety Task Force in September 2020, Chancellor Kim A. Wilcox described its purpose as a "review [of] our overall campus safety efforts, focusing primarily on operation of the UCR Police Department and its relationship to other entities on campus and throughout the community."⁵² While it was offered wide latitude "to prioritize topics that they believe to be more important," Wilcox took special pains to address what he considered to be the limits of the Task Force's charge:

I am not asking the Task Force to opine on the issue of whether we should maintain a police force. *We are better served as a community by having our own police force, which reflects our values and reports to the campus.* Without our own police, we would fall under the jurisdiction of the Riverside Police Department and the Riverside County Sheriff. In addition to losing direct oversight and accountability to our campus, reliance on an outside police force would likely increase response times in emergency situations. Additionally, response by those with less knowledge of our campus, facilities, and operations would likely impact effectiveness.⁵³

A close reading of two aspects of Wilcox's qualifying statement is requisite to the task of fully comprehending the assumptive premises of the UCR Task Force's convening.

First, while it is a common rhetorical convention for elected officials, police chiefs, and other institutional executives and administrators to invoke a universalized notion of "our values" in the course of rationalizing their decision-making processes, such pronouncements avert sober consideration of the ethical premises of the university. What if "our values," read as the institutionally enforced priorities of the university, effectively (though tacitly) *encompass* systemic, discursive, normalized antiblackness and antiblack policing at the very same time they fetishize notions of Black

⁵² Kim A. Wilcox, *Campus Safety Task Force Announcement*, INSIDE UCR (Sept. 14, 2020), <https://insideucr.ucr.edu/announcements/2020/09/14/campus-safety-task-force-announcement>.

⁵³ *Id.* (emphasis added).

student “success” and graduation rates?⁵⁴ Posed another way: How does the policing of Black people, Black presence, and Black (intellectual, cultural, and social) life form the historical conditions of possibility for “our values,” which, in turn, cohere institutional notions of “diversity, inclusion, and equity (DEI),” including—and especially—when they are applied to the work of university policing task forces?

Second, Wilcox’s preemptive dismissal of police abolition as exposing the campus to the jurisdiction of the city police and county sheriff is a red herring due to the longstanding police policy of “concurrent jurisdiction.” The UC’s Universitywide Police Policies and Administrative Procedures define the arrangement as follows:

CONCURRENT JURISDICTION

202. Jurisdiction is shared with local law enforcement agencies. The county sheriff’s department has concurrent jurisdiction on all campuses and upon all properties owned or controlled by the University located within the county. If the campus or property is located within a municipality, the city police department has concurrent jurisdiction.⁵⁵

Put simply, city and county police forces *already* have shared authority with the UC Riverside Police Department on campus and campus-owned property.⁵⁶ Concurrent jurisdiction is a common arrangement for university and college campuses that house their own police forces.⁵⁷ Under concurrent jurisdiction, a campus administration usually creates a mutually recognized agreement (memorandum of understanding) with city police and county sheriff’s departments that allows the university/college police to operate

⁵⁴ See, e.g., Teresa Watanabe, *African American Students Thrive with High Graduation Rates at UC Riverside*, L.A. TIMES (June 23, 2017, 4:00 AM), <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-uc-riverside-black-students-20170623-htlmlstory.html> (providing examples of how university administrations opportunistically narrate Black undergraduate graduate rate data as evidence of the institution’s overarching success in achieving diversity, equity, and inclusion objectives).

⁵⁵ UNIV. OF CAL., UNIVERSITYWIDE POLICE POLICIES AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES para. 202 (2011), <https://policy.ucop.edu/doc/4000382/PoliceProceduresManual>.

⁵⁶ Univ. of Cal. Riverside, *Campus Policy Number: 850-40*, UCR POL’YS & PROCS. (2009), <https://fboapps.ucr.edu/policies/index.php?path=viewPolicies.php&policy=850-40>.

⁵⁷ For examples of concurrent jurisdiction at university police departments, see UNIV. OF BALT., POLICE POL’YS § 2.412.02(A) (2011), <http://www.ubalt.edu/about-ub/offices-and-services/university-police/police-policies-community-service-complaints/concurrent-jurisdiction.cfm>; UNIV. OF TEX. SYS., UTS 160 JURISDICTION OF COMMISSIONED PEACE OFFICERS Sec. 6 (2018), <https://www.utsystem.edu/sites/policy-library/policies/uts-160-jurisdiction-commissioned-peace-officers; Authority and Jurisdiction, SMU POLICE DEP’T, https://www.smu.edu/BusinessFinance/Police/About/Authority-and-Jurisdiction> (last visited Apr. 4, 2021); Aaron Davis, *University of Maryland Police Expands Its Concurrent Jurisdiction*, UNIV. OF MD. POLICE DEPT. (Sept. 16, 2013, 2:36 PM), <https://umpdnews.umd.edu/node/122>.

with relative autonomy on campus grounds⁵⁸ (or, in the UCPD's case, "within one mile of the [campus's] exterior boundaries"⁵⁹).

Importantly, there is no inherent prohibition against the possibility of a university negotiating concurrent jurisdiction with external police departments *in the absence of a campus police force*, provided alternative (abolitionist) forms of security and safety are instituted in place of the campus police force. Such alternatives might include:

- mutually beneficial safety-focused partnerships with grassroots community groups and organizations, including religious, social, educational, addiction rehabilitation, and service-oriented groups;
- externally administered, and institutionally binding, transformative justice processes;
- organized free public access to otherwise privatized and inaccessible university resources, including classes, libraries, performance spaces, and computer labs;
- radically expanded free and/or progressively subsidized health services made available on or near campus;
- university-supported food and housing security resources, including emergency housing, accessible campus and campus-supported farming, and healthy food pantries;
- feminist/queer/trans focused self-defense training, inclusive of collective, proactive forms of protection against gender and sexual violence;
- robust mutual aid efforts with adjoining communities of displaced, criminalized, and economically vulnerable people; and
- rigorous martial arts, crisis management, trauma and defensive training for non-police, campus-based emergency/first responders

Examples of such abolitionist and proto-abolitionist community safety infrastructures are easily studied, economically feasible, and could be reshaped and adapted to the geographies of specific campuses. Ujima Medics, Dream Defenders, Critical Resistance, All of Us or None, Survived & Punished, The Red Nation, Project NIA, Big Door Brigade, Reclaim the Block, and numerous other organizations enact abolitionist, feminist, queer,

⁵⁸ For an example of one such memorandum of understanding, see *Memorandum of Understanding with the Glendora Police Department*, CITRUS COLL., <https://www.citruscollege.edu/campussafety/Pages/MOU.aspx> (last visited Apr. 4, 2021).

⁵⁹ UNIV. OF CAL., *supra* note 55, at para. 201.1.

trans, disability-centered, Black liberation, Indigenous self-determination, and community caretaking practices that create transformative conditions of everyday life in radical opposition to (and effective replacement of) police power.⁶⁰ Crucially, such practices demonstrate the capacity to foster decriminalizing, non-oppressive, anti-violent, and radically respectful relations premised on abolitionist principles anchored in a dynamic, changing Black Radical Tradition.⁶¹

The spectacle of the UCR Task Force’s one hour virtual “town hall,” held on November 12, 2020, evidenced the administrative leadership’s lack of preparation, research, and seriousness in grasping its topic, despite the fact that, according to Associate Chancellor Christine Victorino, the Task Force was provided a “shared drive with scholarly work in the area of [sic] police abolitionism and racial profiling.”⁶² This hour-long online interaction with the campus community provided ample reason to conclude that the Task Force’s primary purpose—in resonance with the Chancellor’s protective pro-UCPD dictate—is to support and defend the existence of the campus police while making non-binding, consultative suggestions for modest revision of some of its internal and public-facing practices.⁶³ While the Chair of the Task Force (a local attorney and UCR alumnus), upon being inundated with critical questions and challenges from abolitionist students and faculty (including me), assured the hundred or so audience members that the group was “open” to considering abolitionist alternatives to the UCRPD, the prominent (and periodically defensive) presence of UCR Police Chief John Freese undermined the Chair’s generous claim.⁶⁴

In response to Freese’s description of the “diversity” of the UCRPD (“We have twenty-two male officers, three female, one Asian [sic] officer,

⁶⁰ For general information regarding these organizations, see *About Us*, UJIMAA MEDICS, *supra* note 10; *Ideology*, DREAM DEFENDERS, <https://dreamdefenders.org/ideology> (last visited Jan. 11, 2021); *What is the PIC? What is Abolition?*, CRITICAL RESISTANCE, <http://criticalresistance.org/about/not-so-common-language> (last visited Jan. 11, 2021); *All of Us or None*, LEGAL SERVS. FOR PRISONERS WITH CHILD., <https://prisonerswithchildren.org/about-aouon> (last visited Jan. 11, 2021); *About S&P*, SURVIVED & PUNISHED, <https://survivedandpunished.org/about> (last visited Jan. 11, 2021); *About*, RED NATION, <http://therednation.org/about> (last visited Jan. 11, 2021); *About Us*, PROJECT NIA, <https://project-nia.org/mission-history> (last visited Jan. 11, 2021); *About Big Door Brigade*, BIG DOOR BRIGADE, <https://bigdoorbrigade.com/about> (last visited Jan. 11, 2021); *About Reclaim the Block*, RECLAIM THE BLOCK, <https://www.reclaimtheblock.org/home/#about> (last visited Jan. 11, 2021).

⁶¹ See Robin D. G. Kelley, *Foreword* to ROBINSON, *supra* note 5, at xxv (discussing the suppleness and lasting significance of what Cedric Robinson defines as the Black Radical Tradition); FUTURES OF BLACK RADICALISM 10, 12–13 (Gaye Theresa Johnson & Alex Lubin eds., 2017) (detailing recent and developing Black futurities, movements, and knowledge production based on the long genealogies of Black radicalism, including abolition).

⁶² Task Force on Campus Safety, *Nov. 12 Town Hall Recording*, UNIV. OF CAL. RIVERSIDE OFF. OF THE CHANCELLOR, at 24:21 (Nov. 12, 2020), <https://chancellor.ucr.edu/task-force-campus-safety> (recording and meeting minutes may be accessed through the website). Full transparency: this shared drive apparently includes at least one of my published scholarly articles on policing and police violence in the UC system.

⁶³ *Id.*

⁶⁴ *Id.* at 50:16.

two Black officers, seven Hispanic [sic] officers, and fifteen white officers”),⁶⁵ i posed a written question to the panel: “Is the Task Force aware that increased diversity of police personnel does not lead to less racist, less sexist, less transphobic, less antiblack police practices?”⁶⁶ The Police Chief’s rambling response to this rudimentary question incited a lack of confidence in the Task Force’s credibility and analytical rigor, given Freese’s central role in its deliberations:

We—like all police departments—we hire from the human race, and it doesn’t matter what color our police officers are. Police officers, just like any human beings, can have, um, feelings and things that are a part of their lives and that they act on, sometimes subconsciously. And as the leader of this department, I’ve always had a clear stance that we do not stand for any kind of prejudiced behavior from our officers [T]he best way I can answer that question is that we do the best with hiring from the human race. I acknowledge that it doesn’t matter what color or the makeup of our police department or any police department, you’re, you’re uh, you’re dealing with human beings.⁶⁷

The public “chat” component of the town hall was flooded with critical commentary regarding the Task Force’s seemingly contradictory statements of purpose, as well as questions regarding the UCR administration’s competence in comprehending (not to mention addressing) the intertwined matters of policing, antiblackness, and abolitionist approaches to “campus safety.” Especially revealing is a passage from the minutes of the Task Force meeting held immediately after the Town Hall: “[UCR Police Chief] John Freese raised his concern about a recommendation for abolishing the police force; [Associate Chancellor] Christine Victorino suggested focusing on developing justified, well-founded, and implementable recommendations.”⁶⁸

While the Town Hall was nothing short of an administrative shitshow, the Task Force continued its work unabated, spurred by a January 2021 deadline to submit “recommendations” to the Chancellor. Serious questions about the Task Force’s credibility persisted, due in part to administrative incompetence in the appointment of its members. At least two Black student appointees were not initially asked for their consent to be part of the Task Force, and one was no longer enrolled at the university at the time of their

⁶⁵ *Id.* at 11:45.

⁶⁶ *Id.* at 31:41.

⁶⁷ *Id.* at 32:07.

⁶⁸ Task Force on Campus Safety, *Minutes*, UNIV. OF CAL. RIVERSIDE OFF. OF THE CHANCELLOR (Nov. 12, 2020), <https://chancellor.ucr.edu/sites/g/files/rcwecm761/files/2020-12/CSTFMeetingMinutes11220.pdf> [hereinafter Task Force on Campus Safety, *Minutes* (Nov. 12)].

appointment (their name is still listed as a Task Force member as of this writing in early January 2021).

A casual glance at the Task Force's meeting agendas and minutes betrays an ideological and procedural commitment to police power that is unmoved by a precious few members' earnest attempts to generate discussions of defunding/redistributing the police budget and the need for institutional measures that could fractionally reduce the police presence. The agenda for its December 10, 2020 meeting was entirely devoted to a presentation and discussion with the University of Oregon Chief of Police, although members were encouraged to watch a "restorative justice presentation" on their own time.⁶⁹ Other meeting agendas covered a variety of piecemeal proposals and assessments, including discussions of police uniforms; an informational overview of the UCR Police Department; ideas for increasing UCRPD interaction with students and the campus community via annual town halls; "meet and greets;" weekly office hours; a proposal for a "UCPD statement on social justice and/or systemic racism;" a UCPD recommendation to create a "community panel" interview for new officer recruitments and internal promotions; and a (perhaps inevitable) proposal to create a police oversight committee.⁷⁰

Yet, it seems clear that questions of credibility and competence have little to do with the Task Force's most important purpose: *to simply exist* for a finite period. To be fair, the UCR example is utterly typical of administrative efforts to domesticate, incorporate, and/or dissipate abolitionist and proto-abolitionist critique and movement against policing and antiblackness. I therefore offer this case study as a symptomatic, rather than provincialized, one. My modest hope is that this grounded critical analysis of one instance will encourage some readers to identify and intervene on similar and analogous forms of counterinsurgency in their own institutions and communities.

⁶⁹ Task Force on Campus Safety, Agenda, UNIV. OF CAL. RIVERSIDE OFF. OF THE CHANCELLOR (Dec. 10, 2020), <https://chancellor.ucr.edu/sites/g/files/rcwecm761/files/2020-12/CSTFAgenda12102020.pdf>.

⁷⁰ Task Force on Campus Safety, Agenda, UNIV. OF CAL. RIVERSIDE OFF. OF THE CHANCELLOR (Oct. 14, 2020), https://chancellor.ucr.edu/sites/g/files/rcwecm761/files/2020-10/Campus_Safety_Task_Force%20Agenda_10-14-2020.pdf; Task Force on Campus Safety, Minutes, UNIV. OF CAL. RIVERSIDE OFF. OF THE CHANCELLOR (Oct. 29, 2020), <https://chancellor.ucr.edu/sites/g/files/rcwecm761/files/2020-11/CSTFMeeting%20Minutes102920.pdf>; Task Force on Campus Safety, Agenda, UNIV. OF CAL. RIVERSIDE OFF. OF THE CHANCELLOR (Nov. 25, 2020), <https://chancellor.ucr.edu/sites/g/files/rcwecm761/files/2020-11/CSTFAgenda11252020.pdf>; Task Force on Campus Safety, Agenda, UNIV. OF CAL. RIVERSIDE OFF. OF THE CHANCELLOR (Dec. 10, 2020), <https://chancellor.ucr.edu/sites/g/files/rcwecm761/files/2020-12/CSTFAgenda12102020.pdf>.

II. COUNTERINSURGENCY CAMPUS, PT. 2: “TO ENCOURAGE GROWTH OF A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT”

Counterinsurgency often takes the form of responsive, sympathetic, mediating, or otherwise friendly gestures to actual and potential communities of “insurgents.” In fact, the curricular framework of the U.S. Army’s *Counterinsurgency* field manual is significantly oriented around the rhetoric, propaganda, and public-facing ceremonies of ostensible societal reform. While the bulk of *Counterinsurgency* explicates military strategies, tactics, protocols, and (leadership) training for neutralizing resistance to U.S. occupation and “integrating civilian and military activities”⁷¹ (Chapter Two), it also considers the need to create a (no less militarized) bureaucratic pedagogical capacity that adapts to changing conditions of potential political and cultural instability. A section from the field manual titled “The Learning Imperative” contextualizes the analysis that i am developing in this section:

Army and Marine Corps leaders need to visualize the operational and informational impact of many tactical actions and relate their operations to larger strategic purposes. . . . *Open channels of discussion and debate are needed to encourage growth of a learning environment* in which experience is rapidly shared and lessons adapted for new challenges. The speed with which leaders adapt the organization must outpace insurgents’ efforts to identify and exploit weaknesses or develop countermeasures.⁷²

If ongoing and emerging movements for police and carceral abolition are (or suggest potential for) a viable formation of domestic or campus-based insurgency, it should be expected that a full mobilization toward a counterinsurgent “learning environment” will rely on a combination of state and extra-state strategies that galvanize a wave of police reform messaging via elected officials, philanthropic foundations and nonprofit organizations, schooling and educational institutions, corporations, industrialized professional sports, and religious leaders, among others.

The public university—and UC, in particular—is a historically significant site of such forms of counterinsurgency, not only because UC serves as an infrastructure for research and teaching agendas that support (and define) the cultural, juridical, social scientific, and technological formations of modern domestic and global policing/warfare, but also because it *actively uses police power on its employees, students, and visitors in its daily operations* through electronic and video surveillance, plainclothes observation of demonstrations and political events, detention and arrest of suspected unauthorized campus visitors, militarized responses

⁷¹ COUNTERINSURGENCY, *supra* note 15, at i.

⁷² *Id.* para. 7-46 (emphasis added).

to protest mobilizations, and an armed patrolling presence (etc.).⁷³ Alison Howell's notion of "martial politics" clarifies how "certain forms of warfare are produced by, and produce, academic disciplines," arguing that "academic disciplines, or indeed the university as a whole . . . are not innocent domains sullied by military values. Rather . . . their form and function are embedded in how they emerge out of and simultaneously shape warfare."⁷⁴

A rudimentary inventory of the UCPD's jurisdictional power affirms Howell's analysis of the university as a constitutive site of (domestic) war. Far from being a junior corollary of city police, county sheriffs, or the highway patrol, the UCPD, established in 1947, has statewide authority in California; its officers are charged with exercising their "power[] [and] authority . . . (a) upon the campuses of the University of California and an area within one mile of the exterior boundaries of each thereof, [and] (b) in or about other grounds or properties owned, operated, controlled or administered by the Regents of the University of California"⁷⁵

The public ritual of the police reform task force reproduces the legitimacy of this police presence by inviting criticism of its excess, dysfunction, mismanagement, corruption, antiblackness, racism, misogyny, queer phobia, transphobia, ableism, and white supremacy (etc.). Such task forces are *a production and performance of police power* and are thus constitutive of, rather than external to, it; their deliberations (including task force reports, white papers, and recommendations) extend the technology of policing to incorporate the ceremonial participation of critics, individualized and communal targets of police terror, and survivors of acute (and homicidal) police violence. These processes tend to not only incorporate the direct participation of police, but also extend the reach of domestic counterinsurgency as a defense of the fundamental legitimacy of police power (violence) and police militarization (domestic war). This counterinsurgency serves to protract and reproduce antiblack state violence at the very same time that it solicits indignant outrage against it. Yet, the omnipresence of police reform task forces at university and college

⁷³ See generally Alison Howell, *Forget "Militarization": Race, Disability and the "Martial Politics" of the Police and the University*, 20 INT'L FEMINIST J. POL. 117 (2018) (discussing the constitution of academic disciplines by police/martial power, and vice versa); DIANE C. BORDNER & DAVID M. PETERSEN, *CAMPUS POLICING: THE NATURE OF UNIVERSITY POLICE WORK* (1983) (discussing the 20th century origins of campus police departments); STUART SCHRADER, *BADGES WITHOUT BORDERS: HOW GLOBAL COUNTERINSURGENCY TRANSFORMED AMERICAN POLICING* (2019) (explaining the shifts and expansions of contemporary United States policing through the influence of military counterinsurgency concepts and strategies); MARK NEOCLEOUS, *THE FABRICATION OF SOCIAL ORDER: A CRITICAL THEORY OF POLICE POWER* (2000) (discussing the conceptualization of modern social formations as expressions of police power); John J. Sloan, *The Modern Campus Police: An Analysis of their Evolution, Structure, and Function*, 11 AM. J. POLICE 85 (1992) (explaining the systemic concepts that form the institutional foundations of campus police).

⁷⁴ Howell, *supra* note 73, at 127, 129.

⁷⁵ CAL. EDUC. CODE § 92600 (West 2020).

campuses also occasions an overdue reflection on the *continuities* of policing and police power beyond “the police.”

A. *The Chief and the Chancellor: Administration as Police*

According to the *Universitywide Police Policies and Administrative Procedures*, the Chiefs of Police at each University of California campus exist “[u]nder the general administrative direction of the Vice Chancellor or administrator responsible for police.”⁷⁶ Put simply, the UC police “Chain of Command” continues, unbroken, to the very top of the campus administration, as “[r]esponsibility for security and law enforcement at each campus is assigned to the Chancellors who are responsible for campus organization, operation, internal administration and discipline.”⁷⁷

The implication of this administrative power mapping is clear: *there is no distinction* between “the university administration” and “the police.” That is, the Chancellors (via designated Vice Chancellors) are effectively the *chiefs of the Chiefs of Police*.

The university administrators are not only directly engaged in the labor, strategies, and tactics of policing, but are also the direct supervisors of their police departments. This bureaucratic relation of power institutes an everyday administrative climate of *police collegiality* that blurs the distinction between officers with badges, batons, chemical spray, and guns and highly paid bureaucrats responsible for establishing campus police policies, hiring/firing officers (including Chiefs of Police), and dictating the terms and mandates of police mobilizations, from passive surveillance of campus activities to active suppression of protests, labor strikes, and demonstrations.

In a practical sense, this means that, while UC police policies and “orders” are formally issued by the Chiefs of Police, they are beholden to a reporting relationship with their respective Chancellors and are structurally subservient to the will of the administration. There is no “firewall” of authority between the Chief of Police and the Chancellor. To the contrary, the Chief of Police is the direct subordinate of the Chancellor and has no autonomy other than that which is collegially conferred by the administration.

The institutionalization of police collegiality permeates the administrative-policing continuum beyond the university’s bureaucratic

⁷⁶ UNIV. OF CAL., *supra* note 55, sec. 303.1. The full text of the description reads:

303.1 Chief of Police. Under the general administrative direction of the Vice Chancellor or administrator responsible for police, the Chief of Police shall be responsible for and has commensurate authority to command, direct, and organize a police department on a University of California campus. This includes establishing objectives for the department; developing department policies and procedures; preparing the budget; and selecting, appointing, training, disciplining, and promoting officers and employees in the department.

Id.

⁷⁷ *Id.* at Introduction.

hierarchy. By fusing police power to the administrative functions of an educational/research institution, the university creates an edifice of knowledge, rationality, civility, and institutional mores (per Wilcox’s invocation of “our values”⁷⁸) that preemptively locates abolitionist analysis, research, and planning outside the pale of acceptable discourse. Hence, the Police Chiefs and their administrative supervisors are afforded the latitude to reject arguments against campus police presence on *epistemological and moral* grounds, as well as pragmatic ones; the university—despite its alleged historical commitment to daring experimentation, institutional innovation, community engagement, and intellectual leadership—cannot imagine itself outside or in the absence of police power. As a counterinsurgent “learning environment,” the campus organizes technologies of policing that constitute university-sanctioned forms of student organization (including student affairs, student conduct, and student government) while establishing disciplinary (criminalizing) parameters around autonomous forms of student community and mobilization, including mass gatherings, mutual aid (housing and food redistribution), and off-campus political and cultural activities.⁷⁹

Thus: the university administration is police power, and the university police are the direct expression of administrative power.

CONCLUSION: DEFINITION AND DEPARTURE: REFORM, REFORMISM, AND THE ABOLITIONIST IMPERATIVE⁸⁰

I have attempted to demonstrate how the “task force” has become a primary technology through which counterinsurgency attempts to “outpace insurgents’ efforts” to convey and popularize the incisive analysis and praxis of abolition. Far from being taken for granted, the incessant protocols of reform, alongside the counterinsurgent ideology of reformism, require clear analytical definition if they are to be substantively demystified and productively immolated by abolitionist labors of social creativity and community building.

Reform is a logic of institutional change that alters specific operational aspects of existing social, economic, state, and/or legal systems while allowing those systems to remain intact. Rather than directly challenging the legitimacy, logic, or material existence of a system, reform focuses on

⁷⁸ See discussion *supra* Section II.C.

⁷⁹ See generally Abigail Boggs, Eli Meyerhoff, Nick Mitchell & Zach Schwartz-Weinstein, *Abolitionist University Studies: An Invitation*, ABOLITION J. (Aug. 28, 2019), <https://abolitionjournal.org/abolitionist-university-studies-an-invitation> (raising a call to convene and curate an abolitionist conceptualization of collective presence in and against the contemporary university’s constituting logics of carceral power, colonial dominance, antiblack violence, and policing); MITCHELL, *supra* note 27, at 119–63 (discussing the logics, mobilizations, and protocols of counterinsurgency that structure administrative policies and systems in modern universities).

⁸⁰ Portions of this Conclusion are adapted from Dylan Rodríguez, *Reformism Isn’t Liberation, It’s Counterinsurgency*, LEVEL (Oct. 20, 2020), <https://level.medium.com/reformism-isnt-liberation-it-s-counterinsurgency-7ea0a1ce11eb>.

identifying and changing its policies, practices, personnel, discursive/cultural structures (institutional rhetoric, symbols, etc.), and other systemic operations. Reform is often undertaken to address and deescalate historical crises that threaten systems with collapse, implosion, and/or external destruction. Processes of reform frequently rest on the ethical belief and/or ideological assumption that such systems can be altered so they will stop producing asymmetrical misery, suffering, premature death, and violent life conditions for targeted people and places.

Reformism—the ideological and political position that naturalizes reform as the primary, if not compulsory, method of social change—often plays a central role in the pedagogical technologies of counterinsurgency, including police reform task forces. Reformism disavows, caricatures, and even criminalizes abolitionist efforts to transform existing relations of power/violence, especially when such praxis confronts the logics of asymmetrical domestic war. Often relying on dogmatic and compulsory mandates of “nonviolence,” incrementalism, and loyalty to legitimate/respectable police power as the preconditions for confronting systems of asymmetrical violence, reformism restricts the horizons of political possibility to those which are understood to be achievable within the limits of existing institutional structures and imaginaries (e.g., Associate Chancellor Victorino’s previously cited directive to the UCR Task Force to offer “justified, well-founded, and implementable recommendations”⁸¹). Reformism effectively defends and reproduces social, political, and economic orders by modifying isolated aspects of their operation, while suggesting that the long historical asymmetries of violence, suffering, preventable illness, and collective casualties produced by domestic war, antiblack policing, and counterinsurgency are the unfortunate consequences of *fixable* “inequities,” “disparities,” “(unconscious) biases,” corruptions, and/or inefficiencies. In this sense, reformism presumes that equality/justice/equity/parity are achievable—or even desirable—within existing systems. It also implicitly requires that those targeted for misery, displacement, and premature death under an existing social order must tolerate continued suffering while awaiting the reformist “fix.”

Under the conditions of antiblack policing and asymmetrical domestic war, “reform” is, at best, a form of casualty management, and “reformism” is counterinsurgency against those who undertake abolitionist projects of community, collective power, and futurity. Abolition, in this sense, offers a thriving, urgent, creative rebuttal to the bad faith incrementalism of the reformist position.

Abolition is not an outcome. Rather, it is an everyday practice, a method of teaching, creating, thinking, and doing that exposes the pitfalls of the reformist fraud and radically refutes the pedagogies of counterinsurgency. It

⁸¹ See *supra* note 68 and accompanying text.

is to move within, and in accountability to, a dynamic Black radical and revolutionary tradition that guides collective labors of freedom, structures notions of justice and collective self-defense, and emboldens a political and ethical obligation to fight unapologetically in whatever ways are available, effective, and historically accountable. To avoid this obligation is to surrender to the tyranny of the task force and concede to the perpetuity of police power in and beyond the relatively privileged geography of the university.

POSTSCRIPT (JUNE 2021)

The UC Riverside Campus Safety Task Force published the final version of its “Report and Recommendations” on March 18, 2021, after a mere three months of deliberation.⁸² UCR Chancellor Kim Wilcox circulated a campus memo four days later that declared his unqualified endorsement of the Task Force document, claiming that “[f]or many years, we have been striving at UC Riverside to redefine campus safety in a way that addresses the needs of our diverse community.”⁸³

While the UCR Task Force Report acknowledges that “[s]ystemic racism exists in U.S. society and in policing, and must be eliminated wherever possible,” its nine recommendations fail to challenge the fundamental centrality of police power to the university’s infrastructure and everyday operations. At first glance, the Task Force appears to advocate a modest downscaling of the UCRPD’s campus presence. Upon further analysis, however, its proposals cultivate an expansion of police power through the deputization of campus staff and administrators to act as civilian surrogates of the police department. Perhaps most revealingly, campus employees in specific units (including Student Affairs, Human Resources, and the Title IX office) are expected “to pair and cross-train [with] public safety personnel [e.g., UCRPD officers].”⁸⁴ The Report does not bother to elaborate on the substance of such “pairing and cross-training” other than to indicate that select staff and administrators will be expected to build collegial relationships with the UCRPD that, by extension, further legitimize and extend the reach of campus police power by institutionalizing what amounts to a civilian/employee shadow police force.

The paradigm of “campus safety” operationalized by the Task Force Report fails to even remotely heed the widespread, growing body of both university-based and community-accountable research, organizational innovation, and institutional leadership exemplified by students, faculty,

⁸² UNIV. OF CAL RIVERSIDE CAMPUS SAFETY TASK FORCE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS (2021), <https://chancellor.ucr.edu/sites/g/files/rcwecm761/files/2021-03/CSTF%20report%20final%203.18.21.pdf> (last visited June 1, 2021).

⁸³ Letter from Kim Wilcox, Univ. of California Riverside Chancellor, to Campus (Mar. 22, 2021), <https://insideucr.ucr.edu/announcements/2021/03/22/campus-safety-task-force-and-next-steps>.

⁸⁴ UNIV. OF CAL RIVERSIDE CAMPUS SAFETY TASK FORCE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS, *supra* note 82, at para. 1B.

staff, administrators, and concerned community members (including survivors of police harassment and violence) at educational institutions like Peralta Community College District and Oakland Unified School District, both of which have effectively eliminated police presence at their college and school campuses.⁸⁵ Rather, by appropriating and distorting a pedagogical framework widely used by abolitionist researchers, activists, organizers, and teachers for much of the early 21st century—“Re-imagining Campus Safety”—the UCR Task Force offers a series of recommendations that allege to take steps “toward narrowing the role of traditional law enforcement” by “integrat[ing] UCR’s Police Department into a more comprehensive Campus Safety Division.”⁸⁶ The history of modern police reforms indicates that such proposals expand the bureaucratic, ideological, cultural, and institutional capacity of policing and police violence in their various forms, from surveillance and harassment to crowd control, involuntary hospitalization, and bodily (sexual) assault. Regrettably, the Task Force Report proposes a reorganization and redistribution of police power that rests on an “[integration of] campus safety activities, including prevention and response, more deliberately with existing campus-based programs that address issues such as mental health, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and drug or alcohol abuse.”⁸⁷

Such reforms of campus police power replicate the widely criticized models of “community policing” attributed to well-known late-20th and early-21st century police administrators like Daryl Gates, William Bratton, and numerous others who have implemented scaled-up versions of similar policing protocols in Los Angeles, New York City, and numerous other locales known for rampant, normalized, gendered antiblack police violence.⁸⁸ To invoke David Correia and Tyler Wall’s entry on “community policing” in their indispensable keyword text *Police: A Field Guide*, “[a]dvocates for community policing claim that it offers a suite of best

⁸⁵ *Peralta District to Hire Three New Community-based Security Services*, PERALTA GEMS, <https://gems.peralta.edu/peralta-community-college-district-to-hire-three-new-community-based-security-services-to-replace-alameda-county-sheriffs-on-campus> (last visited May 31, 2021); Angela Ruggiero, *Oakland School District to Eliminate its Police Force*, MERCURY NEWS (June 24, 2020), <https://www.mercurynews.com/2020/06/24/oakland-board-agrees-to-eliminate-its-police-force-at-school-campuses/>.

⁸⁶ UNIV. OF CAL RIVERSIDE CAMPUS SAFETY TASK FORCE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS, *supra* note 82, at para. 1A. On the abolitionist conceptualization of “reimagining safety,” see KATE JAMJI, KUMAR RAO, MARBRE STAHLY-BUTTS, JANAÉ BONSU, CHARLENE CARRUTHERS, ROSELYN BERRY, & DENZEL MCCAMPBELL, FREEDOM TO THRIVE: REIMAGINING SAFETY & SECURITY IN OUR COMMUNITIES (2017), https://m.box.com/shared_item/https%3A%2F%2Fpopulardemocracy.app.box.com%2Fv%2FFreedomtoThrive?fbclid=IwAR2V_pAIs2r_572GfT17jpaDQtsJ_9y3sgR3Kr2NL2RkOX_hbxUrTDgYHpJM, a collaboration between the Center for Popular Democracy, Law for Black Lives, and Black Youth Project 100.

⁸⁷ UNIV. OF CAL. RIVERSIDE CAMPUS SAFETY TASK FORCE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS, *supra* note 82, at para. 1B.

⁸⁸ See KRISTIAN WILLIAMS, OUR ENEMIES IN BLUE: POLICE AND POWER IN AMERICA 197–222 (South End Press 2007) (2004) [hereinafter Williams, *Our Enemies in Blue*].

practices and policies that promote collaboration and partnership with communities as a way to enlist the active support of an entire community in the fabrication of social order.”⁸⁹ Kristian Williams further crystallizes the philosophical, organizational, and strategic logic of community policing in terms that anticipate the boilerplate proposals of the UCR Task Force:

Philosophically, community policing is characterized by the solicitation of citizen input, the broadening of the police function, and the attempt to find solutions based on the values of the local community. Organizationally, community policing requires that departments be restructured such as to de-centralize command, flatten hierarchies, reduce specialization, civilianize staff positions, and encourage teamwork. Strategically, community policing efforts reorient operations away from random patrols and responding to 911 calls, towards more directed, proactive, and preventive activities.⁹⁰

Unless there are sustained and accelerated attempts at collective critical analysis, shared study, and concrete institutional intervention, the next phase of campus police reforms at UCR and beyond will directly reflect the logics of collaboration, re-legitimation, and deputization outlined by Correia, Wall, Williams, and many others.⁹¹

On a closing note, this author received an invitation from the UC Riverside Chancellor on May 24, 2021, to join the “Chancellor’s Campus Safety Workgroup,” chaired by Provost Liz Watkins.⁹² Part of the agenda for this workgroup entails “[integrating] UCPD into the new Division of Campus Health, Well-being, and Safety,” thus expanding the reach of the campus police to include mediated involvement in matters related to mental and physiological trauma, illness, and vulnerability. The invitation was declined.

⁸⁹ DAVID CORREIA & TYLER WALL, *POLICE: A FIELD GUIDE* 30 (2018).

⁹⁰ Williams, *Our Enemies in Blue*, *supra* note 87, at 204 (emphasis added).

⁹¹ See CHRISTIAN PARENTI, *LOCKDOWN AMERICA: POLICE AND PRISONS IN THE AGE OF CRISIS* (2000) (explaining the implication of federal and state policy reforms in the expansion and militarization of modern policing, as well as the rise of the prison industrial complex); ALEX S. VITALE, *THE END OF POLICING* (2017) (discussing the explanatory, analytical, and practical insufficiency of reformist approaches to addressing police violence, particularly in its antiblackness and coloniality); STUART SCHRADER, *BADGES WITHOUT BORDERS: HOW GLOBAL COUNTERINSURGENCY TRANSFORMED AMERICAN POLICING* (2019) (demonstrating the centrality of counterinsurgency concepts to the everyday operation of police departments in the United States and elsewhere).

⁹² Email from Kim Wilcox, Univ. of California Riverside Chancellor, to the author (May 24, 2021, 5:41 p.m.) (on file with author).

