

END RAPE END COPS

TOWARD A WORLD WITHOUT RAPE
WITHOUT POLICE
WITHOUT PRISONS

MARTINS & HALL
AREN'T THE ONLY
RAPISTS
ABOLISH
POLICE

police and prisons are currently our society's solution to rape

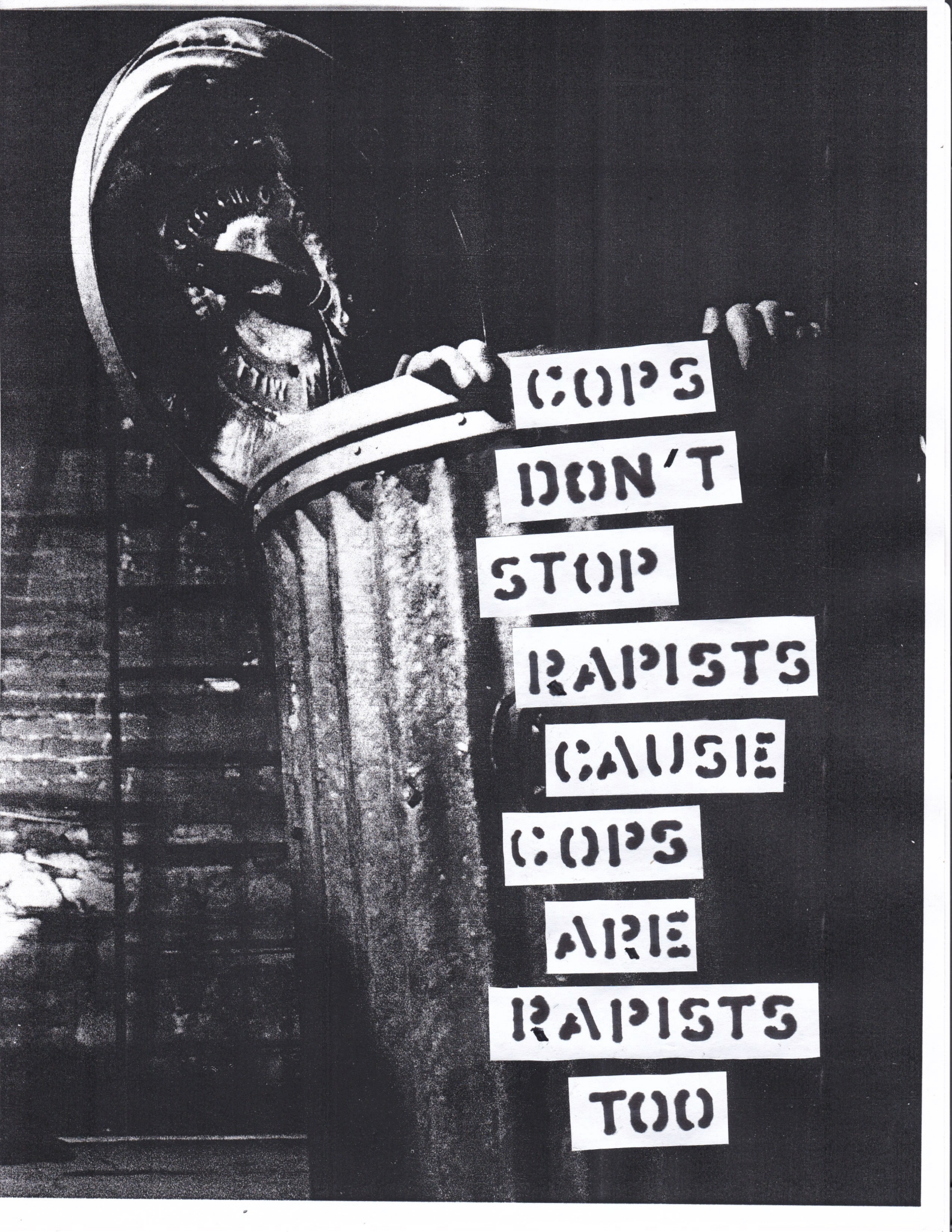
when it comes to fighting sexual violence, the popular imagination is almost always limited to ways to "improve" the reporting experience and the carceral response

what if police are not actually helping us to fight rape?

what if police responses to rape aren't making rape any less likely?

what if police are fundamentally incapable of preventing rape or getting justice?

what if police are responsible for more sexual violence than they curb?



COPS

DON'T

STOP

RAPISTS

CAUSE

COPS

ARE

RAPISTS

TOO

PART 1: POLICE AND PRISONS DO NOT END RAPE

THE POLICE ARE BOTH UNINTERESTED AND FUNDAMENTALLY INCAPABLE OF THOROUGH, SENSITIVE, AND JUST INVESTIGATIONS OF AND RESPONSES TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Investigations never happen, are not thorough or are botched: Police routinely fail to follow up on reports of sexual violence, misclassify cases of sexual violence and close cases before following all leads. External review bodies like the DOJ and local D.A.'s departments have found many police departments, including the police departments in New York, New Orleans, Baltimore and Puerto Rico, guilty of neglecting cases of sexual violence.

Investigations are retraumatizing, shaming and sexist: Rape victims who report to the police are routinely subject to disbelief, shaming and even more violent rhetoric. In an email leaked in 2016, a Baltimore prosecutor emailed his cop colleague about a rape victim they were prosecuting on behalf of. "I am not excited about charging it," he wrote. "This victim seems like a conniving little whore." "Lmao!" the officer responded. "I feel the same."

Rape kits are lost or never tested: Police propaganda campaigns continue to urge rape victims to report to the hospital and later to the police, openly suggesting that a victim's unwillingness to report is the driver of a continued American rape epidemic. It is estimated that tens, if not hundreds of thousands of rape kits are sitting in American police departments, untested or lost. In a USA Today investigation of a fraction of American police departments, reporters found at least 70,000 untested kits.

So few people report sexual violence to police because they don't trust them: From their extreme and ubiquitous racist, queerphobic, and transphobic violence, to slut-shaming, retraumatizing and disbelieving rape victims, to abysmal track records, police give people more than enough reasons to believe they should not go to them after trauma. It's estimated that fewer than 10% of rapes are reported to the police.

WHEN TRIALS ACTUALLY HAPPEN, PERPETRATORS FACE LITTLE CONSEQUENCE

Perpetrators are rarely prosecuted, rarely found guilty, and rarely face consequences: According to one group of researchers, between 14-18% of sexual assaults reported to the police are ultimately prosecuted, and the others are apparently abandoned. Of rape cases prosecuted, only 18% end in conviction, and even fewer end with any significant jail time.

PRISON IS NOT REHABILITATION, NOR IS IT JUSTICE

Prison can't change sexually violent behavior or sexist ideology: For the minority of rapists that are actually sentenced to any jail time, incarceration provides neither guidance towards an anti-sexist life nor pathways for rehabilitation. Exposure to extreme violence (including sexual violence), sexist and homophobic authority figures and subhuman degradation inside is unlikely to provide abusers with rehabilitation and re-evaluation.

If justice includes restoring harm, prisons don't serve justice: When a perpetrator goes to prison — an American “best case scenario” — harm is not restored. There is no place for apology, restoration or illustrated remorse and rehabilitation in the American penal system. While we have seemingly endless resources to incarcerate people, victims rarely have the material and emotional support they need after experiencing trauma.

PART 2: POLICE AND PRISONS RAPE AND FACILITATE RAPE

POLICE HARASS AND ASSAULT US ON DUTY AND OFF

Sexual assault by cops is rampant: While cases of police sexual violence — the case of NYPD officers Eddie Martins and Richard Hall raping teen Anna Chambers, the case of Daniel Holtzclaw raping more than 14 Black women, almost the entire Oakland Police department taking turns raping an underage sex worker — seem to be perpetually covered by the media, hundreds more take place without coverage. Rape by the police often includes an element directly related to enhancing their own authority, i.e. unnecessary anal cavity checks and rape at the hands of prison guards.

POLICE PERPETRATE DOMESTIC ABUSE AT DISPROPORTIONATE RATES

Cops disproportionately perpetrate domestic violence: Two studies have found that police families are at least 4x more likely to experience domestic violence than other families. On top of the propensity to commit domestic violence, these abusers are armed and able to use a gun, and many instances of fatal domestic violence by an officer involve a firearm.

INCARCERATED PEOPLE ARE RAPED BY AUTHORITIES AND NEVER GET JUSTICE

Incarcerated people are especially vulnerable to sexual violence and have even less recourse: The frequent stories about the abuse of incarcerated people often highlight their particular vulnerability and officers' propensity to exploit that vulnerability. Incarcerated people are often raped repeatedly, and coerced into not talking with threats of further consequences. Officers will use their absolute authority to summon incarcerated people to isolated areas where they will be abused. “Who could I tell?” asks a formerly incarcerated woman who was raped almost daily by the same officer. “It's only PREA when you don't like it,” a lieutenant who raped women repeatedly at a Brooklyn prison joked on Facebook.

POLICE AND THEIR UNIONS GO TO BAT FOR OTHER RAPIST COPS

Police unions fight for no accountability: Police unions have historically stood up for cops accused of rape, and lobby heavily against consequences for rapist cops. According to a report by Splinter News, “under threat of a new oversight board, both the Chicago and Illinois chapters of the Fraternal Order of Police invested heavily in lobbyists to soften the Law Enforcement Sexual Assault Investigation Act, resulting in an amendment that would functionally gut the bill, removing the requirement for Chicago police accused of rape to be investigated by an outside arbitrator.”

PART 3: HOW DO WE END RAPE FOR REAL?

WHY NOT JUST REFORM THE POLICE AND WEED OUT BAD APPLES?

Policing and prisons are irreformable. The institution of policing was established in the United States as a runaway slave catching patrol and has maintained its mission of protecting “capital” and upholding oppressive hierarchies. As the number of police has increased exponentially, and the number of people in prison has followed suit, why haven’t rape and domestic violence decreased? Because police exist to keep white neighborhoods white, to throw addicts and houseless people in jail, to incarcerate Black and Brown people for petty “offenses,” to threaten violence constantly and as response to all lack of obedience, to squash protest and intimidate dissidents, to enforce gender conformity and hierarchy. If cops are more likely to commit domestic violence than everyone else, how would more cops reduce domestic violence? How can we subject police officers to “laws” when they are arbiters of the law, and therefore above the law? Why would anyone ever discipline themselves with the brutality they use on the rest of us?

As reformers ask for more “protection” from law enforcement and bestow more money, resources and authority onto police departments for such “protective” programs — from body cameras to hate crime laws to domestic violence policy to the Prison Rape Elimination Act — we see no reduction of violence against oppressed people. Instead, these “reforms,” the extra money and authority, are used against the most marginalized people and for the purpose of further repression by police. These problems, including sexual and domestic violence, are structural problems and are impossible to solve with a gun.

WHAT WOULD WE DO WITH ALL THE “BAD GUYS”?

A favorite question of skeptics. First of all, we have plenty of bad guys roaming the streets right now. Rich and powerful rapists and murderers, the Harvey Weinsteins of the world, in addition to police officers that execute Black children and beat their wives with impunity. Politicians that implement genocide in other countries and insurance company CEOs whose decisions directly lead to the death of so many are celebrated. Ending capitalism and the carceral death machine would reduce the number of “bad guys” so drastically, replacing prisons with nothing would still

be an improvement. Beyond that, many abolitionists have different ideas for how to handle violent people, most of them oriented towards ensuring the victim is taken care of, that harm is restored as much as possible, and that the abuser is never violent again. Rehabilitation is an important part of many abolitionist visions.

WHAT IS PRISON ABOLITION AND HOW IS ABOLITION TOWARDS THE END OF RAPE?

Prison abolition is an ideology that sees itself as a continuation of the legacy of the abolition of slavery. Prison abolitionists believe that, beyond its inability to solve the structural problems that are all oppressions, the carceral system (made up of the police, courts and prisons) is actually a foundational mechanism of these oppressions. White men with guns (and the select women and men of color that are willing to uphold their ideology), paid for by a racist and colonial government — the same government that slaughtered indigenous people, the same government that allowed rape within a marriage until 1993, the same government that upheld slavery — and with the ability to kill and do most else with impunity will only ever be bad news for oppressed people and an asset to the powerful. Additionally, the ever-growing prison population is being put to good use for capitalists — incarcerated, they're forced make products to be sold for profit by corporations and are paid almost nothing. We used to call that slavery, and we still should.

Prison abolitionists believe that if we really cared about ending violence, we would stop using such a violent system and start doing something that actually worked. To many, that would look like a world where everyone had everything they needed to live full, happy, meaningful lives. Violence often springs from either desperation or a thirst for power, and a world that sought to eliminate both would be towards the end of violence. Prevention of violence would be prioritized, and conflicts would be worked out in robust community-based systems.

BEYOND PRISONS AND SAFE SPACES: RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

We are confronted with a multifaceted problem inherent to the culture of oppression and violence we live in: prisons cannot rehabilitate perpetrators of violence, and police use rape as a tactic to quiet survivors of violence and harm our communities. On the other end of the spectrum, we are faced with the impossibility of truly safe spaces within the power structures that dominate our everyday routines at work, in our relationships, and in our communities. While the abolition of prisons and the police are a means to achieving a society free of sexual violence, we must create alternative structures that meet the needs of survivors now.

One solution to this problem can be found in restorative justice, which is an approach to mediation that prioritizes the needs of the survivor of violence by emphasizing accountability and making amends on their own terms. This method to restoring survivor autonomy necessitates the involvement of the community rather than the hierarchical and abusive structures that reinforce our oppression (because we believe that violence to one person in the community causes harm not only to the victim, but also to the offender and the community at large).

Contrary to the state's conception of incarceration as "justice," restorative justice proposes that the people most affected by the crime should participate in its eventual resolution. At first glance this may seem like a vague solution. However, by individualizing the needs of the survivor, they are able to: confront their abuser without being confined to judicial limitations, safety plan with friends and community members to preserve their own physical and emotional wellbeing, dictate whether they want to make amends with their abuser (and to what degree), and to receive support from their mobilized community who can help rehabilitate the abuser and prevent further harm.

This is a cursory look at a long term, community based, survivor-centric practice that takes immense care, commitment, and preparation. We need to support survivors as we move towards the abolition of prisons, police, and all oppressive structures.



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