

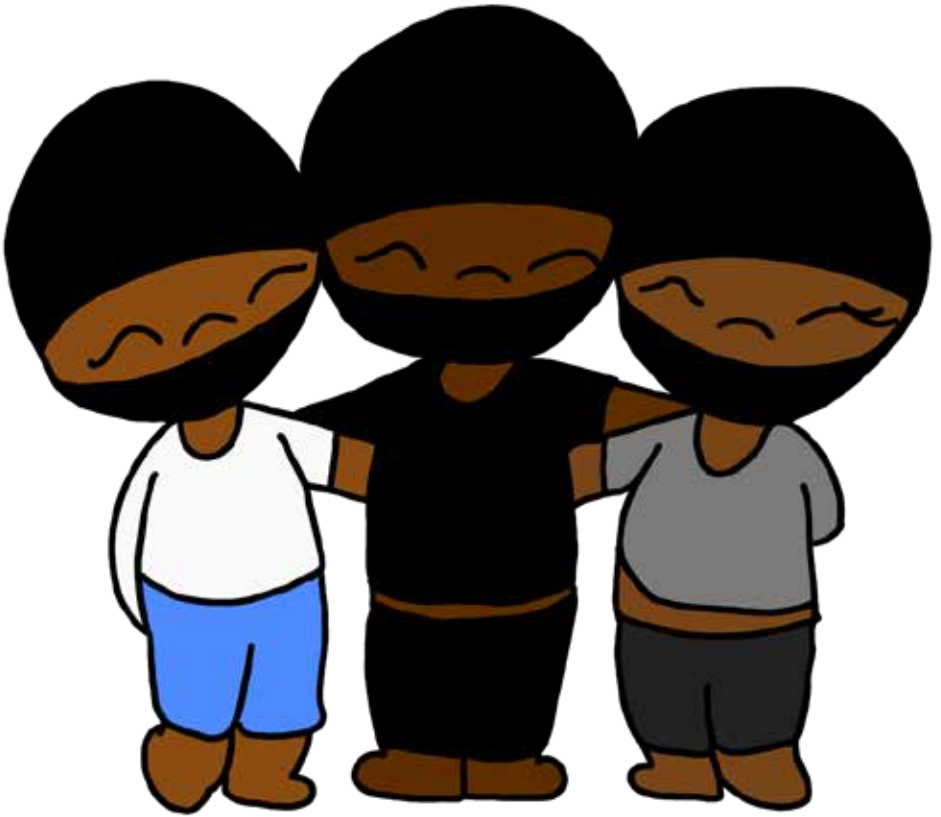
BURNING BRIDGES

ABOLISHING
OUR RELATIONSHIP
WITH THE STATE



LOOK
WHAT
YOU CREATE

AUGUST 2022



May this light the way.

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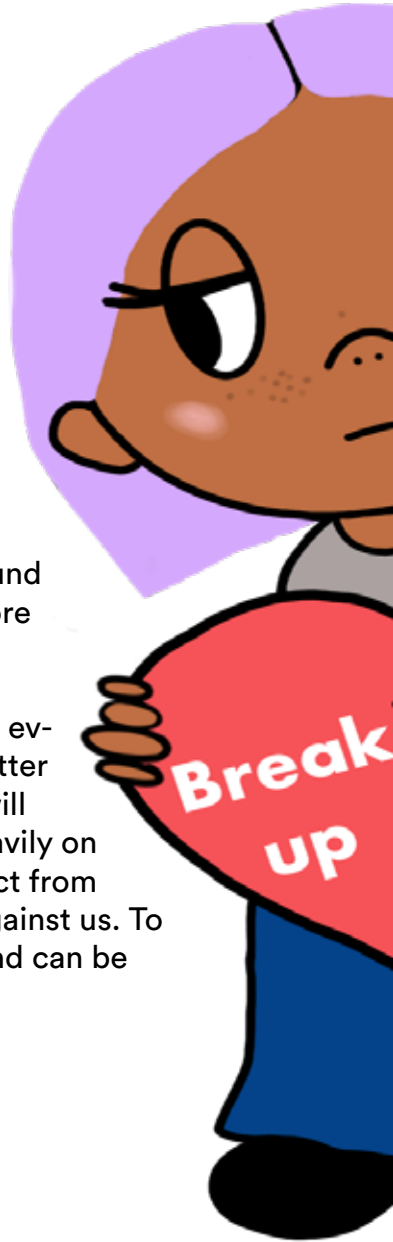
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INTRODUCTION

We often think about our relationship with the state — and by extension the police— as an abusive one. How thousands of people took to the streets demanding that police stop killing us, as a collective response to the brutal death of George Floyd. How cops and federal agencies responded to these protests by once again brutalizing protestors, journalists and children alike. How politicians across the United States responded to our cries to defund the police by giving police agencies more money than ever before.

Because settlers police their way out of every condition they create, it is not a matter of if but when the next state violence will occur. That's why the state relies so heavily on the weapon of "police reform" to distract from public dissent and refine its violence against us. To feed us lies that they are not abusers and can be better. That they will change.





Whenever our communities rise up in insurrection, that's when police and reformers quickly scramble for common ground. But for our communities, reform efforts will always fail to secure what we want, while helping police secure exactly what they want— whether it is their push for body cameras, better training, or community policing. None of these reforms will ever stop cops from doing what they are systemically intended to do. That is, to maintain the status quo by protecting private property and interests regardless of the harm and violence it must inflict in order to maintain its control.

The abusive state is rooted in cis-heteropatriarchy and built on settler-colonialist, occupying, racist violence. Like with intimate partner violence, the cycles of abuse can be hard to break because abuse disguises itself as love and care. Although we may unwillingly be in an abusive relationship with the state, we have the agency and power to break it. In honor of our ancestral resistance and collective rebellion, we create this zine to analyze the last 3 uprisings here in so-called Los Angeles and to show how reform efforts are deputized and weaponized as a key tool of the settler state.

THE UPRISINGS

The U.S. loves violence. It has since its creation whether through genocide of indigenous peoples, enslavement of Africans, or through the targeting of their descendants today. Regardless of what our ancestors faced, we have always paved a way for resistance.

To honor the rebellion and resistance of our ancestors before us and among us, we have to look to our past in order to avoid the same mistakes in the future.

What did the uprisings of '65, '92, and '20 have in common? They each represent our communities taking our fate into our own hands and demonstrating our agency and power. They each exemplify the settler state's fear of the people, with cops on the run from the rebellion. And they each taught us that reform will only work to harm and target.

Police arrested over 4,200 of their critics during the Watts Uprising in August 1965, when an estimated 34,000 people took to the streets to defy white supremacist rule of the city. The brutality that Marquette Frye and hundreds of other young Black men faced during the uprising – accused, cuffed, and beaten – by white police officers continues to happen today.

1
9
6
5



1992



After the uprising, the city convened the McCone Commission, which met for 100 days at a cost of almost \$2.4 million in today's dollars. Chaired by and named after a former CIA director, the commission refused to propose any of what the community had been demanding, including better job opportunities and community resources. Instead as a pamphlet from the time titled Why Watts Exploded put it, the commission "offered no solution to the plight of the Negro" and to the contrary "suggested a series of reforms designed to make ghetto life more tolerable, but not the abolition of the ghetto."

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In 1992, when white police officers were acquitted for beating Rodney King, communities took to the streets to protest the same police brutality and impunity our ancestors have faced. Once again, the city responded by convening two commissions- one called the Webster Commission, which was named after another CIA director, and the second called Christopher Commission, named after

another establishment operative who went on to become the US Secretary of State. Rather than address any of what the community demanded, both commissions recommended a laundry list of changes giving more power to LAPD and expanding the police force.

After the police murder of George Floyd in 2020, cities burned demanding accountability and justice

from a state that has proven it will never hold itself accountable. LAPD cracked down violently and again arrested over 4,000 of their critics along with brutalizing and maiming hundreds of others.

The slogans on the street were loudly and uniformly “fuck the police” and “defund the police.” Yet once again, the city quickly moved to work with professional police reformers to use LAPD’s violence to propose \$67 million in new spending for “reforms.” This included \$53.1 million for new trainings, including \$663,000 just on bullets to shoot at these protestors, \$4.1 million for a new bureau that will be charged with policing protests, \$2.4 million to hire officers who will engage “community members and leaders likely to organize and participate in First Amendment assemblies,” \$800,000 for surveillance technology, \$125,000 for upgraded technology for the “shadow teams” that infiltrate protests, \$120,000 to upgrade video recording and live video feed equipment for 17 helicopters, and \$100,000 annually for snacks “that personnel can grab quickly and take with them” to protests.

In each of these uprisings, communities knew what they needed – they made clear demands for reinvestment with direct resources to their communities and redress for the institutional white supremacy that had decimated their communities for decades. What they got instead was sound bytes from an abusive state – more police repression dressed up as reform.

The disenfranchised are and will continue to fight back.

In 65, 92, 2020

Until we are all free.

Until we are all free.

THE MYTH OF THE “RIOT”

The state gaslights us. We can see that in the way they have responded to each of these uprisings and in the same way they occupied these lands: through violence.



Occupiers have to rely on rewriting history to justify their actions. This can be seen during any uprising, by the state's strategic decision to label our response to their abuse as destructive. News outlets become PR machines for the state – as they display images of Black and Brown people looting stores and destroying property as if these actions have no context. The myth of the “riot” defines the community as inherently violent. The label “riot” pretends the violence originates with the community, rather than as a response to both broader structural violence as well as direct police violence, which are rooted in an institutional context of racism systematically disenfranchising our communities. The myth of the riot turns an uprising into an insurgency to be crushed with violent state repression.

The PR machine is vicious in its racism. During the coverage of the Watts uprisings, media described protestors in racist, animalistic terms as guided by the “rule of the jungle” where Black people “roamed unchecked” in what they described as a “guerilla war.” In 1992, media described the protests as a result of “race relations” rather than police brutality and it described protestors as “looters” who “swarmed” businesses and “declared open season” on [white] communities. So it’s not surprising that in 2020, these similar tactics were utilized as Mayor Garcetti denounced “violence and vandalism” while failing to acknowledge why people were protesting—even implying that protestors were “hijacking a moment and a movement.” In a live video address, LAPD’s chief joined Garcetti to even go as far as blaming protestors for George Floyd’s death. He proclaimed: “We didn’t have protests last night. We had criminal acts. We didn’t have people mourning the death of this man, George Floyd. We had people capitalizing. His death is on their hands, as much as it is [on] those officers.”

The tactics of trying to sow division among those oppressed by police, of cultivating exemplars of “good” protesting, and of blaming police brutality on critics of police brutality, are all reflective not only of the counterinsurgency playbook but also this normalization of abuse.

Counterinsurgency tactics: Department of Defense Civil Disturbance Plan “Operation Garden Plot”



The state justifies its violence by victim blaming. Our communities are deemed to be “uncivil” populations who are dangerous to the state – labeling us as enemies, the state justifies waging war with military-grade weapons. Building on both the media propoganda about Black and brown protestors as inherently violent mobs and the violent repression of the Watts and other similar uprisings, officials created avenues for crushing domestic uprisings with military force.

“Operation Garden Plot,” created by the DOJ in 1968, was used to deploy military force in response to the 1992 uprisings, and paved the way for grant programs that enable police departments to acquire military-grade weapons and equipment, such as the Department of Defense 1033 program, Department of Homeland Security Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI), State Homeland Security (SHSP), and Operation Stonegarden. As of 2014, LAPD had received over \$30 million in equipment from the 1033 program, the same program through which Ferguson police famously received the armored tank used to repress protests in the wake of Michael Brown’s murder. From the creation of SWAT in 1967, to the deployment of the National Guard amidst the 1992 uprisings, to the use of “shadow teams” to infiltrate George Floyd protests in 2020, the militarized police responses to protests illuminate the function of police to control our communities and suppress collective resistance, all in service of the settler state.

Spies on the Streets

Deputizing Snitches and Clearing Land

The state “courts” us, puts on dress clothes, and rolls out reform – they negotiate for legitimacy through the dressed up violence of reform.



Reform is always on the abuser’s terms – for example, when the state proposes the lie of “revitalization” for criminalized and overpoliced neighborhoods. After each of these rebellions, the state focused its efforts on controlling what they labeled “blighted neighborhoods,” which is just a political way of saying historically looted communities. Instead of directing resources to meet our needs, the state has always directed them toward policing and social control. The myth of “riots” and “looting” demonstrates that the state cares more about (white) property damage than Black and brown people’s lives – in the years following Watts and similar rebellions, the idea of “defensible space” encouraged neighborhood-watch style suspicion and surveillance. Beyond deputizing community members and inviting self-policing, it also fed into policing protocols that enable gentrification under the guise of “professionalization.”

Since the LAPD sees Black and brown communities as “foreign” territory where “guerrilla warfare” happens, they set out to infiltrate and occupy these neighborhoods, and ultimately to clear them for white property interests. In LA, this manifested in programs like “Weed and Seed,” introduced in 1992 as a “riot recovery” program targeting South Central and Pico-Union/Koreatown with the aim of “weeding out” gangs and “seeding” new growth by literally clearing land for developers.



It continues today in Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) sites through the use of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED). LAPD uses CPTED to conduct regular “Safety Assessments,” promising to address community needs for better lighting and safe playgrounds. Yet these basic needs remain unaddressed year after year, while the LAPD instead installs cameras and removes bushes and trees in order to create clear sightlines for surveillance – what the LAPD calls “force multipliers.” These forms of hostile architecture and plans for banishment are nothing new for the settler state– just another means to an end.

Cultural Counterinsurgency

Winning Hearts and Minds, the LAPD remix

The Stalker states maps out our every move and creates a roadmap to keep us under control. How do they map us? A 1968 US House on Un-American Activities Committee report recommended mapping the “human terrain” of the Black Panthers and Students for a Democratic Society, perceiving their efforts to create a more just world as a threat.



From 2006-2014, the US military used this same idea of mapping “human terrain” to propagate counterinsurgency warfare in Afghanistan and Iraq – what military strategists call “winning hearts and minds” paves the way to occupy and destroy communities. In LA, “winning hearts and minds” tactics are particularly visible in the wake of uprisings.

In response to Watts in 1965, the LAPD established a Community Relations Section, whose purpose was to “consolidate and broaden community support” by “maintaining channels of communication with minorities throughout the City.”

When Daryl Gates resigned following the ‘92 rebellion, Mayor Bradley appointed Willie Williams as the first Black LAPD Chief. Clearly meant to be the face of racial reform, Williams uplifted “community policing” as the way to improve relations between the LAPD and the Black and brown communities they target daily.

In response to the 2020 George Floyd protest demands to abolish the police, the LAPD has seen budget increases, leveraging reform logic to fund a massive DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) initiative that promises to hire more Black and brown officers and to institute more DEI trainings as the answer to a structurally racist, cis-heteropatriarchal, violent killing force.

In what often amounts to a form of psychological warfare, this tactic can operate by hiring officers (and, in the case of Willie Williams, appoint Police Chiefs) that look like the communities they police and who use the words of anti-racism to show face, all while paving the way for more surveillance, control, and police violence.

Armed Social Work

Weaponizing Care



The state's abusive cycle of violence depends on the false claim that it cares about us and wants to change. Community policing weaponizes care – the state removes access to services, ensuring that people have no one to call but the police. Limiting and shutting down our options, community policing increases surveillance in already overpoliced Black and brown communities, while pretending to institute meaningful reform. In the wake of the Watts uprisings, LAPD organized a Community-Police Service Corps, an early community policing program, that functioned to deter people from joining the Black Power movement.

The year after the Rodney King uprising, LAPD introduced Community Policing Advisory Boards (CPAB), which work to rubber stamp the harm of the police state through the notion of “oversight.” CPABs pretend to be an avenue for accountability, but only function to quell dissent.

Similarly, in the wake of uprisings following the murders of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown, the state relied on the reform of body cameras. As history has shown, the sham of body cameras is that cops break, tamper, and manipulate data in order to sell the narrative that justifies their violence. They have cost millions of dollars and do not stop police murders. In the midst of George Floyd protests, the LAPD announced an expansion of community policing programs by establishing the CSP Bureau. Branding itself a “department of guardians,” the LAPD belatedly took a page out of Obama-era reforms of “changing the culture of policing” by training officers to be “guardians” rather than “warriors” in a clear PR effort to sidestep demands for abolition.

Final Reflections



Don't just break
up with the state.
Break the State



Again and again – and particularly in the wake of the people’s rebellion – LAPD uses what military strategists have called “armed social work” to continue its cycle of violence. Retreating into the counterinsurgency tactic they call reform, they promise to be better. But we know better.

We don’t break up with the state.
We break the state.

STOP LAPD SPYING COALITION

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