

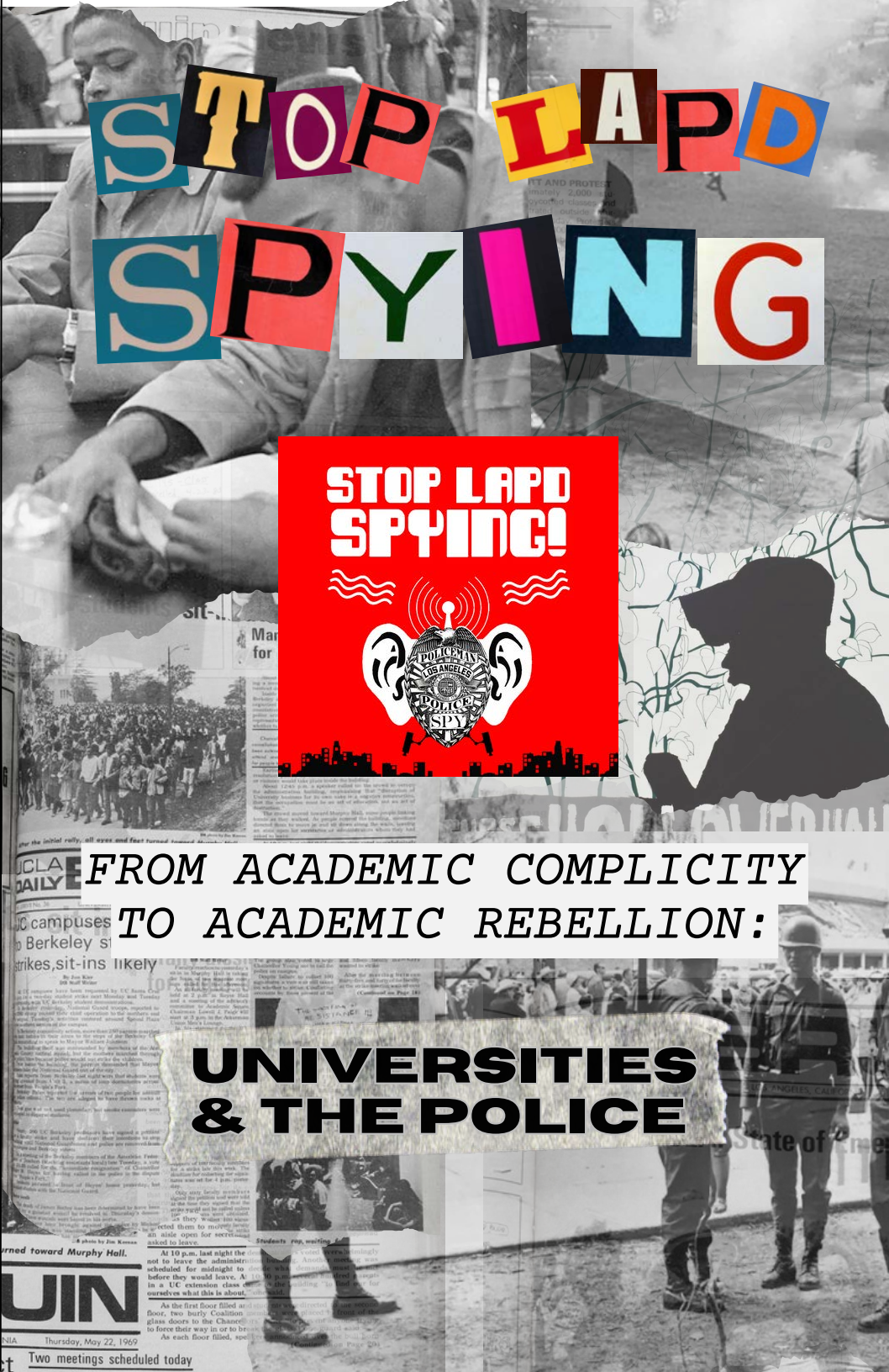
STOP LAPD SPYING

STOP LAPD SPYING!



FROM ACADEMIC COMPLICITY TO ACADEMIC REBELLION:

UNIVERSITIES & THE POLICE



...turned toward Murphy Hall.

Two meetings scheduled today

Thursday, May 22, 1969

SMASH FASCISM!

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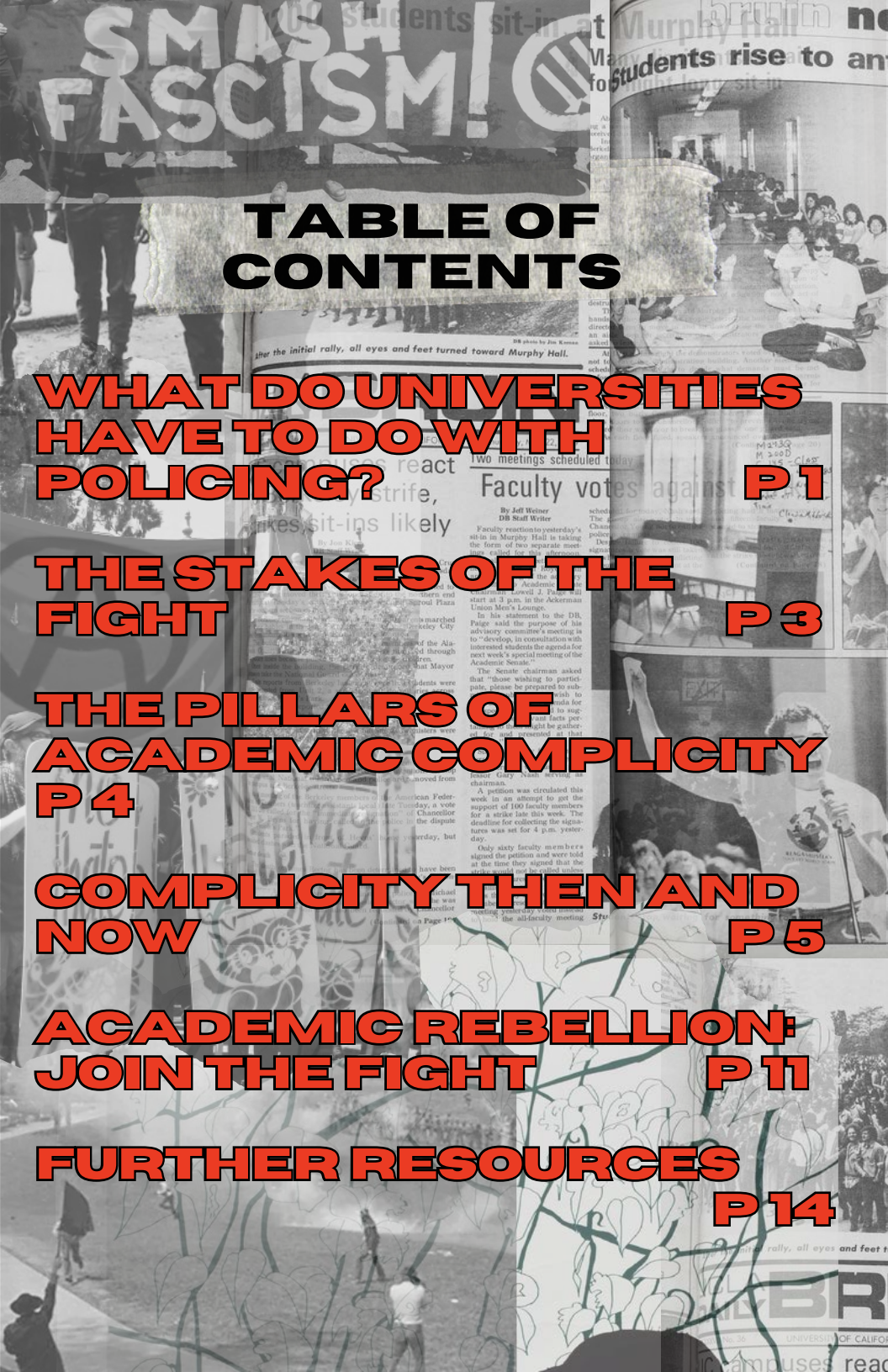
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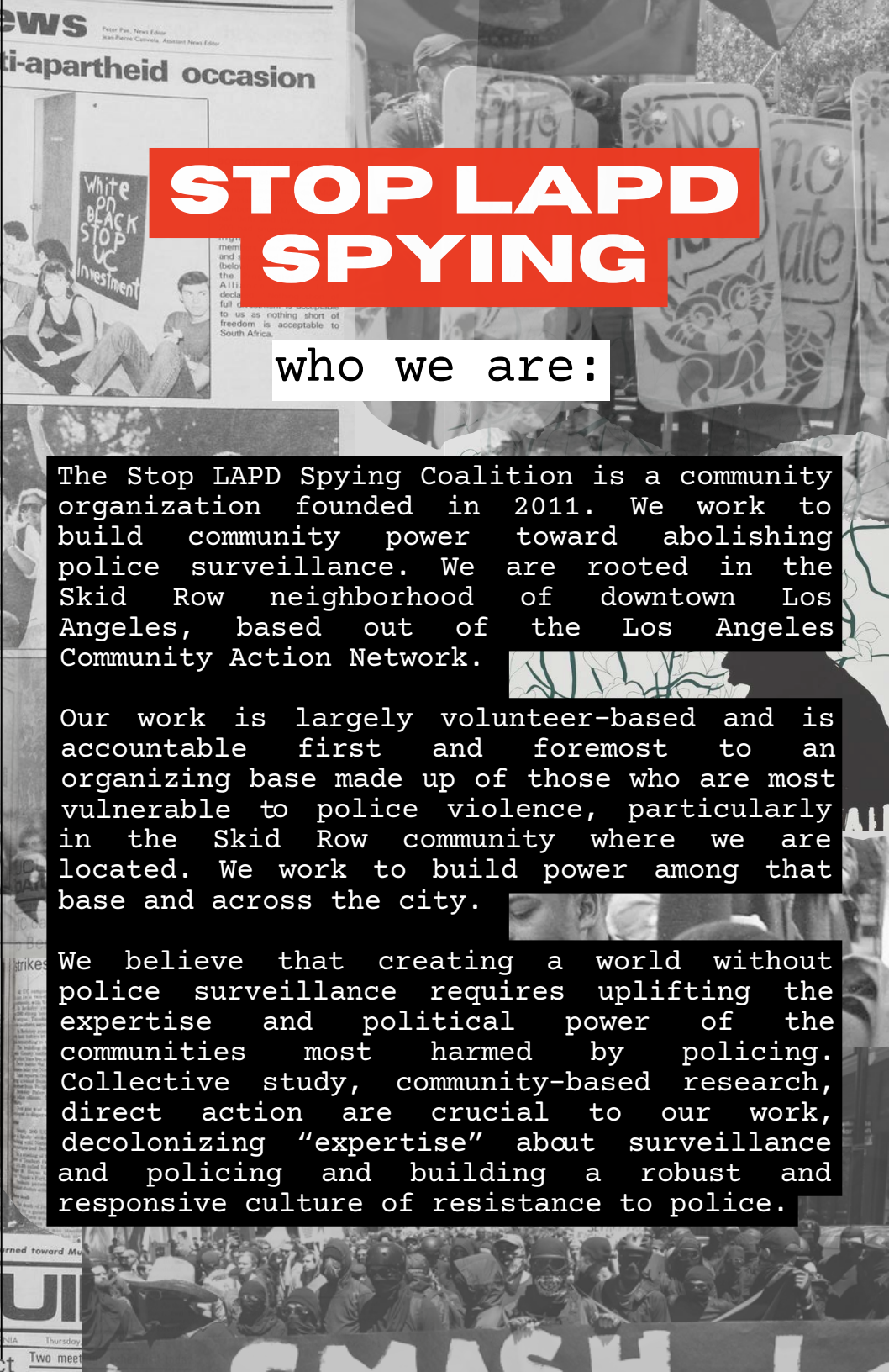
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STOP LAPD SPYING

who we are:

The Stop LAPD Spying Coalition is a community organization founded in 2011. We work to build community power toward abolishing police surveillance. We are rooted in the Skid Row neighborhood of downtown Los Angeles, based out of the Los Angeles Community Action Network.

Our work is largely volunteer-based and is accountable first and foremost to an organizing base made up of those who are most vulnerable to police violence, particularly in the Skid Row community where we are located. We work to build power among that base and across the city.

We believe that creating a world without police surveillance requires uplifting the expertise and political power of the communities most harmed by policing. Collective study, community-based research, direct action are crucial to our work, decolonizing "expertise" about surveillance and policing and building a robust and responsive culture of resistance to police.



WHAT DO UNIVERSITIES HAVE TO DO WITH POLICING?

When we talk about academic complicity, we're talking about a long history of deliberate and intimate collaboration between universities and police, a vast ecosystem that fosters the growth of police oppression and violence. University police departments are a highly visible part of this ecosystem: maybe you've heard of the movement to get Cops Off Campus or have already been active in this crucial fight. At the same time, academia's ties to policing—and policing's dependence on academia—go much, much deeper than the physical presence of cops on college campuses. So when we talk about complicity and about abolition, we need to think big. **How do we identify and dismantle every strand of the web that binds the university to policing and its systems of surveillance, militarism, and colonization?**

Greater Los Angeles is an especially important site for understanding this web, and for building a world without police. L.A. is a central hub of the militarized police ecosystem, and LAPD has long been a pioneer for new innovations in police violence and police "reform." Local universities like UCLA, USC, and

the Cal States play a key role, sometimes by participating directly in research and development for police, sometimes by helping to vet police tactics as objective and "scientific," and sometimes by designing the "reforms" that police use to secure more resources and political cover. For these reasons, this zine focuses mostly on Los Angeles, but the types of academic complicity we identify can be found all over the country and the world, if you know how to look.

It's important to recognize that complicity is a spectrum, not an on-off switch. In these pages you'll meet professors who vocally advocate for expanded policing, as well as researchers who think policing just needs some tweaks in order to "improve." But our fight is about much more than individuals or specific universities. **It's about how higher education, in general, has always served and continues to serve as a space for police violence to grow and take root.** These dynamics have become especially powerful in recent years, but the roots go deep. Over the centuries, universities and academic research have always been instruments of colonialism and exploitation, helping justify imperialism and domination.

At the same time, universities have also been crucial sites of resistance and dissent. Students have played vital roles in liberation movements, and there is a powerful legacy of coalition-building between community and student organizing. This zine, created by student and community members of the Stop LAPD Spying Coalition's Academic Complicity Working Group, is part of that legacy. Our research and our fight are still very much in progress, and there is a lot of work to be done. Are you ready to join us?

THE STAKES OF THE FIGHT

Academic complicity in policing isn't just about building the physical weapons police use. It's also about producing the ideas that police use to target and oppress our communities. For a clear example of this, take a look at this quote from Dr. Edward Banfield, a social scientist and Harvard professor, from his 1970 book *The Unheavenly City*:

"The implication that **lower-class** culture is **pathological** seems fully warranted. Rather than **waste** time and **public money** implementing policies based on the **false notion** that all **men were created equal**, better to just face facts and acknowledge the **natural divisions** that exist. Members of the lower classes should leave school in ninth grade, to get a jump on a lifetime of manual labor. The **minimum wage** should be repealed to encourage employers to create more jobs for low-value labor. The state should give **intensive birth control guidance to the incompetent poor**. And the police should feel free to crack down on young lower-class men."

Each of these statements provides a road map for state violence. It provides an intellectual framework for how our people will be seen and approached by the police state. And this framework doesn't just remain in the abstract intellectual sphere. Banfield leveraged his prestigious academic position into a side gig as an advisor to presidents Nixon, Ford, and Reagan—and the federal government implemented his racist, classist ideas. They turned academically respectable "social science" into policies like the so-called War on Crime and War on Drugs, which led to mass incarceration and criminalization of Black and brown communities. When we talk about academic complicity, this is the core of what we're talking about: **the ways in which the "scholarly" work coming out of universities turns into real-world, on-the-ground violence.**

THE PILLARS OF ACADEMIC COMPLICITY

Universities engage in many different actions that reinforce police oppression. In this zine, we'll discuss five major categories, or pillars, of complicity: technology, theory, data, public relations (PR), and reformist shock absorption. Universities:

- produce the **technologies** of policing (physical weapons, surveillance systems, data processing and algorithms)
- perpetuate **theories** that normalize policing (ideas that justify why police should act in the racist and oppressive ways they do)
- generate and/or analyze **data** for the police (information that police use to pick which people and places they will target)
- leverage their prestige to do **PR** for the police and the carceral state (excusing police violence or spinning false narratives about what police really exist to do)
- override demands for fundamental change by proposing pointless **reforms** that absorb the shocks of social uprisings (making police violence more durable, well funded, and difficult to dismantle)

Though we've identified these categories to make complicity easier to track, they aren't mutually exclusive. Most forms of academic complicity in policing serve at least one of these purposes, and certain actions definitely serve multiple purposes. In the next section, we'll look at how these five pillars show up today, and how their history has led us to where we are.

COMPLICITY THEN AND NOW

TECHNOLOGY

Universities are not just places where students come to learn and earn a credential. They are also factories for both ideology and technology, which shape the broader society beyond the campus. For instance, UC Berkeley produced the polygraphic "lie detector" technology in the 1920s, around the same time that eugenicist August Vollmer founded the university's criminology department. It didn't matter that the actual effectiveness of lie detector technology was always in doubt and eventually disproved. With a scientific packaging and "respectable" university origins, the polygraph became commonplace in policing.

This pattern of using bogus technologies to justify preexisting police beliefs and priorities reappeared in L.A. with "predictive" policing algorithms, which Stop LAPD Spying has organized against for many years. One of the most notorious of these algorithms is PredPol, developed by a team of UCLA professors first as an academic research project and then sold through their private, for-profit company to police departments across the world. (By the way, UCLA's own Venture Capital fund invested in PredPol, which could then turn a profit for the university endowment if the company were successful.) PredPol was spearheaded by UCLA anthropology professor Jeffrey Brantingham, who took funding from the U.S. Department of Defense to turn his earlier research on the paleo-archaeology of ancient hunter-gatherers into helping the military predict insurgency during the imperial occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. Brantingham later partnered with

LAPD to test these same algorithms on Angelenos, and now his company claims that 1 out of 30 people in the country are policed using this product.

Brian Jefferson, a geography professor who studies police technologies, explains in his book *Digitize and Punish: Racial Criminalization in the Digital Age* that "the real-world function of predictive policing is not to see crime before it happens but to graft scientific authority onto entrenched forms of racialized policing." We agree. We have seen it happen here in L.A. To learn more about Stop LAPD Spying's fight against LAPD's "predictive" policing systems, read our 2018 report "Before The Bullet Hits the Body: Dismantling Predictive Policing in Los Angeles."

THEORY

Police technology is not just about computer software, but also the ideas that shape how police operate. What academics call "theories" aren't just abstract concepts—they provide police with concrete methods and operations, and therefore have real-world consequences. Framing their work as theory or as scholarly research helps academics feel like their hands are clean of whatever the cops end up doing with the operational frameworks they create.

For instance, PredPol and other modern surveillance programs are mostly experiments in automating a policing framework known as "broken windows." "Broken windows" was proposed in the 1980s by two criminology professors—one of whom, James Q. Wilson, was soon recruited from Harvard to become a professor at UCLA.

The basic idea of "broken windows" is that police need to punish minor crimes of poverty extremely harshly, or else broader disorder will spiral out. This approach essentially replaced older eugenics paradigms in policing, shifting from expressly targeting "lower races" to instead targeting "bad neighborhoods."

COMPLICITY THEN AND NOW, CONT.

(Of course, in the U.S., neighborhoods and race are historically inseparable, due to extreme segregation produced by racist policies such as redlining.) LAPD and other departments across the country translated "broken windows" into "intensive, invasive, and aggressive enforcement" for "low-level infractions," as sociologist Alex Vitale has explained. It didn't matter whether the ideas behind "broken windows" were accurate or effective at reducing crime; they provided a pseudo-scientific justification for the brutal tactics cops were increasingly eager to deploy.

Today, thanks to community organizing and activism, there is broader public understanding of how "broken windows" was just a racist pretext to aggressively target communities of color. So, in turn, police needed a new framework to justify its violence, as we'll see in the next section.

DATA

Today, the most trendy reform concept linking police technology to police theory is "data," now the essential resource required for policing to seem scientific. In fact, only a few days after our community campaign to dismantle LAPD's contract with PredPol succeeded, LAPD announced its new policy of "Data-Driven Community-Focused Policing," an obvious attempt to disguise the old status quo. Data is useful to police because it appears even more "objective" than the racist work of social scientists like Edward Banfield and James Q. Wilson. After all, numbers don't lie, right?

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Wrong. There is a long history of numbers, measurements, calculations, and other supposedly objective data serving the biased or outright racist purposes of whoever is generating the data. Think of eugenics, the utterly false "science" of race and genetics embraced by the Nazis—and by early police departments in the United States. We're working on a bigger project about the many problems with this fixation on "data" as the solution to the police state (join us!), but for now, let's focus on how demands for more and "better" data are the new excuses to justify the endlessly expanding practices of police surveillance.

Academic researchers play an essential role in assisting this "data-driven" expansion of policing. Take the Center for Policing Equity, a research organization founded in 2007 by a psychology professor at UCLA named Philip Atiba Goff. (Goff has since moved to Yale, where he took CPE with him.) CPE has over the years collaborated closely with police departments, offering data collection and analysis to help promote "equity in law enforcement." Their website claims the CPE "measures bias in policing. That means we can stop it." More recently, Cal State Long Beach created a certificate program in Crime and Intelligence Analysis in 2022, one of many similar initiatives popping up at universities across the country.

Policing cannot be "fixed" or "improved" by tinkering with data, and certainly not by training more people to do the tinkering. Police oppression and state violence come down to political and ideological choices, not scientific ones that can be refined with data. Data-centered research and academic programs only serve to justify further surveillance (because it produces data) and defer political confrontation with the cops (because you have to wait for the data to intervene). And the idea that we just need more data on police oppression to "prove" what our communities have long been saying is a form of gaslighting, meant to deny our truth and leave our fate in the hands of "expert" professionals.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Let's be clear: much of the research produced in university-police collaborations is bullshit, and the most important thing about bullshit is for it to find an audience. In L.A., some professors have been incredible mouthpieces for the police, lining as many ears as they can get their words into.

James Q. Wilson, the "broken windows" professor and the most famous criminologist of his time, is surely the king. He moved to UCLA in the mid-1980s—a period of frequent and intense scandals for LAPD—and immediately began to defend his friends in blue in as many newspaper quotes and columns and TV appearances as he could. LAPD's scandals reached a peak with the beating of Rodney King in 1991, undeniable because it was captured on videotape. The public outcry was extraordinary, demanding major changes. Even though Wilson couldn't ignore the well-documented problems of brutality, he still came to the department's defense, telling the public we should only expect a "delicate process of shaping the [LAPD's] culture without destroying it." Don't ask for too much change too quickly, he warned: LAPD is "delicate."

LAPD faced further scandals throughout the 1990s, in response to its extreme levels of violence, fraudulence, intimidation, and racial discrimination. In response, a team of UCLA and USC professors conducted police-friendly studies including "ride-alongs" in cop cars. These professors then wrote op-eds in the L.A. Times encouraging the public to take it easy on the cops, who were "guided by altruistic values"... if only you took the cops' word for it. We don't, the communities that the cops were harassing didn't, and you shouldn't either.

Today, the university PR machine is working to prop up "community policing." In 2020, researchers at UCLA including Jorja Leap and Jeff Brantingham (yes, him again, of for-profit PredPol, Inc. fame)

produced an "independent" Evaluation of the LAPD Community Safety Partnership (CSP) program. How independent was it? Well, we already know that Brantingham held a lucrative contract with the LAPD while it was using PredPol... Leap's husband Mark was LAPD Deputy Chief of Counterterrorism from 2002 to 2009... and the Advisory Committee for the report included L.A. City Councilmember Joe Buscaino, who is a former LAPD officer. Given all these cozy relationships, you won't be surprised to learn that the UCLA study found that LAPD's new community policing model "effectively works" and that "the community feels protected and strengthened." But wait, there's more: after the publication of the report, Councilmember Buscaino cited UCLA's "rigorous evaluation" to call for increasing investment in LAPD's budget. And Mayor Garcetti touted the study when exploiting the George Floyd uprising to turn CSP into a full-fledged LAPD bureau in July 2020.

For all the professors we discuss here, their position in the university has helped them seem "neutral" and "objective," even when they just recycle the talking points produced by their friends in blue. This supposed objectivity is then used to legitimate police programs and increase their funding. It's bullshit in, violence out.

REFORMIST SHOCK ABSORPTION

The problem, however, isn't only professors who vocally defend the police. At least as important, in this age of "diversity and inclusion," is how university leaders seem to condemn or criticize the police (sometimes in radical-sounding, abolitionist-sounding language) while actually helping to smooth over the PR crises. These false critics offer solutions that only dress up the status quo in new clothes, leaving police power fundamentally unchanged. Following our friend and comrade Pete White at LA Community Action Network, we call these reform-peddlers the "shock absorbers" of white supremacy.

When students and communities demand change, universities will commission public safety reports, open new progressive research centers, hire a Dean of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion – anything except making actual, meaningful change. And that's what we need: **Change, now!**

- ★ Get cops off campus, now!
- ★ Stop funding surveillance technology and cop-friendly studies, now!
- ★ Divest university endowments from companies that profit off policing, surveillance, and militarism, now!
- ★ Cut all ties between universities and police departments, now!
- ★ Stand with communities organizing for abolition and decolonization, now!
- ★ Academic complicity to academic rebellion, NOW!

ACADEMIC REBELLION: JOIN THE FIGHT!

The pillars of complicity we've outlined here are only part of the full story. There's much more to say about the many other ways universities are entangled with policing, militarism, and racial capitalism: from university police departments and their surveillance of both campus and community members, to research funded by the Department of Defense that directly contributes to U.S. military imperialism, to the neoliberal university's role as real estate developer on stolen land. Furthermore, as we've hopefully made clear, academic research across disciplines can all too easily be put in service of ideologies and institutions that do violence to our communities, making it extremely important for those of us who are scholars to think about our research ethics and how our work can be in solidarity with the collective struggle against oppression. →

If these issues are important to you, or if there's something else we haven't gotten to in this zine, we encourage you to get involved as we continue to gather resources to fight academic complicity in all its forms.

For now, though, we want to close this zine by emphasizing that the university is more than just a site of complicity and collaboration. Students, professors, other university workers, and community members have repeatedly struggled directly and indirectly against policing and surveillance, on campus and off.

To get you inspired, here are a few incredible examples of what academic rebellion can look like and has looked like:

Mass mobilization on campus

- Student demonstrations against the Vietnam War in the 1970s
- Black Lives Matter protests in 2020

Collaboration between students and community groups

- The Black Panthers led a coalition that successfully shut down a racist UCLA project in 1973

Cosigned public letters

- Faculty, students, and community members/orgs have come together to send public letters to LAPD, UCLA, and local/national news outlets condemning academic projects such as PredPol and the Leap/Brantingham Community Safety Partnership study

Teach-ins

- NYU students recently hosted a teach-in to highlight and organize against the harms of the Policing Project, an NYU-based nonprofit funded by the policing technology industry.

WHAT FORM WILL YOUR REBELLION TAKE?

Here are a few places to start:

Stop LAPD Spying Coalition's Academic Complicity Working Group meets on Zoom on the fourth Monday of every month. We're community members, students and faculty at different universities, all working together to combat complicity in all the forms we've outlined here. We have many projects in the works and our meetings are open to anyone. Come join our fight! You can email stoplapdspying@gmail.com to get plugged in.

Print copies of this zine and give them to your friends and classmates! You can download a printable version of the zine at <https://stoplapdspying.org>.

Get involved with student organizing and activist groups on your campus.



(Continued on Page 14)

FURTHER RESOURCES

Books and Articles

★ "Beyond 'Police Brutality': Racist State Violence and the University of California" by Dylan Rodríguez (2012):

https://www.jstor.org/stable/23273518?refreqid=excelsior%3Af13e40d0a8f972a4cea1986dd2e347b7&seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

★ *Digitize and Punish: Racial Criminalization in the Digital Age* by Brian Jefferson (2020)

★ *In the Shadow of the Ivory Tower: How Universities are Plundering Our Cities* by Davarian L. Baldwin (2021)

- See also "The Ivory Tower is Dead," an interview with Davarian Baldwin (2021):
<https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/the-ivory-tower-is-dead-an-interview-with-davarian-l-baldwin>

★ "The Racist Roots of Campus Policing" by Eddie R. Cole (2021):

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2021/06/02/racist-roots-campus-policing>

★ *We Demand: The University and Student Protests* by Roderick Ferguson (2017)

FURTHER RESOURCES CONT.

Web Resources

★ Abolition University:
<https://abolition.university/>

★ UCLA Cops Off Campus Abolition Map:
<https://cops-off-campus-ucla.github.io/>

Zines and Reports

★ Abolish the UC 2020 Disorientation Guide:
<https://t.co/Yig7tUfNSH>

★ “Automating Banishment: The Surveillance and Policing of Looted Land” by Stop LAPD Spying Coalition (2021):
<https://stoplapdspying.org/automating-banishment-the-surveillance-and-policing-of-looted-land/>

★ Stop LAPD Spying Coalition Zine Archive:
<https://stoplapdspying.org/action/reports-and-resources/zines/>

★ USC Abolition zines:
<https://uscabolition.wordpress.com/zines/>



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