



NORTH BAY LABOR COUNCIL POLICE UNIONS STATEMENT

The North Bay Labor Council met on Juneteenth to begin the difficult but necessary discussion about police brutality perpetrated upon Black people/People of Color and the role of police unions.

Questions were raised and are continuing to be answered such as; what role do police unions play in the disproportionate way police officers are committing violence and murder against the Black community and communities of color? Do police unions foster this brutality or impede justice? What needs to change? What does solidarity look like under these circumstances?

While these discussions will be ongoing, we unanimously agreed it is imperative that as the North Bay Labor Council, we speak out against police brutality and murder.

With the exception of a couple of police departments in Lake County represented by Operating Engineers, Local 3, and SEIU 1021 representing SRJC police, our labor council does not have police unions as affiliates. That, however, does not relieve us of the responsibility to do whatever we can to have a positive impact on police culture and the institutional racism that exists within their ranks.

Black union workers making up a core constituency of the Labor movement, makes it even more imperative that all of us in Labor take a strong stance and take action to ensure their safety.

NBLC supports collective bargaining for all workers and feels strongly this support can exist alongside the attempt to change police culture and work toward a more just community.

As we continue to work on addressing racism and anti-Blackness, we agree on the following principles:

- Everyone deserves to feel safe. Nobody should fear for their lives or the lives of people around them when they call the police for help or are confronted by police.
- The issue of excessive force and murder by police goes beyond “a few bad apples.” A cultural and systemic shift is needed.
- What is known as the “Code of Silence” (the tendency of police officers to ignore, look away, or simply deny the bad actions or the inhumane treatment of citizens, especially against people of color, by fellow police officers) needs to be examined and openly discussed as a barrier to transparency in police conduct oversight.
- There needs to be real policy change, including the codes of conduct in which rank and file police officers participate.
- Sonoma County still has not yet recovered from the killing of Andy Lopez, making it difficult to believe there could be real change now. As Labor we must acknowledge these feelings and stand with our community and union membership as we continue to mourn and seek justice.
- Police departments need to more closely reflect the demographics of – and be accountable to – the communities they serve.
- There must be ongoing training with regard to de-escalation and racial bias with ongoing evaluation of this training. Union workers should be able to have regular discussions about systemic racism and anti-blackness and be able to process how they will implement what they are learning into better de-escalation practices, on worktime.
- The use of “qualified immunity” needs to be overturned.
- Calling the police should not be the only option when there are health experts that are better qualified to provide the needed support.
- We support “defunding the police” meaning a redistribution of funds so that police officers are not expected to be social workers and mental health workers.
- We support the Evelyn Cheatham Effective IOLERO (Independent Office of Law Enforcement Review & Outreach) Ordinance (the NBLC endorsed this ordinance prior to the campaign being shut down by the pandemic) and strongly urge the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors to either enact it or, at the very least, put this ordinance on the 2020 ballot.

To think this is not a problem in Sonoma County or the North Bay is simply not true and even dangerous. The North Bay Labor Council is heartsick and angry over the behavior of some of those in law enforcement, including the recent statements made in the Press Democrat.

As a result, the NBLC has reached out to the Sonoma County Deputy Sheriffs Association president, Mike Vail and will be meeting with him and other police associations leadership to start work on an action plan. We are hopeful this plan will lead to real change and strongly reflect basic union values including; solidarity,

improving the lives of working people, social justice, dignity, and the humane treatment of all, regardless of race, creed, gender, age, or sexual orientation.

After decades of work to push police and elected officials (who also bear some responsibility for police actions) to stop the senseless brutality and killing of Black people and people of color, we understand why some have taken to the streets to demand change. We support them and stand with them.

America watched George Floyd's life grinded out on the pavement, beneath the knee of a white police officer who looked as though he wasn't thinking about anything more important than what he might have for dinner. As allies and people who bore witness to this heinous, brutal act for 8 minutes and 46 seconds, we find it impossible now to turn away. Instead, we will continue to lean into these vital conversations and ensure that our actions and our strategic plan reflect the work it will take to help address the violence.

The North Bay Labor Council commits to working for change for as long as it takes.

All lives do not matter, until Black Lives Matter.