

NO PRIDE IN A POLICE STATE

POLICE IN THIS PARADE DON'T MAKE US SAFE

The recent enthusiasm some LGBTI groups have shown for collaborating and aiding policing operations is disturbing considering the police's historical and ongoing targeting of people who are queer, trans, Indigenous, racialised, dis/abled, poor, and/or homeless. It was only in 1981 that homosexuality was decriminalised in Victoria. Yet today the PR unit in the Victoria Police convey a narrative of 'progress' that moves from the active persecution of queers under anti-sodomy laws only 30 years ago to the establishment of the 'Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer' ('GLLO') unit over the past decade and the 'Prejudice Motivated Crime' (PMC) strategy released last year. These developments have come about, in part, through vocal queer criticism of longstanding police homophobia and discrimination. Some prominent LGBTI groups have received these initiatives as welcome reforms, disregarding the ways that queer and trans people continue to be criminalised. To work towards safety for all queers and trans folk we need to tackle transphobia and homophobia at their roots.

TRANSPHOBIA AND HOMOPHOBIA ISN'T JUST ABOUT INDIVIDUALS

LGBTI groups working collaboratively with the police focus on homophobic and transphobic violence and oppression in terms of individual behaviours and ignorance. Instead, we see transphobia and homophobia as structural issues. Queer and trans folks are more vulnerable to employment and housing discrimination than our straight peers, and almost a quarter of homeless youth are queer or trans. Dominant belief systems promote the ideas that queer and trans folks are worth less, are dangerous just by existing, that our identities are a lie, or that we need to be pressured or punished into acting straight. These ideas are widespread, often legally sanctioned and form part of the status quo. Approaches focusing on GLLOs and individual crimes won't get to the roots of queer and trans oppression.

POLICE RACISM IS A QUEER ISSUE

The ongoing effects of colonialism displace and impoverish Aboriginal communities, making Aboriginal people vulnerable to racist street policing. As public spaces are increasingly privatised, people who lack wealth are over-policed and excluded. Recent reports show that African young people in Melbourne experience disproportionate police surveillance, harassment and violence on a daily basis. Police often use ethnic descriptors of perpetrators to target racialised communities and sections of the queer media perpetuate racist sentiments and stereotypes by describing the perceived ethnicity of perpetrators. This further fuels the myth that communities of colour are more homophobic than white communities. Queer and trans people are present in many different communities. Many queer and trans people are also poor, or Aboriginal, or migrants, or dis/abled. **We must move beyond single-issue politics.** Different forms

of oppression - whether based on race, class, ability, gender or sexuality - cannot be neatly divided up or separated out. Our queerness and gender non-conformity aren't isolated from other aspects of our lives. Our presence in every community is our strength and that's been our rallying cry for decades.

"STILL, AREN'T GLLOS BETTER THAN NOTHING?!"

Police GLLOs and the PMC strategy co-opt the fear and rage queer and trans people experience as targets of both state-administered and interpersonal violence. LGBTI collaborations with the police legitimise, strengthen and expand the reach of existing policing practices that focus on individual punishment and target poor and racialised communities. We can't let police initiatives couched in progressive rhetoric deflect our attention away from police brutality and a rapidly expanding criminal punishment system. Not in our name. We will not be complicit. As police collaboration remains at the top of many LGBTI agendas, the routine police harassment confronting queer Indigenous people, queers of colour, poor queers, and their communities, is silenced and ignored by mainstream gay organising. **Collaborating with police excludes too many queers.** If our goal is to create safer lives for all queer people then we need to tackle homophobia, transphobia, racism, sexism and ableism in all their forms.

WE SUPPORT STRATEGIES THAT WEAKEN OPPRESSIVE INSTITUTIONS, NOT STRENGTHEN THEM

Today's Pride March is an international tradition that commemorates the Stonewall riots, an historical event catalysed by queers and transwomen of colour defending themselves against a transphobic, homophobic and racist bar raid by police. In order to honour this legacy, we're organising against state violence and multiple forms of oppression, continuing radical queer histories that span across borders. **Instead of directing our energies towards creating alliances with the police we should build alternative solidarities that resist and refuse oppressive relations.** By focusing on grassroots organising with other progressive community-based groups we can create social change from the ground up rather than relying on a "trickle down" effect. We can imagine more creative ways to open up discussions in our communities around intertwined issues of homophobia, transphobia, racism, poverty, sexism, ableism and how to address these on all levels. We can campaign for increased access to services and support for those most marginalised in queer communities - such as housing, healthcare, education and welfare. These approaches encourage more holistic and long-term visions of community safety for all queers and our allies. **None of Us or All of Us.**

Contact: abolitioncollective@gmail.com

This pamphlet was created by **Queering the Air**, a new queer radio show on 3CR Radio 855am 3pm every Sunday, and **The Abolition Collective**, committed to creating safer communities without prisons or policing.

