

## **Working to Eliminate Poverty, Racism and Militarism: Resource Center for Nonviolence Calls for Action to Prevent Militarization and Racial Profiling in Local Law Enforcement.**

In 1967 the great nonviolent activist Dr. Martin Luther King identified the three greatest threats to America: poverty, racism, and militarism.

48 years later America and Santa Cruz continue to suffer these threats.

The Resource Center for Nonviolence calls on local governments in Santa Cruz County to make our democracy work for everybody by continuing to combat poverty, racism, and militarism.

**Poverty:** The Santa Cruz city council has for decades used economic development and progressive commitment to social services to combat poverty. Still we have far to go. People who are poor and homeless are disproportionately contacted by law officials in a way that does not seek to address underlying causes that create inequality leading to crime and violence, but only attacks the symptoms. We support efforts underway involving social service agencies to change this.

**Racism:** The city council has taken stands of noncooperation with the federal INS in a significant effort to combat racism and violence against local residents.

The killings of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and Eric Garner in New York City, by police officers and ratified by Grand Juries, are visible examples of a reality in the American legal system that Michelle Alexander calls “the New Jim Crow.” People of color are disproportionately contacted by police, arrested, charged, convicted, and incarcerated across America. This reality is institutional racism.

The Resource Center for Nonviolence calls upon local governments to study practices and policies of law enforcement, legal systems, and incarceration in Santa Cruz County to combat racial and social class profiling and bias that make justice unequal under the law.

**Militarism:** Across America, lines between the military and civilian law enforcement are blurring and merging. Since 9/11, the Department of Homeland Security and the CIA have taken increased combatant roles abroad and in America. The “war on terror” justifies invasions of foreign countries, occupations, and police actions domestically. Now the Department of Homeland Security provides grants to local police departments, in Program 1033 and other means, to supply military equipment for local law enforcement.

City of Santa Cruz acceptance of this Homeland Security grant opens a door to a trend of accepting unnecessary military equipment.

The Resource Center for Nonviolence calls upon local government to prevent militarization of local law enforcement. Military style vehicles, even if they carry no weapons, present a posture of defensiveness and power that separates policing roles from community service. In this climate, the Center calls upon the City of Santa Cruz to rescind the decision to purchase an armored vehicle under a Department of Homeland Security grant.

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The job our society gives to police officers is one that most citizens refuse ourselves. The city asks police to respond to difficult and dangerous conflicts and violence in our community. We respect our officers' dedication and safety, and we support a police force in our community that does maintain peace and de-escalates violence without the use of military equipment.

The Resource Center for Nonviolence calls upon local government, law enforcement staff, and all community members to come together, across all divides, to engage community safety issues, build trust, and support constructive community responses to conflict and to those caught in violence.

The triple threats of poverty, racism, and militarism, need to be fought by everybody, working together, and by local government as well as national government.

Thank you for your consideration and dedication to conducting fair, well-publicized meetings to include a diversity of voices on these issues.

In Community,  
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