

Sins Invalid Statement on Police Violence

[Image description: Watercolor painting of a young Black man's face and shoulders. He wears a black beanie and a black sweatshirt and has a goatee. He is gazing intensely at the viewer. Large handwritten text above him says "Justice for Mario Woods." Handwritten text to his left says "Over 50% of people killed by police are disabled." Handwritten text to his right says "No comprehensive federal data is collected, but available reports show at least half of those killed by police have psych disabilities. These statistics do not include people with mobility, sensory, or developmental impairments or people who are otherwise neurodivergent or sick/chronically ill." Handwritten text on his sweatshirt says "Disability Justice Now" and "#BlackDisabledLivesMatter." Art by Sins Invalid and Micah Bazant]

In outrage and solidarity, we offer the Sins Invalid Statement on Police Violence, originally released on September 4th, 2014 to coincide with the Stop Urban Shield rally and noise demo in Oakland, CA. It was then released again in December 2015 when Mario Woods, a young Black disabled man, was shot over twenty times by San Francisco police while slowly walking away. In horror and sadness, we updated and re-released it in June 2017 after the death of Charleena Lyles, a pregnant Black mother with a mental health disability, who was killed by Seattle police in her own home after calling to report a burglary. Charleena was murdered in front of her children, one of whom has Down Syndrome.

Sins Invalid is a disability justice-based performance project centering disabled artists of color and queer/gender non-conforming disabled artists. Our work celebrates the embodied humanity of disabled people, and we understand all bodies live in a multitude of very real social, political, economic and cultural contexts.

As an organization led by disabled people of color and queer/gender non-conforming people with disabilities, we live with high rates of state violence, from forced institutionalization, to ongoing police brutality and the murder of Black and brown disabled people.

We witness the horror of a deadly chokehold placed on Eric Garner, a Black man with multiple disabilities, by the NYPD. Our hearts break for Kayla Moore, a fat Black schizophrenic trans woman suffocated to death by police in her home in Berkeley, after her friends called 911 for help. (Similar to Eric Garner, Kayla's killers tried to blame her death on "obesity.") We are outraged by the in-custody death of Lakota 24 year-old mother of two, Sarah Lee Circle Bear, who was refused

medical care; her last words were "I'm not faking." We embrace the memories of Victoria Arellano, an under-documented Latinx trans woman, and Johana Medina, an asylum-seeking Latinx trans woman, who were both living with AIDS, and died in ICE facilities as a result of being denied medical care. We feel devastation with the family of Natasha McKenna, who cried "You promised you wouldn't kill me!" just before being tasered to death by half a dozen guards in a Virginia jail. We stand with Lashonn White, a Deaf queer Black woman who was running toward police for safety, and was instead tased by police and jailed for three days without access to an interpreter. And we embrace survivors Andre Thompson and Bryson Chaplin, two Black brothers who now have permanent disabilities because a racist white police officer in Olympia, WA shot them multiple times each for attempting to steal a twelve-pack of beer.

We know that modern day police forces are direct descendants of the "slave patrols" created to police and control the bodies and labor of enslaved African people and violently repress their resistance to slavery. We recognize that Black, Indigenous and people of color with disabilities are pipelined from "special education" to incarceration of one form or another, and that more cops in schools means more police terror, especially for disabled youth. We acknowledge that people Native to this land are among the highest targeted to experience police terror and that the horrifically high number of Missing and Murdered Indigenous People is a form of state violence.

We know from experience that disabled people who are Autistic, who are D/deaf, who live with mental health impairments or cognitive impairments, epilepsy or movement disorders, are at highest risk of being assaulted by police, and that this is deeply compounded when we are further marginalized by homelessness, violence against trans people, and white supremacy.

We do not see training as a viable solution, since it leaves intact the fundamental belief of the police that their purpose is to "control the situation." As people with disabilities, our bodies and minds are not controllable and cannot always comply – this must be understood. Our bodies and minds are not criminal. We are unique and we celebrate our complexities.

We strongly oppose Urban Shield and all programs that seek to militarize police departments through paramilitary training and military equipment, as they serve to further dehumanize communities of color and poor and working class communities as "domestic enemies." Increased militarization of the police leads directly to increased police violence, particularly against disabled people of color.

We grieve that people with disabilities have largely been ignored and dismissed as

key leaders in resistance to state violence by the US Left, silencing our stories and maintaining barriers to a united front.

It is within the context of disability justice that we demand that ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) be abolished. No extent of reform can humanize an agency designed to criminalize migrants, deny their humanity, and profit off their detention and suffering. It is within the context of disability justice that we call for an end to the Prison Industrial Complex, including policing, surveillance and incarceration. It is within the context of disability justice that we align ourselves with Transformative Justice, a vision and emerging practice that seeks to address violence by holding people accountable within our communities and putting the power back in the hands of those most impacted.

[Image description: Black and white charcoal drawing of a Black woman with long hair, looking directly at the viewer. Text at the top says "Charleena Lyles" in bold black letters. Text at the bottom says: "#SayHerName, Black Disabled Lives Matter, Black Mothers Matter" Image by Micah Bazant.]

[Image description: A hand-drawn set of teeth on the edge of a box that contains the words: "We can take a particular kind of leadership, and the bigger our goals for ourselves, the more we ask for, the more potential we have for doing that across many movements... For example, accessible public transportation puts you directly up against the oil companies who have a vested interest in automobile transportation. Who else is up against oil companies? The indigenous people in Ecuador who are fighting Chevron, people in Nigeria who are up against Royal Dutch Shell, the people in the Gulf dealing with the BP spill...The preciousness of our bodies and our lives is the basis for a huge coalition." – Aurora Levins Morales]