

NLG Ohio and Partners Get Cases against Protesters Dropped

By NLG Ohio Chapter

On May 23rd, 71 protesters, plus two Legal Observers, were arrested during demonstrations following the acquittal of Michael Brelo, a Cleveland police officer charged in connection with the deaths of Timothy Russell and Malissa Williams in November 2012. Protesters were pushed into and trapped in a small alley, given no opportunity to leave, and then arrested for failure to disperse and jailed for two nights. Fifty-three protestors were charged with misdemeanor offenses and four additional protestors were charged with felony offenses.



Cops block an alley to kettle protesters. (Photo: Jocelyn Rosnick)

In anticipation of demonstrations, the City had previously developed a “rapid response strategy” in order to protect “peaceful protesters” which tasked volunteer marshals with identifying “agitators” and reporting rumors of unrest or disorder to the Cleveland Division of Police (CDP). The City’s rapid response program also chose to utilize lime-green badges to identify their marshals, causing potential confusion with the Guild’s Legal Observer identifiers. Shortly after the program’s announcement, the Ohio NLG issued a press release urging the City, the CDP, and the marshals to respect the rights of all activists and differentiating Guild Legal Observers and their lime-green hats and armbands from the City’s rapid response teams.

Throughout the May 23rd demonstrations, the Ohio NLG, with assistance from the Black Movement Law Project (BMLP) and Shanna Merola of the Detroit and Michigan NLG, coordinated multiple teams of Legal Observers throughout the city.

The Ohio NLG and the BMLP also coordinated jail support while protesters were in custody. The Ohio NLG worked with the Cleveland NAACP to recruit pro bono defense attorneys to appear at the arrestees’ arraignments.

After the arrestees were released, the Ohio NLG and the BMLP met with Cleveland city officials to raise concerns about

the lack of speedy processing for the arrestees, discuss the arrest of NLG Legal Observers during the demonstrations, and reiterate the potential for confusion resulting from the lime-green rapid response team badges. The Ohio NLG has also launched the CLEMovementLaw.com with Cleveland Action as a resource for the arrestees and future demonstrators and created and distributed hot cards to inform demonstrators of their legal rights during a protest.

Attorneys recruited by the Ohio NLG and Cleveland NAACP have continued to provide pro bono representation for arrestees through the resolution of their cases. At present, all misdemeanor cases have been either nulled by the prosecutor, dismissed by the Court, or resolved through plea deals or participation in first-time offender programs. Three of the felony cases are in the process of being resolved while the fourth is set for trial. An ACLU of Ohio suit against the city has also recently begun settlement discussions.

The Ohio NLG is hosting the Mideast (“Rustbelt”) Regional Conference at Case Western Reserve University School of Law on March 19-21, 2016. A heavy emphasis will be placed on building local capacity to provide legal support to RNC demonstrators on July 18-21, 2016. ■

Run the Jewels Break Down 'Meow the Jewels' Donation Recipients

After families of Eric Garner and Michael Brown split \$40,000, remaining and future profits will go to National Lawyers Guild's Mass Defense Committee

BY DANIEL KRUPP | October 25, 2015

Run the Jewels have updated their 'Meow the Jewels' Kickstarter page with a list of beneficiaries of some of the album's proceeds in the Rolling Stone article. www.rollingstone.com

Run the Jewels “Meows” the Guild

During the Law for the People Convention, the NLG learned that in addition to \$40,000 in proceeds from their feline-inspired remix album, “Meow the Jewels” pledged to the families of Mike Brown and Eric Garner, acclaimed rap group Run the Jewels will donate the album’s remaining and future profits to the National Lawyers Guild Mass Defense Committee! Read more in Rolling Stone.

To donate to the NLG Mass Defense program, visit nlg.org/donate.