



Stop Cop City: A Repro Justice Fight

What is Repro Justice?

Reproductive justice is broader than *just* obtaining access to abortion care. It partners reproductive rights with social justice issues and it stands on four major tenets: 1) the right to bodily autonomy; 2) the right to have children; 3) the right to not have children; and 4) the right to parent our children in safe and healthy environments.¹

Audre Lorde said, “There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.” RJ dissects how the ability to birth and parent children is linked directly to conditions of our communities, and these conditions are not just a matter of individual choice.²

RJ was created to uplift *all* of the barriers that Black and Brown birthing people are faced with and it was created to center the most marginalized in our society, because all oppressions impact our reproductive lives.³

What is ‘Cop City’?

“Cop City”, also known as the “Atlanta Public Safety Training Center”, is a mega police training center that will be built in the Weelaunee Forest, known as one of the “four lungs” of Atlanta.⁴ Building this facility will cause mass destruction to the forest. The City of Atlanta has leased 381-acres of the Weelaunee Forest, stolen Muscogee land, to the Atlanta Police Foundation for a police military facility funded largely by corporations.⁵ The center will cost around \$90 million, utilizing tax dollars and the money from private donors.⁶

The facility will include shooting ranges, plans for bomb testing, and will practice tear gas deployment. The plans also include military-grade training facilities, a mock city to practice urban warfare, explosives testing areas, dozens of shooting ranges, and a Black Hawk helicopter landing pad.⁷

City officials claim that this facility could improve policing but it has seen major pushback from community members, abolitionists, environmentalists, and community organizers against police brutality.⁸ Atlanta has already begun to demolish parts of the forest and clear debris and states that it will begin its first phase in late 2024.⁹

Why is ‘Stop Cop City’ an RJ Fight?

RJ doesn’t ignore the social issues that are not directly linked to reproductive care.

¹ <https://www.sistersong.net/reproductive-justice>

² <https://www.sistersong.net/reproductive-justice>

³ <https://www.law.berkeley.edu/php-programs/courses/fileDL.php?fID=4051>

⁴ <https://www.mainlinezine.com/this-is-the-atlanta-way-a-primer-on-cop-city/>

⁵ <https://stopcop.city/>

⁶ <https://stopcop.city/what-is-cop-city/>

⁷ <https://stopcop.city/what-is-cop-city/>

⁸ <https://abcnews.go.com/US/atlantas-cop-city-people-protesting/story?id=96716095>

⁹ <https://atlantapolicefoundation.org/programs/public-safety-training-center/>



Firstly, Cop City is an environmental justice issue. Environmental justice is *necessary* in order to parent our children and raise them in a healthy environment. Cop City is going to require a major deforestation effort - jeopardizing our climate and further making it difficult to raise our children in a world they deserve. Atlanta has the highest percentage of tree canopy of any major metropolitan area in the United States, a very unique and extremely beneficial part of this city.¹⁰

A major key in protecting a city from the drastic effects of the climate crisis, is keeping and planting more trees. The Weelaunee forest in Southeast Atlanta helps to filter rainwater and prevent flooding, which we should note as important because many areas in Atlanta flooded only weeks ago after a heavy rain.¹¹ Trees also reduce energy usage, remove air pollutants, filter stormwater AND cool hot city streets by providing shade and releasing water vapor.¹²

This past summer is one of the hottest on record for Atlanta. Since 1977, the summer temperatures have been on a steady rise each year. On average Georgians experience about 37 days that are 90 degrees or higher, but this summer Georgia experienced at least 47 days of 90 degrees and above.¹³ On a global scale, July 2023 was Earth's hottest month on record.¹⁴ Because on a national scale nothing is done about the climate crisis, the least we should be doing is protecting the forests that we do have. To clear acres of forest for Cop City, would significantly reduce the benefits that they provide.

Secondly, we are already living in an overly policed state. Police do not protect us, police don't usually prevent crimes, but they *do* terrorize Black and brown communities. RJ fights for bodily autonomy and the right to parent in safe communities. Police are doing the opposite of creating safe communities.

City officials claim that Cop City will help boost recruitment efforts.¹⁵ It is a known fact that police terrorize, and are ever so present in, Black and brown communities at higher rates. The facility will be built in a predominantly Black and low-income area, the very communities that are more likely to be overpoliced in the first place.¹⁶ The completion of Cop City will only increase their presence because of its recruitment efforts. We do not need more police in our streets. With a higher police population, we also need to be hyper aware of the criminalization of pregnancy. It is a very real possibility the state, and therefore the police, may be more attentive to pregnancy outcomes and more violent because they will have more power to be present in more spaces. This could cause less Atlantans to seek medical care for fear of being criminalized.

Not only are the police going to be further militarized at the Cop City facility, but the facility will also have a mock city that mirrors an "urban landscape" and will be instructing the

¹⁰ <https://defendtheatlantaforest.org/>

¹¹ <https://defendtheatlantaforest.org/>

¹² <https://treeboston.org/tree-equity/benefits-of-urban-trees/>

¹³ <https://www.fox5atlanta.com/news/hot-weather-georgia-summer-2023-fall-equinox>

¹⁴ <https://www.fox5atlanta.com/news/july-2023-was-officially-earths-hottest-month-on-record-by-a-wide-margin>

¹⁵ <https://abcnews.go.com/US/atlantas-cop-city-people-protesting/story?id=96716095>

¹⁶ <https://www.newyorker.com/news/letter-from-the-south/the-new-fight-over-an-old-forest-in-atlanta>



police on how to approach those spaces as well.¹⁷ The facility will utilize military tactics, training the police to interact with Atlantans in a highly militarized fashion. Having police patrol a city while having a militarized mindset is extremely concerning.

Additionally, current policing practices have a profound effect on public health, both mental and physical.¹⁸ Evidence from a 2020 study shows that residing in a neighborhood where lethal policing has occurred makes individuals more likely to have high blood pressure and other disease risk factors. Mental health is also deeply affected, even without physical violence.¹⁹ Police surveillance, police stops, and verbal harassment have substantial public health impacts.²⁰ These encounters are linked to heightened depressive symptoms and higher rates of trauma, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress. Youth of color who are exposed to either aggressive police practices or indirect police contact exhibit lower educational performance. We deserve to thrive in our communities, both physically and mentally.²¹

Reproductive Justice is the right to raise your children in a safe and healthy environment. An over policed city is not safe. Militarized police forces are not safe. The real and drastic effects of the climate crisis are not healthy. Stopping Cop City is a Reproductive Justice fight.

Stop Cop City, WEEK OF ACTION: November 6-13 in Atlanta. Visit <https://stopcop.city/news/> to learn more and join the fight.

¹⁷ <https://stopcop.city/what-is-cop-city/>

¹⁸

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8807347/#:~:text=Recent%20evidence%20shows%20that%20residing,et%20al.%2C%202018>

¹⁹

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8807347/#:~:text=Recent%20evidence%20shows%20that%20residing,et%20al.%2C%202018>

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<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8807347/#:~:text=Recent%20evidence%20shows%20that%20residing,et%20al.%2C%202018>

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<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8807347/#:~:text=Recent%20evidence%20shows%20that%20residing,et%20al.%2C%202018>