

## Georgetown Law and Sheppard Mullin Create Nationwide Hub for Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement

### Joint Project Between Georgetown University Law Center's Innovative Policing Program and Sheppard Mullin Aims to Help Prevent Police Misconduct

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Georgetown Law's Innovative Policing Program and global law firm Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton LLP are pleased to announce the creation of the ABLE (Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement \*) Project, the first nationwide program dedicated to promoting, teaching and studying "active bystandership" within law enforcement agencies.

When police officers remain passive bystanders in the face of misconduct by other officers, abuses can thrive, but when officers gain the skills needed to become active bystanders, they can intervene to prevent peer misconduct. The ABLE Project will be a signature program within Georgetown Law's Innovative Policing Program, and it will lead the effort to create a police culture of intervention to prevent police misconduct and to protect officers and the public from dangerous mistakes.

"When Minneapolis Officer Derek Chauvin put his knee onto George Floyd's neck, three other officers stood by and did nothing while Floyd died. That's only the most recent high-profile illustration of the harm police officers can cause when they fail to intervene to prevent misconduct by their colleagues," said Georgetown Law Professor Christy Lopez, Co-Director of the Innovative Policing Program. "But there are countless other incidents of police misconduct, large and small, that undermine police legitimacy and that could have been prevented with bystander officer intervention."

"Sheppard Mullin is proud to support and co-found the ABLE Project," said Guy Halgren, Sheppard Mullin's Chairman. "We all have a duty and responsibility to look out for others and to not simply stand back and not intervene when something is wrong. We believe the ABLE Project is a great step in shifting the current paradigm and helping both law enforcement agencies and the general public work better together."

Jonathan Aronie, Sheppard Mullin partner and court-appointed federal monitor of the New Orleans Police Department Consent Decree, added, "History is filled with examples of people not speaking up when, in hindsight, it seems quite obvious they should have. Through our work with academic institutions like the Georgetown University Law Center and the Loyola University New Orleans College of Law, police leaders and community stakeholders across the country, and a number of other experts, we have learned a lot about why police officers (and, frankly, humans generally) oftentimes fail to intervene." Co-monitor David Douglass added, "The ABLE Project will teach and prepare police officers to use tried and true strategies and tactics of active bystandership to keep themselves and their communities safe."

The ABLE Project will build upon the groundbreaking work of Dr. Ervin Staub and other experts to create standards and a training curriculum for a robust active bystandership law enforcement program; teach both local communities and law enforcement agencies the strategies and tactics for an effective intervention; provide program evaluation and certification opportunities; undertake cutting-edge academic research; serve as a national hub for active bystandership resources and technical assistance; and partner with law enforcement agencies across the country like New Orleans, Baltimore, Washington D.C., Charleston, and others that already have made great strides in the area of active bystander training for police officers.

The Georgetown Law and Sheppard Mullin partnership also will provide Georgetown Law students opportunities to work closely with Sheppard Mullin attorneys, who are working on a pro bono basis, on these and other nationally important community-centered projects. The ABLE Project will be run by Georgetown Law Professors Christy Lopez and Rosa Brooks, and guided by a nationally recognized, hands-on Board of Advisors, led by Aronie.

Georgetown Law and Sheppard Mullin leaders of the new ABLE Project actively participated in the development of the nation's first police department-wide peer intervention program created by the New Orleans Police Department. That program, called EPIC, for *Ethical Policing Is Courageous*, has demonstrated the effectiveness of the active bystandership model in reducing misconduct, reducing mistakes and promoting officer health and wellness.

### **About Georgetown Law's Innovative Policing Program**

Georgetown University Law Center's Innovative Policing Program is dedicated to identifying new approaches to long-standing questions about the role police should play in a diverse and democratic society. The Innovative Policing Program brings together many of the nation's top experts on criminal justice and policing, including several members of the Georgetown University Law Center faculty. The Innovative Policing Program offers the Police for Tomorrow Fellowship Program for new Washington, D.C. police officers and police department personnel; Police Academy lectures and workshops; and a project-based practicum for Georgetown University law students. The Innovative Policing Program also carries out a variety of policing-related projects and hosts convenings on policing topics. You can learn more about the Innovative Policing Program by visiting <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/innovative-policing-program/> .

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