

National Lawyers Guild

Personal Journal, Reflection on Organizational Direction and Anti-State Activism

I am writing a personal journal about my experience with the National Lawyers Guild. At the time, a leader of the organization in Vermont was leaving their post, and the organization was seeking a new chair. After some time passed without anyone stepping forward, I submitted a letter offering my services, motivated by my concern for addressing modern slavery and human trafficking.

Not long afterward, another individual was nominated, Jayna Ahsaf, a name I did not recognize, and someone I had not previously worked with in Vermont. I wished her success, chose not to attend the chair meeting, and withdrew my offer. At that point, I began to sense that the organization carried a strongly activist orientation and that its internal discussions were often highly charged. Having already stepped away from activism, I chose not to involve myself further in many of the conversations that followed.

Because of my earlier experiences with anti-state activism as a military retiree, this period stood out to me. The organizational direction being discussed at the time emphasized anti-statist frameworks, particularly the abolition of the prison system in Vermont. While I support meaningful prison reform, I found that named organizations were more frequently centered on abolition of prison systems rather than on issues of trafficking and modern slavery, which I view as urgent and under-addressed.

Additional topics, including Palestine, gay rights, and immigration, were also introduced into organizational discussions. While these issues are complex and important, the overall tone appeared increasingly shaped by partisan and ideological priorities. As someone concerned for people affected by war, exploitation, and displacement across many contexts, I began to feel that these discussions lacked balance and practical grounding.

Over time, I withdrew my support for activism more broadly as many of these spaces felt emotionally intense and, for me, unhealthy. These observations reflect broader organizational trends.

As a personal statement, I respect and appreciate the passion of activists and continue to support prison reform in constructive and humane ways. However, I believe certain activist patterns have developed that risk moving away from reform toward ideological positions that, brass tacks, support *Modern Cold War*. I ultimately believe in reform rather than abolition, and in approaches that remain grounded, inclusive, and attentive to issues such as **modern slavery**.

References and related organizations:

1. <https://www.nationalcouncil.us/>
 2. <https://vtracialjusticealliance.org/our-work-2/>
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