

Originally Presented on:	11/12/2020
Type of Action:	Recommendation
Status/Result:	New Business

S.A. Resolution #11

Calling For the Disarmament of the Cornell University Police Department

Sponsors: Uche Chukwukere '21, Shaun Roberts '23, Tyler Brown '22, Angeliki Cintron '22, Valeria Valencia '23, Kat Restrepo '21, Cat Huang '21, Selam Woldai '23, Lucy Contreras '21, Sherell Farmer '22, Estefania Perez '21, Moriah Adeghe '21, Tomás Reuning '21, Meshach Boyce '21, Lissan Bagayoko '22, Nnaemeka Nwankpa '22, Mardiya Shardow '23, Jenniviv Bansah '23

ABSTRACT: This resolution is calling for the disarmament of the Cornell University Police department.

Whereas, The policing system in America is rooted in racism, slavery, corruption, and violence, particularly against Black and Brown people, which has been commonplace since the institution's inception;

Whereas, American law enforcement as we know began as slave patrols and union busters where squadrons of white volunteers that enforced laws related to slavery by capturing and returning enslaved people who had escaped, crushing uprisings, and punishing enslaved workers believed to have violated plantation rules;

Whereas, Police have upheld and enforced racist laws since slavery, the black codes, and the Jim Crow laws;

Whereas, *Ugly Laws* were enacted as early forms of policing that primarily targeted low income and people with disabilities;

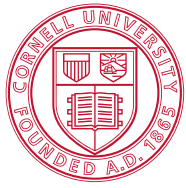
Whereas, Ugly Laws essentially "prohibited people with noticeable physical disabilities from visiting public spaces;"

Whereas, Ugly laws disproportionately targeted folks at the intersection of race, income, and disability status;

Whereas, After the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment, slavery took on the form of prison labor camps, several of which were located on the grounds of former plantations;

Whereas, The prisoners in these camps were not safeguarded by the Fourteenth Amendment thus denying any type of protection from the harsh, unpaid labor that characterized these prisons;

Whereas, Policing was henceforth racially motivated, preying on almost exclusively young Black men, causing these prisons to be filled based on the racist predispositions that remained during the Reconstruction era;



Cornell University Student Assembly

43 **Whereas,** This exploited workforce soon after were subjected to “convict leasing” which allowed
44 for plantation owners to buy back previously enslaved peoples for a small fee that went to the state;

45
46 **Whereas,** To this day, the exploitation of prison labor is continually perpetuated, predominantly
47 targeting Black neighborhoods to sustain these racist systems which disproportionately police and
48 incriminate Black individuals;

49
50 **Whereas,** Police in the Jim Crow Era were integral in the mandatance of separate public spaces for
51 blacks and whites, such as schools, libraries, water fountains and restaurants. Police routinely
52 subjected Black Americans in violation of such laws, or who dared to deviate from social norms, to
53 intense beatings and other forms of police brutality;

54 **Whereas,** Police actively subjected peaceful protesters during the Civil Rights era to violence
55 through acts involving use of police dogs, fire hydrants, batons and other means of physical
56 violence, with the goal of suppressing protest and maintaining the existing racial status quo;

57 **Whereas,** Policing on college campuses started as a way to break up student movements before they
58 grew large enough to effectively pressure the administration to win change;

59 **Whereas,** Recent incidents suggest that policing in higher education continues to utilize the violent
60 tactics used to suppress the Vietnam War and civil-rights activists;

61 **Whereas,** Recent incidents include campus police pepper-spraying a row of passive, seated students,
62 unlawfully detaining students, murdering innocent unarmed people (including one during a period of
63 distress due to mental illness);

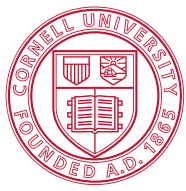
64 **Whereas,** The need for weapons has increasingly come into question as a result of the violent crime
65 rate on college campuses decreasing 27 percent from 2004-2010. Despite such a decrease, more
66 sworn officers with firearms (94 percent), chemical or pepper spray (94 percent), taser-like devices
67 (40 percent), and in some cases military-grade equipment, have been simultaneously added to college
68 campuses;

69 **Whereas,** The most common crimes at peer institutions, such as Harvard University, appear to be
70 mostly (95%) property related as opposed to those crimes requiring campus police to be heavily
71 armed. Further, at schools like SUNY Cortland, school administrators condemn an armed police
72 force for creating an unnecessary aura of power and domination on campus, as opposed to a role of
73 helpers, protectors and problem solvers;

74 **Whereas,** Unarmed police officers are similarly effective as armed police officers in deterring crime
75 through patrol ([American Society of Criminology’s Director of the Division of Experimental](#)
76 [Criminology](#));

77
78 **Whereas,** Unarmed uniformed private security guards have a crime deterrent effect through patrol
79 ([ASA DEC](#));

80



Cornell University Student Assembly

81 **Whereas,** An alternative solution to policing can take the form of [targeted community investments](#),
82 such as investing into more CAPS staff and making mental health services more accessible to the
83 campus community;

84
85 **Whereas,** The police [should not respond to calls concerning mental health crises](#) or medical
86 emergencies, which should fall under the jurisdiction of EMTs and social workers, who are more
87 equipped and trained to handle these situations;

88
89 **Whereas,** Decriminalization helps reduce crime. CUPD should not respond to situations
90 concerning alcohol and drug abuse, including patrolling parties or being called to dorms when RAs
91 smell marijuana. Rather, alcohol and drug use should be decriminalized so that medical professionals
92 will instead respond appropriately when students require support related to substance abuse;

93
94 **Whereas,** Such alternatives target and prevent the roots of crime rather than what police forces do,
95 which is merely reacting to and reproducing crime;

96
97 **Whereas,** [Portland State University](#) disarmed their campus police this fall. Their officers will now
98 conduct patrols without firearms, but are still permitted “non-lethal” tasers. The university has a
99 “Reimagine Campus Safety Steering Committee” dedicated to providing recommendations on
100 campus safety without armed officers. This policy change was in response to the fatal shooting of
101 Jason Washington on the PSU campus. Cornell should not wait for a tragedy to disarm CUPD;

102
103 **Whereas,** [The Massachusetts College of Art and Design](#) has an unarmed police force, and the
104 Board of Trustees voted to keep their campus police unarmed in 2019. The MassArt campus police
105 tried to regain their firearms, but a petition of over 550 students and community members urged the
106 Board of Trustees to keep campus police officers unarmed;

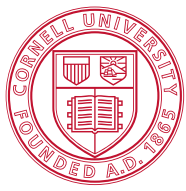
107
108 **Whereas,** Students at the [University of Chicago](#) founded the #CareNotCops campaign in 2018 with
109 the intention of disarming, defunding, and disbanding the UCPD. The campaign started after the
110 UCPD shot a student on campus who was experiencing a mental health episode; once again, Cornell
111 should not wait for a tragedy to occur to make change. When the University of Chicago refused to
112 engage with students, activists occupied UCPD headquarters for 20 hours. Students are still actively
113 petitioning the University of Chicago to disarm, defund, and disband the UCPD;

114
115 **Whereas,** Students at [Harvard University](#) are also calling to disband their university police force.
116 Their demands were reinvigorated over the summer when [HUPD officers](#) were spotted in Boston
117 monitoring a demonstration after George Floyd’s death. This resulted in the University releasing an
118 [official statement](#) announcing an independent review of HUPD;

119
120 **Whereas,** The [Black Students for Disarmament at Yale](#) organization sent an [open letter](#) to the Yale
121 administration asking for the disarmament and dismantling of the Yale Police department.

122
123 **Whereas,** This letter came after a Yale police officer fired 16 shots into the car of Stephanie
124 Washington and Paul Witherspoon- two unarmed, Black youth- in 2019. Cornell should not wait for
125 gun violence to occur to disarm the CUPD;

126



Cornell University Student Assembly

127 **Whereas,** Prior to 2005, the SUNY Cortland campus, as well as two other SUNY campuses, did not
128 permit their University Police to carry lethal weapons;

129
130 **Whereas,** The term lethal weapons does not refer exclusively to guns as any weapon such as taser or
131 baton can be used with deadly force.

132
133 **Whereas,** Cornell should look to create more community structures that do not rely upon the
134 armament of CUPD; Alternative mechanisms are put in place in the transition towards disarming
135 the Cornell University Police Department such as, but not limited to:

136
137 **Whereas,** A mental health emergency response team and an alternative blue-light system that would
138 have no affiliation with CUPD that would provide paid jobs filled by unarmed Ithaca community
139 members.

140
141 **Whereas,** To address issues concerning drug and alcohol related medical emergencies, the Cornell
142 University Emergency Medical Response team should not call CUPD if a student is underaged;

143
144 **Whereas,** In the event of an active threat on campus, CUPD should not have weapons because
145 there exist non-armed responses to perpetrators of gun violence;

146
147 **Whereas,** The quick nature of gun violence does not permit for police officers to prevent violence
148 and or harm incurring on other students since mass shootings often stop at the volition of the
149 perpetrator and not because of armed intervention;

150
151 **Whereas,** More weight should be given to the reality and consequences of police brutality and not
152 the hypothetical mass shooting scenarios that rarely occur in the first place.

153
154 **Be it therefore resolved,** Supporting data and trends overwhelmingly show that police on college
155 campuses should not have access to lethal weapons as it is unnecessary and proves to increase the
156 likelihood of danger/use of lethal force rather than decrease;

157
158 **Be it finally resolved,** Cornell University must take action by immediately disarming the Cornell
159 University Police department of all lethal weapons.

160

161 **Respectfully submitted,**

162

163 Uche Chukwukere '21
164 *Vice President for Finance, Student Assembly*

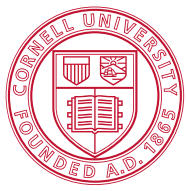
165

166 Lucy Contreras '21
167 *First Generation Students Liaison At-Large, Student Assembly*

168

169 Selam Woldai '23
170 *Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion, Student Assembly*

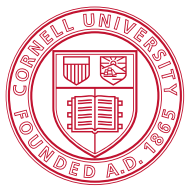
171



Cornell University

Student Assembly

- 172 Kat Restrepo '21
173 *Director of Finance, Office of the Student Advocate*
174
175 Amber Haywood '21
176 *Co-Founder, DoBetterCornell*
177
178 Estefania Perez '21
179 *Arts and Sciences Representative, Student Assembly*
180
181 Tomas Reuning '21
182 *LGBTQIA+ Representative At-Large, Student Assembly*
183
184 Meshach Boyce '21
185 *MGFC Ex-Officio Representative, Student Assembly*
186
187 Sherell Farmer '22
188 *Co-Founder, CornellStudents4BlackLives (CABL)*
189
190 Valeria Valencia '23
191 *Minority Students Liaison At-Large, Student Assembly*
192
193 Tyler Brown '22
194 *Co-Founder, Cornell Abolitionist Revolutionary Society*
195
196 Angeliki Cintron '22
197 *Co-Founder, Cornell Abolitionist Revolutionary Society*
198
199 Shaun Roberts '23
200 *Cornell Abolitionist Revolutionary Society*
201
202 Cat Huang '21
203 *President, Student Assembly*
204
205 Moriah Adeghe '21
206 *Co-Director of Elections, Student Assembly*
207
208 Lassan Bagayoko '22
209 *Co-Chair, Black Students United*
210
211 Nnaemeka Nwankpa '22
212 *Co-Chair, Black Students United*
213
214 Mardiya Shardow '23
215 *Dyson School of Business Representative At-Large*
216
217 Jenniviv Bansah '23



Cornell University

Student Assembly

- 218 *Hotel Students Representative at Cornell*
- 219
- 220 Black Students United
- 221
- 222 Native American and Indigenous Students at Cornell
- 223
- 224 South Asian Council
- 225
- 226 Cornell Democrats
- 227
- 228 Climate Justice Cornell
- 229
- 230 Cornell Abolitionist Revolutionary Society
- 231
- 232 Multicultural Greek and Fraternal Council
- 233
- 234 Cornell Students 4 Black Lives
- 235
- 236 DoBetterCornell
- 237
- 238 People's Organizing Collective
- 239
- 240 La Asociacion Latina
- 241
- 242 Cornell Progressives
- 243
- 244 Cornell DREAM Team
- 245
- 246 Men of Color Council
- 247
- 248 Cornell Asian and Pacific Islander Student Union
- 249
- 250 Arab Students Association at Cornell
- 251
- 252 Gender Justice Advocacy Coalition
- 253
- 254 (Reviewed by: Executive Committee, 4-1-2, 11/11/2020)