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S.A. Resolution #30

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, Yana Kalmyka '20

**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;

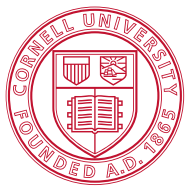
**Whereas,** *Ugly Laws* essentially "prohibited people with noticeable physical disabilities from visiting public spaces;"

**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;



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

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

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

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

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

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

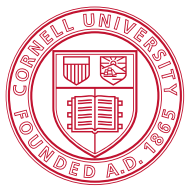
62 **Whereas,** Recent incidents include campus police pepper-spraying a row of passive, seated students,  
63 unlawfully detaining students, murdering innocent unarmed people (including one during a period of  
64 distress due to mental illness);

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

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

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

78



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

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

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

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

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

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

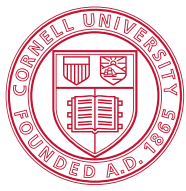
103  
104 **Whereas,** [The Massachusetts College of Art and Design](#) has an unarmed police force, and the  
105 Board of Trustees voted to keep their campus police unarmed in 2019. The MassArt campus police  
106 tried to regain their firearms, but a petition of over 550 students and community members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

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

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

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

123



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

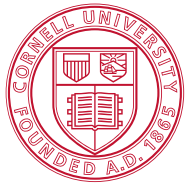
151  
152 **Whereas,** More weight should be given to the reality and consequences of police brutality and not  
153 the hypothetical mass shooting scenarios that rarely occur in the first place.

154  
155 **Whereas,** The Student Assembly hosted a Town Hall on 12/08/2020, which was attended by over  
156 200 students, to hear from constituents about campus police disarmament,

157  
158 **Whereas,** The express purpose of the Town Hall was to create “space for community members to  
159 share their thoughts with SA members on the topic of CUPD disarmament,” and the community’s  
160 input added new information to the SA’s understanding of the interests of the student body,

161  
162 **Whereas,** The student body displayed an overwhelming amount of support for full CUPD  
163 disarmament at the Town Hall, with 51 unique attendees speaking in favor of the resolution and  
164 only 7 unique attendees speaking against,

165  
166 **Whereas,** According to the Student Assembly Charter, Article IV: Membership, Section 8B, it is the  
167 duty of student-elected representatives to “[gather] information about their particular college,”  
168 “[represent] their respective constituencies,” and “[vote] according to their needs and desires,”



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169 and in this case the student body has overwhelmingly voiced their need and desire for CUPD  
170 disarmament at the Town Hall,

171  
172 **Be it therefore resolved,** Supporting data and trends overwhelmingly show that police on college  
173 campuses should not have access to lethal weapons as it is unnecessary and proves to increase the  
174 likelihood of danger/use of lethal force rather than decrease;

175  
176 **Be it therefore resolved,** The SA's 12/08/2020 Town Hall on CUPD Disarmament provided  
177 voting members of the Student Assembly with new information from constituents, namely a strong  
178 showing of support for Resolution 11, which justifies the reconsideration of campus disarmament;

179

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

183

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

186

187 **Respectfully submitted,**

188

189 Uche Chukwukere '21

190 *Vice President for Finance, Student Assembly*

191

192 Lucy Contreras '21

193 *First Generation Students Liaison At-Large, Student Assembly*

194

195 Selam Woldai '23

196 *Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion, Student Assembly*

197

198 Kat Restrepo '21

199 *Director of Finance, Office of the Student Advocate*

200

201 Amber Haywood '21

202 *Co-Founder, DoBetterCornell*

203

204 Estefania Perez '21

205 *Arts and Sciences Representative, Student Assembly*

206

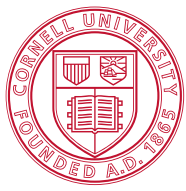
207 Tomas Reuning '21

208 *LGBTQLA+ Representative At-Large, Student Assembly*

209

210 Meshach Boyce '21

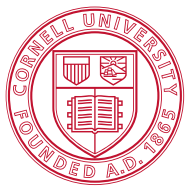
211 *MGFC Ex-Officio Representative, Student Assembly*



# Cornell University

## Student Assembly

212	
213	Sherell Farmer '22
214	<i>Co-Founder, CornellStudents4BlackLives (C4BL)</i>
215	
216	Valeria Valencia '23
217	<i>Minority Students Liaison At-Large, Student Assembly</i>
218	
219	Tyler Brown '22
220	<i>Co-Founder, Cornell Abolitionist Revolutionary Society</i>
221	
222	Angeliki Cintron '22
223	<i>Co-Founder, Cornell Abolitionist Revolutionary Society</i>
224	
225	Shaun Roberts '23
226	<i>Cornell Abolitionist Revolutionary Society</i>
227	
228	Cat Huang '21
229	<i>President, Student Assembly</i>
230	
231	Moriah Adeghe '21
232	<i>Co-Director of Elections, Student Assembly</i>
233	
234	Lassan Bagayoko '22
235	<i>Co-Chair, Black Students United</i>
236	
237	Nnaemeka Nwankpa '22
238	<i>Co-Chair, Black Students United</i>
239	
240	Mardiya Shardow '23
241	<i>Dyson School of Business Representative, Student Assembly</i>
242	
243	Jenniviv Bansah '23
244	<i>Hotel Students Representative at Cornell</i>
245	
246	Black Students United
247	
248	Native American and Indigenous Students at Cornell
249	
250	South Asian Council
251	
252	Cornell Democrats
253	
254	Climate Justice Cornell



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255	
256	Cornell Abolitionist Revolutionary Society
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258	Multicultural Greek and Fraternal Council
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260	Cornell Students 4 Black Lives
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262	DoBetterCornell
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264	People's Organizing Collective
265	
266	La Asociacion Latina
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268	Cornell Progressives
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270	Cornell DREAM Team
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272	Men of Color Council
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274	Cornell Asian and Pacific Islander Student Union
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276	Arab Students Association at Cornell
277	
278	Gender Justice Advocacy Coalition
279	
280	
281	(Reviewed by: Diversity and Inclusion Committee, XX-XX-XXXX, 12/10/2020)