

My name is haley pilgrim. I sat on CCTV Monitoring Committee as GAPSA President in 2018 and met with Penn police as BGAPSA President in 2017, but the hat I'm wearing for you now is as a GA where I have worked with penn police for going into six years. I am reading for you a statement written by a group of RA and GAs.

As former and current resident advisors, spanning all of the University of Pennsylvania's schools, including undergraduate programs and graduate programs, we are writing to support students, alumni, and organizers who are advocating for the funding of public education and the divestment of funding for the Philadelphia Police Department (PPD). We support [Police Free Penn and Drexel Community](#) for Justice in their calls to redirect funding away from policing and toward education and social services.

As resident advisors, we received monthly "briefings" from a representative of the PPD that were racialized and biased against people of color living in the community outside of Penn's campus. These tended to assume a fear-based narrative, providing basic, superficial data about the number of petty crimes, assurances that the police were "on it," and, frequently, anecdotes about the Penn Police's impressive shows of prowess in responding to petty crimes through surveillance—particularly of Black youth—and what might arguably be seen as setting people up to get caught. One GA reports that the detective said "they could tell who was a criminal as opposed to a student," and when asked "how he could tell," he started describing young black culture for instance baggy pants. As students and student leaders tasked with creating a safe, inclusive environment for young scholars and working together to provide programming and other means of community and individual mental health, we constantly received text message alerts warning us about the climate of criminality surrounding and permeating Penn due to "outsider" activity. Police briefers did not respond to our request for information about the danger of sexual violence, racism, and hazing in largely white fraternities on campus.

When out-of-state white supremacists targeted Black first-year UPenn students in 2016 with racist messaging and threats of violence, students and resident advisors protested. We marched with signs and a megaphone to the football field where hundreds of Penn supporters were gathered to watch a game. The intent was to make a showing of support for Black students across the university, and to inform Penn fans and alum about threats to the community. As students approached, Penn police and stadium security forcibly locked the entry gates to the stadium, with an officer grabbing a student to prevent her from entering through the gates as they were being closed. The police repeatedly blocked our entry to the game, even after we were told they could enter with tickets, refusing to give information to protestors but informing other students. In an effort of social control, penn police then instructed all Black students and allies to line up in silence and to prepare to have their bags checked in order to gain entry to the stadium. Even though everyone complied, students were still blocked from entering the stadium. Meanwhile, they permitted entry for non-protesting students. Police broke up the mass of student protestors, claiming that we could enter on a different side of the stadium, but students could not. These students who were just traumatized were not treated with dignity and respect.

We as RAs have long supported and requested funding and programming in mental health services. We encourage the University to redirect funding to recruiting, hiring, and retaining a diverse staff of counselors and mental health professionals.