

**University of Pennsylvania  
Public Safety Review and Outreach Initiative  
Hearing 7: Tuesday, September 15, 2020, 2 p.m. EDT**

**Advisors:**

<b>Dorothy Roberts</b>	Penn Integrates Knowledge Professor of Africana, Law, and Sociology
<b>Reverend Chaz Howard</b>	Vice President for Social Equity and Community

**Panelists:**

<b>Jason Andrechak</b>	Director of Equity and Access, Graduate and Professional Student Assembly
<b>Kristen Ukeomah</b>	B.A. Candidate, Health & Societies 2019-2020 Representative, College of Arts and Sciences, Undergraduate Assembly
<b>Victoria Sanchez</b>	J.D. Candidate, Law M.S. Candidate, Nonprofit Leadership
<b>Lei Brutus</b>	President, Black Law Students Association

[00:00:00]

[00:00:04] **Dorothy Roberts**

Welcome to the seventh virtual hearing of the Penn Public Safety Review and Outreach Initiative. I am Dorothy Roberts; a Penn Integrates Knowledge Professor of Africana Studies, Law, and Sociology. And I, along with Reverend Chaz Howard, are leading this initiative as appointed advisors to Penn President Amy Gutmann. Reverend Howard will introduce himself and welcome you in a minute. We are working with the Law School's Quattrone Center for the Fair Administration of Justice, and you will hear from its Executive Director, John Hollway, after Reverend Howard.

The Public Safety Review and Outreach Initiative is conducting a comprehensive review of public safety at Penn. The goal of the review is to assess Penn's success in creating a physically and emotionally safe environment on campus and in the surrounding

communities while treating every person with equal dignity and respect, and in a way that prioritizes and promotes anti-racism, racial equality, and justice.

The outcome of the initiative will be a report and recommendations we will present to President Amy Gutmann, Executive Vice President Craig Carnaroli, and Provost Wendell Pritchett in the fall.

Our report and recommendations will be based on two main efforts. First, we have begun collecting and are far along in reviewing hundreds of documents from Penn's Division of Public Safety regarding a wide range of policies, procedures, and outcomes, including use of force, vehicle and pedestrian stops, complaints, budgets, transparency, and relationships with other policing agencies.

The second part of our review is why we are here today. We are holding a series of virtual hearings to receive input from members of the Penn and West Philadelphia communities on their experiences with Penn's Division of Public Safety and on their ideas and suggestions. The hearings are being made publicly available via live stream and also recorded for future public access on our website.

Reverend Howard and I both have long-time advocates of racial justice, and we approach our leadership of this initiative very seriously and independently. We have been given complete freedom to listen, to learn, and to make recommendations without any pressure from the university administration. Our aim is to move Penn toward achieving a vision of public safety that treats everyone with equal respect, in which everyone can feel physically and emotionally safe with a sense of equal belonging, and that prioritizes racial justice.

Many of us are finding it hard to go on with business as usual after the recent police violence and ongoing protests in Kenosha, Wisconsin, Rochester, New York, and all around the nation and the world. The work of reimagining public safety is more urgent than ever, and we are very grateful to everyone in the Penn and neighboring communities who are participating in this initiative. We are especially thankful to have a panel of Penn Students today, as students have been the focus of so much we've heard about policing at Penn in past hearings.

I will now turn to my Co-Presidential Advisor, Reverend Chaz Howard.

[00:04:00] **Chaz Howard**

Thank you, Professor Roberts, and thank you, everybody, for tuning in; it means a lot that you're taking out of your time to go on this journey with us to think about what ways that we can improve and care for our Division of Public of Safety as well as policing in America right now.

Adding to what Professor Roberts said, we are committed to a process that is open, open to hear from a wide range of opinions and thoughts and experience along this way, but open also in regard to transparency. We are doing our best to make these hearings fully accessible online, via the phone, they are also being recorded, and information about that will be shared at the end.

I also just to add, this is a really hard, challenging, very difficult issue, not only because of the experience of people who have experienced police violence; it's also hard as a police officer right now, too, after the shootings in Los Angeles a few days ago. But still, thank you, everybody, who has tuned in and will be contributing to our conversation; it means a great deal.

Finally, thank you so much to the Quattrone Center, who have done so much of the heavy lifting for us along this way. Thank you for your expertise and your generosity of time and resources. With that, I turn it over to the Director of the Quattrone Center, John Hollway.

[00:05:18] **John Hollway**

Thanks, Reverend Howard, and thank you, Professor Roberts. I am John Hollway; I am the Executive Director of the Quattrone Center for the Fair Administration of Justice at Penn Law, and along with my colleagues, I want to extend our welcome to not only the members of the Penn community we will be hearing from today but to those of you who are participating in the audience and will be asking questions online as we conduct the seventh in an ongoing series of public hearings in the Public Safety Review and Outreach Initiative to solicit input from our community, broadly defined, on these important issues.

Each person who has participated in these conversations, and I am sure the people who are going to speak with us today have provided a valuable and unique perspective, not just with regards to our relationship the Division of Public Safety, but in helping us

think about how to reconceive those and what they could be or should be in the future so that we can truly create an environment where all members of the community feel both physically and emotionally safe at Penn.

Our last hearing was last Thursday, September 10, where we heard from Eric Furda, Penn's Dean of Admissions, as well as Karen Hamilton, a Senior Associate Director of Stewardship at Wharton External Affairs, who was also speaking to us as a Penn parent. And we heard two faculty voices who have researched and experienced the impact of campus police: Penn Criminology and Sociology Professor John MacDonald, and Professor of Race Relations, Sociology, and African Studies, Professor Tukufu Zuberi. If you were unable to participate in that live, you can go to [www.pennpublicsafetyreview.org](http://www.pennpublicsafetyreview.org) – Penn with two n's, obviously, to hear the full conversations and the question and answer with Professor Roberts and Reverend Howard. That recording is posted alongside all of the other hearings, and we are adding written transcripts as they become available, again, at [pennpublicsafety.org](http://pennpublicsafety.org).

Today, and in our last hearing, which will be on Thursday, we will hear primarily from student voices. And I want to welcome and thank the following students for their time and testimony today. Jason Andrechak, the Director of Equity and Access for GAPSA, the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly; Kristen Ukeomah, a representative from Penn's Undergraduate Assembly and a member of its Equity and inclusion committee; Victoria Sanchez, Co-President of the Latinx Law Students Association, and Lei Brutus, President of the Black Law Students Association. Each of these speakers has been invited to share a brief opening statement one at a time; once each of them has spoken, Professor Roberts and Reverend Howard will engage with them in a question and answer session.

We are recording the webinar, as been stated, and we will post the recording and transcription on the website at [pennpublicsafetyreview.org](http://pennpublicsafetyreview.org). Members in the audience are encouraged to submit questions at any time through the Q and A feature found on the ribbon at the bottom of the window. We are monitoring this actively, but making sure that we have sufficient time to give each speaker an opportunity to be fully heard may mean that we can't address every question actively in real-time. We will keep a record of those questions and will strive to answer them to the extent possible.

We recognize, as Reverend Howard mentioned, that these are emotional times and emotional topics, and the things we are talking about, it's been very clear from our other hearings, are very, very deeply felt in our community. We ask that members of the audience keep your questions topical and appropriate and appreciate that that has been the case in every one of these hearings to date.

With that, I'll turn it back to Professor Roberts and Reverend Howard, and our first speaker, Jason Andrechak, the Director of Equity and Access for GAPSA, the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly. Mr. Andrechak...

[00:09:05] **Jason Andrechak**

Hi John! May I begin? [Please...]

Thank you to the organizers of this review for inviting the Graduate and Professional Student Association, or GAPSA, at Penn, to make a statement on Penn Public Safety. Thanks also for the thorough data review, thoughtfulness, and community input.

My name is Jason Andrechak, and I am the GAPSA Director of Equity and Access for this academic year. My role is to advocate for policy that ensures graduate students at Penn feel safe and included, that they can thrive in their educational, professional, and personal pursuits. I am not an expert, but I am here to listen, learn, and amplify the voices of others.

Our leadership met with key people at Penn Public Safety in June to discuss graduate students' interactions with and sense of trust toward Penn Public Safety in good faith, but were met with derision and dismissive comments. Many of these leaders have spoken at previous hearings before this review.

The words, public safety, imply a core mission to ensure students, staff, faculty, and the community feel safe. But the reality, as we have seen viscerally on full display these past few months, is much more bleak. Students reach out to us with regularity on their experiences with harassment by Penn Public Safety, violating their sense of wellness and belonging. One common story that we hear is that of Penn Public Safety asking for ID and harassing black graduate students during their regular research duties, whereas white graduate students, for example, can access campus at all hours without

such interactions. This anecdote is just one example of discriminatory policing practices that are reinforced by a culture of othering against whiteness as a default in the name of safety. It contributes to a detrimental educational environment where black graduate students feel they do not belong; that this is not their community; that they are an unwelcome visitor.

Penn Public Safety leadership say they need police to keep people safe. But our students and broader community members do not feel safe daily. Furthermore, there is a lack of recognition of and support for the exposed trauma black graduate students are facing. Rather, Penn Public Safety feels it is not part of the problem and does not need to change.

I am also Co-President of the Graduate Association of Bioengineers, a student governmental organization that advocates for over two hundred doctoral and two hundred master students in the bioengineering graduate group. During the May and June protests in response to the repeated brutalization of black people by police, we sent a letter to the graduate group that outlined our stance and roles in fighting against anti-blackness. While most people were implicitly supportive, this letter was also met with private anger through anonymous forums from both faculty and graduate students who had received the email with explicit references to our callout of discriminatory policing practices. The problem is pervasive, broadcasting and perpetuating a culture of unwelcomeness to black graduate students.

At least from the graduate student perspective, Penn Public Safety is a militarized police force not unlike those municipal police departments, including the Philadelphia Police Department that they try to distance themselves from. The roots of this issue are multi-faceted and intersectional, but it is clear now to millions of people beyond Penn that the future requires fundamental structural change. And increased policing and surveillance does not achieve the stated core values of public safety.

You have heard from many different experts on this topic through these hearings, I am sure. We stand in solidarity with our colleagues at Police Free Penn and the many other organizing groups that are seeking to defund Penn Police, abolish Penn's reliance on the prison industrial complex, and reimagine completely what it means to be a substantive community member in West Philadelphia and beyond.

Thank you for your time and consideration today.

[00:12:51] **Dorothy Roberts**

Thank you so much for that very direct and forthcoming set of remarks; we really appreciated. We have heard about harassment of black students from others, and you are confirming that in a very direct way in your remarks, and we appreciate it.

Let me go straight to what you said about the need for fundamental and structural change. And you said we have heard from others about that, but we could hear from even more; the more concrete suggestions we get, the better. And this is certainly something that we are extremely concerned about and want to focus on in our report and recommendations. So, if you could let us know some of what GAPSA has discussed about possible ways of correcting and ending the culture of unbelonging and harassment that you have been told about by black graduate students—I'd also like to hear a little bit more about your references to some of the backlash that you have received, and who that is coming from and how we might address that as well.

[00:14:25] **Jason Andrechak**

Thank you. I think they are related, so this extends far beyond Public Safety, but that culture that makes black graduate students feel like they don't belong comes from a lot of different places, Public Safety being one of them, but the structure of reward and incentive in academia contributes to it, the lack of knowledge about structural factors that play into racism by the lack of knowledge by faculty and students, you know, basically people at every level; people don't have a formal knowledge of what is going on unless maybe it has directly impacted them, and then those perspectives feed into the way that they interact with students in the system. And I especially feel that academia plays itself as a meritocracy, but you know, it is anything but, and black and brown graduate students tend to feel the brunt of that.

And so, related—so, concrete ideas for changing that. Things that we are thinking about the Graduate Association of Bioengineers, so at the graduate group level, and at the GAPSA level is providing workshops and training and resources on things like racial equity training, how to understand structural racism and how that plays into our daily

lives, things like that. We're trying to inform students, graduate students, who may be in those environments in the classroom or in their research labs to approach the system and their colleagues who may be experiencing this in a better way, and change their actions.

And then, so, when we sent this letter out to the graduate group, we sent out an anonymous form so that people could contribute their thoughts because it is important for us to hear what they have to say. And a lot of the comments were angry about calling out the discriminatory practices of police and how the police itself is rooted in racism from the beginning. And I think as engineers, because I am a bioengineer, we like to bring a data perspective to it, and so people would bring statistics that supported their story and said there is no racism in policing. You know, white people are actually targeted more. All those kinds of statistics that I am sure that you have heard. And while those aren't true, they are used to paint a story; it is also important just to recognize that black and brown students feel this environment, and regardless of whether the stats bear it out, they feel a way that I personally, as a white graduate student, don't.

And then, there was a private phone call from a faculty to administrative people above me in minutes after this letter was sent out that was just angry. And I don't know the content of that phone call, but you know, I was supported by that administrative leadership in that moment.

[00:17:52] **Dorothy Roberts**

So, it sounds as if you're saying that there needs to be more anti-racism education broadly at Penn. You weren't referring, in what you were saying just now, specifically about Penn Police being trained in a different way. It sounds to me, and you can correct me if I am wrong, you were talking about a broader kind of education at Penn to inform everyone about anti-racism and anti-racism.

[00:18:23] **Jason Andrechak**

Right. And then, from my perspective, that feels accessible for us, as GAPSA, to put on those kinds of workshops and trainings, and we have actually had a workshop this past week about anti-blackness and identity and how to create an identity-affirming space in the virtual classroom. So, that is how we are sort of supporting our graduate students



who may be facing the brunt of these conversations now that they are on everybody's mind. But you know, changing—I also agree that those workshops are good for everybody, and so Public Safety, who is having a disproportionate, or maybe not—you have the data, I don't, but disproportionately negative interactions with black and brown graduate students that they could benefit a lot from continued education on racism, anti-blackness, structural factors that play into these things.

[00:19:25] **Dorothy Roberts**

Thank you.

[00:19:28] **Chaz Howard**

Jason, thank you for sharing. I just have one questions, and I don't know if you could answer it or not, but do you think that the experiences of graduate and professional students at Penn is different with Public Safety, particularly Penn Police, then it is with undergraduate students and their experience with Penn Police? And maybe you can compare that to your undergraduate experience. And if they are different, do you think that there are things that Penn Police and Public Safety should keep in mind with these discreet, distinct engagements?

[00:20:04] **Jason Andrechak**

I think they are different because, as an undergrad, your primary job is education. You go to classes, you do homework, you go out with friends, and that informs a lot of what your community feels like. And as a graduate and professional student, especially like research-based, your full-time job is in the lab. You are often alone. And then, you might be going across campus at late hours, and if you do have those negative interactions like being asked for ID, you know that—the fraction of—the percentage that informs what your community and experience feels like is larger than as an undergrad where you have maybe less explicit interaction with Public safety, if that makes sense.

[00:21:07] **Chaz Howard**

Thanks so much.

[00:21:09] **Dorothy Roberts**

Thank you very much for your helpful remarks.

[00:21:15] **John Hollway**

Okay. Thanks very much, Mr. Andrechak, and we will turn to Kristen Ukeomah for her opening statement. Ms. Ukeomah...

[00:21:25] **Kristen Ukeomah**

Hi everyone! My name is Kristen, like I was introduced. I want to thank everyone for having me here. My full name is Kristen Ukeomah; I am a senior in the College of Arts and Sciences; I am an undergrad, and I am a member of the Undergraduate Assembly, a member of the Equity and Inclusion Committee, like I was introduced, but I am also the President of the Black Student League here on campus, and I'm a member of the Black Student League since I was here as a freshman.

To speak on my experiences, frankly, I have been scared of the police my entire life. I can't speak on behalf of all black people, and I am not here to do that, but I feel like as growing up, we have seen this imagery our entire lives. I'm glad police brutality has gotten its place on the national stage as it deserves, but it has existed for a long time, even before I was born. My parents have raised me to do certain things when I am in the presence of police because that's a very frightening scene for a black person. So, yeah, so, from Trayvon Martin to—and everything from there, so many names, I can't name them all, this is not recent at all.

I want to say, to be honest, I haven't had any specific negative interactions with Penn Police, but I have heard of it, and I have had several peers that have. As the President of the Black Student League, a lot of our constituents have and have expressed that to us. And as a student, I have often worn Penn apparel just so I am not confused with anyone else, or I don't run into issues on campus. And a lot of that is it's subconscious, but I didn't realize it until a professor it out that a lot of black students wear Penn apparel so that we are not confused or given problems when we are campus.

Yet, Penn black undergrads still have a lot of those issues. I know of recently, as in our group chats and such, we're warned, hey, I had this issue at the nursing school, or this happened at Wharton. Unfortunately, this happens all the time, even despite the active steps we take as black people and black undergrads to stay safe.

Despite this being a common theme within black students here, I don't believe that Penn Police have done anything to change this narrative. I don't think they have tried to work with black students or been extraordinarily helpful. I think they act the way normal police do, and most of them, if not all, are former police. So, it's—I don't think that there is this distance that Penn may try to create. Penn Police function the same way the police in the United States do. And police in the United States largely harm black people.

That being said, I will never negate that there is a need for public safety. As a black woman, I have experienced countless amounts of harassment from—like in my entire life, from getting off the bus in middle school to being out at night. I don't always—see, I don't usually feel safe and don't think that's any different here in Philadelphia. However, I don't think the police make me feel safer. I feel like this is a common choke amongst my peers, but I almost feel bad in situations where I think it would be necessary to call the police when my life is in imminent danger because I know that it may not even go well for me.

So, that being said, I think that the police and Penn Police specifically function as a product of the systemic racism in the United States. I don't think they are any separate from it. I think it is all one large system. So, this is not—police aren't the only issue; it's like a foot in the entire body of systemic racism in the United States. So, any action that is taken cannot target police alone because I think it's like, in Greek mythology, like a Hydra. Like you cut off one head, another will come back. Like it's not alone. Like systemic racism is very—everywhere in the United States' structure, but I do think that they are harmful nonetheless, especially to black people.

And in regard to where I stand as President of BSL and even a member of the Undergraduate Assembly, we do align with UMOJA, which is the umbrella black organization that's as a liaison to administration and all their demands, and we also generally agree with Police Free Penn.

Yeah, thank you for having me.

[00:25:52] **Dorothy Roberts**

Well, thank you for another very powerful set of remarks that supports what Mr. Andrechak said. You also added some interesting aspects, which I would like to explore a little bit with you. One is a comment you made, which we have heard over and over and over again, that black students at Penn feel they have to wear Penn insignia to protect themselves from the police. So, you said, "so they are not confused." So, one thing I want to ask you, and I want to follow up on it, but I want to ask you what you mean by that, that black students wear Penn garb so they are not confused—confused with what? With whom? What's the confusion?

[00:26:56] **Kristen Ukeomah**

And that's a great question. I think we all understand that the police, in general, harm black Philadelphia, and West, black—yeah, black Philadelphia, the West Philadelphia. So, I think when we do that, I think it's kind of putting a distinction and I think that even how that's *[not]* the elitism we have within ourselves that we are not the black Philadelphians you are targeting; we are Penn students, like treat us with the same privilege as our white peers or the safety we should have. Like I think, *[unintelligible]* I guess in like academia; like when black people get means of capital in other avenues, we think that that should serve as protection, in a sense, that we shouldn't be harmed in the same way as other who don't have this education or this wealth that we have. So, I think that's what it is. Like we are trying to distinguish ourselves from West Philadelphia and the black people that live here, or that are, they expect *[unintelligible]* by Penn Police.

[00:27:51] **Dorothy Roberts**

Thanks, that's very helpful. I have been asking many people about that, and I think you gave the clearest answer I have received so far. The other thing I wanted to ask you a little bit about was your pointing out that the Penn Police act the way police normally do, but you're not saying we don't need public safety. And you added something that I don't think anyone else has pointed out in the hearings, which is that women have a

particular exposure to violence, a threat, which you have experienced, maybe a particular kind because you are a black woman. And so, you've highlighted something we are grappling with throughout these hearings and our review, which is the need for safety for everybody without discrimination in a way that makes everybody feel equally respected but, also, the need to end the harassment and targeted that you have also described. So, can you give us any suggestions about how we can go about achieving that at Penn? I know that's a tall order, but what do we do about what seems to be, for many people, a contradiction or a tension but maybe you can help us see that it doesn't have to be contradictory to want full safety from police harassment as well from other kinds of violence or threats?

[00:29:51] **Kristen Ukeomah**

Yeah, I definitely think this is a multi-faceted problem and I guess [*unintelligible*] have said it several times, but I am only an undergrad, I don't know as much as all of you here. That being said, I do think that a lot of the crime that we see, like theft, for example, is [*unintelligible*] due to lack of resources and people trying to make do with that they have or, more so, don't have. That being said, I think deviance will still happen, or crime or malintent still exists. So, people will still do bad things because they want to do bad things or whatever the proper language for that it, but a lot of the crime we see isn't necessarily that.

So, I think it's in what Penn can do. I think Penn owes a lot of reparations to a lot of people, especially blacks in Philadelphia, and I know there is a big movement for PILOTs. I think if Penn took steps to actively repair the West Philadelphia community and support its infrastructure, especially with the wealth that Penn has, it could help to alleviate a lot of the disparities we see in terms of access to resources. And I don't know; I feel like it's hard because a lot of language says the police shouldn't exist. But like I have scared several times where I've wishes like I could have called someone to save me, you know, and like I had to be on the phone with people, and I could do a lot of things that I know would not have been successful had this been a more serious threat. So, I think some force needs to exist, but I think because our country is racist, whatever force that will exist will always harm black people more.

So, its like one, dismantling racism, which cannot be done by Penn alone. There is also [*unintelligible*] cost component, and getting people that do commit crimes, the resources that can prevent crime. And I know there is definitely a lot of discourse about like even in terms of changing the way punitive systems work, like teaching, like in terms the patriarchy, like providing more education that could prevent things like domestic violence and things, and a lot of patriarchy grounded violence. However, I still do think harm and danger still exists, but I just don't think—a lot of it is preventable with those social things.

So, I just think, to answer your question directly, there are a lot of things Penn needs to do. I think the first step is evaluating itself and being ready to pay where necessary.

[00:32:22] **Dorothy Roberts**

Well, thanks again that you also gave a very cogent response to a question I have been asking a lot about, which is the connection between public safety on our campus and reparations and investment in the neighboring communities of West Philadelphia. So, that was very helpful.

I also would be remiss if I didn't congratulate you and tell you how impressed I am with all of the public service you do at Penn. You just have such a long list of positions. I have never seen anything like it, and I don't know if I can claim to say I am proud of you, but—I am certainly extremely impressed by all that you do and very grateful. So, thank you for all of that and [Thank you!] here today.

[00:33:15] **Chaz Howard**

Thank you so much for joining us this afternoon, and I will echo what my colleague Professor Roberts said. Thank you for your leadership on campus, and to tangent for one sentence, I think you reflect in the best and the hardest ways the experience of being a black student at Penn. The best in the sense of broad excellence, but the worst in the sense that are so few black students that you end up having to be leaders in several different groups and being stretched pretty thin.

My question, and I will qualify it by saying I know you haven't done a formal poll of your classmates, but I am wondering what you are hearing, specifically what you said around the painful experience of being black in America and a lifetime of engagement with police in a range of cities, and it is hard black, having interactions with the police, yet your recognition that we do need policing for several reasons. What are you hearing more? Are you hearing more the kind of Police Free Penn abolitionists' side? Or are you hearing more of the hey, policing really needs to be worked on, but I don't want to get rid of the police broadly? And it will be sort of anecdotal and kind of what you are hearing in your circles, but what are you hearing more?

[00:34:37] **Kristen Ukeomah**

I am hearing more of the Police Free Penn rhetoric of like the police need to be gone. But my fear is that maybe like the loudest voices, but that may not be the most. And I just think that because I know even more recently, other than the undergrad space, at least, there has been a lot of discourse about students that are on campus that are like having or like throwing parties and they're like people have called the police on them, and that has been seen or deemed as the correct response to that, and I'd agree. And I think that's because, in those situations, they were seen as a harm to the black community and Philadelphia.

So, I think the rationale is police—when police are going to harm black people, or people in general, we don't want that. But if police could prevent harm in any capacity, even if it is shutting down a frat party that is happening during a pandemic, we would want that to happen. I just think the former occurs more than the latter. So, yeah, I think to answer your question directly, the first, the Police Free Penn is definitely the more wanted.

[00:35:41] **Chaz Howard**

That's really helpful. And just one quick follow up. In your experience and in your conversation with peers, are you hearing a difference between Penn Police and Philly PD? A lot of people can't tell the difference, they just—they go, police officer, police officer, I don't; know where they come from? But do you hear a distilling between

police over there and then like our Penn Police being different? Or is it kind of one conversation?

[00:36:09] **Kristen Ukeomah**

I think we see them all as the same. Penn Police, Philly police are just different titles but the same—the same [force/for us].

[00:36:17] **Chaz Howard**

I appreciate your—

[00:36:19] **Kristen Ukeomah**

Thank you.

[00:36:20] **Dorothy Roberts**

Yeah, thanks again. We really appreciate your being here and your remarks.

[00:36:25] **Kristen Ukeomah**

Thank you.

[00:36:27] **John Hollway**

Thanks, Ms. Ukeomah, and congratulations on your reelection!

[00:36:30] **Kristen Ukeomah**

Thanks!

[00:36:33] **John Hollway**

Ms. Sanchez, you are up next, please.

[00:36:39] **Victoria Sanchez**

Hi everyone! Thank you for inviting me to be a panelist today, and thank you to the other panelists who have already shared, and to Lei, who will share after me.



I am Victoria Sanchez; I am a dual degree graduate student at Penn. I am also currently, as Mr. Hollway mentioned earlier, the Co-President of the Latinx Law Students Association. And last year, I was a member of the Student Advisory Board for the Office of Inclusion and Engagement at the Law School.

My perspective on public safety at Penn has been shaped by my previous experiences growing up in a variety of low-income and middle-class neighborhoods and, then, going on to Yale in New Haven, Connecticut, which shares a lot of similarities with Penn in terms of I think a very wealthy, predominantly white institution in the middle of a city that has a very large non-white population and a lot of urban poverty.

And when I was at Yale, many of my peers did not like New Haven, Connecticut, and I liked it, and I couldn't figure out why, and I would ask. And they would just be like, oh, it sucks! And I received insight into this question in an English class one year when we were discussing the assigned reading, which had included an essay from the perspective of someone who lived in a gated community. And it became quite clear that I had understood that essay very differently from pretty much everyone in the class. When I read it, I interpreted the family in that essay as quite literally walling themselves off from the world so that they wouldn't have to interact with it. And what became clear as I listened to my classmates is I realized that even if they hadn't literally lived in gated communities, the majority of them grew up in wealthy white neighborhoods. And maybe that is stating the obvious, but what that means is that they were not used to living in places where there were people of color on the sidewalks, where there are homeless people on the sidewalks who might ask you for money. And so, that might—right there—that might them uncomfortable, right? And if you dropped them in the middle of a low-income neighborhood, they wouldn't know how to read the neighborhood to know whether or not it was actually safe.

I think this is a really particular type of ignorance, and it is a result of not fully interacting with the world as it is and with the way most of the people in the United States live.

So, within the context of Yale, and I think this translates very well to Penn from what I have seen and heard, I think that ignorance shapes the way the dominant narratives about public safety and university police forces. Oftentimes when people are thinking

about public safety, they are really referring to violent crime, and that violent crime is expected to come from the outside community. And while it is true that there is some amount of violent crime, it is also true that the perception of that danger is often amplified by the systems we have in place. And that this perception is shaped by that very white, wealthy experience and expectation. That type of experience does not always know how to tell when danger is present, and it often overperceives danger, in my perspective, and overperceives potential harm.

And so, if the university police are at least, in theory, here for the Penn community, which is overwhelmingly shaped by that wealthy white perspective, then it becomes clear that the force cannot effectively serve members of the community who do not share that perspective, right? People like me and the previous two panelists both spoke to that. It is also clear that that perspective completely leaves out the local community—the people who actually live here and make their homes here year in and year out. And I think that's a problem.

I think the other thing I want to put before the initiative is that this is actually incredibly ironic because although the most visible dangers to Penn students, and the most visible dangers that the Penn Police respond to, such as shootings and robberies, are not actually a reflection of the biggest, in my view, one of the biggest threats to university students, which is sexual assault, right? We know that on college campuses, an estimated up to either one in four or one in five women are sexually assaulted while in college. For me, the number is one in twenty. And that that means is you cannot walk across a university campus without seeing multiple students who have experienced sexual trauma.

You know that danger is not violent crime from the surrounding neighborhoods. That is danger that comes from within the university community itself. And, to tie it back to Penn Police, police are notoriously bad at handling complaints and known for exacerbating the trauma for those survivors who, I would highlight, are disproportionately people of color and members of the LGBTQ community. And I think all of that is related; it is not a coincidence.

So, I think just to sum it all up a little bit, you know, Penn is an extremely wealthy, predominantly white institution in a city with a large black low-income population. And the use of the private police force reflects that very wealthy,

overwhelmingly white perspective, but it doesn't fully reflect the reality of the city around us, and it certainly does not reflect the needs of the city, or even fully reflect the needs of the students and the faculty and the staff who are here.

So, what I would like to see from the university is a reimagining, you know, how do we envision and create an alternative where—you know, the students who come here, who do come from those wealthy white backgrounds are not coddled and further shielded from the world around us and from how the majority of America lives, and where the outside community is not—where they are not encouraged to keep viewing the outside community as something that is dangerous and something to be held at arm's length and shielded from, but a place to engage with in a genuine and respectful manner. And I suspect that such engagement would make everyone a lot safer. Thank you.

[00:43:39] **Dorothy Roberts**

Thank you so much, Victoria. I feel like outing you as one of my wonderful students and research assistants. Another student I am extremely impressed with. And also, I have to say, your comments were so insightful and explain a lot of what we have been hearing at these hearings, including reports that students are told not to venture out to certain parts of West Philadelphia, their borders, and also the fact that many black Penn students feel they have to wear certain insignia to distinguish themselves from people from the surrounding community. And I really like the way in which you said it's a type of ignorance that shapes the narrative of public safety and perceptions of what the real harms are.

And so, I'd like you to perhaps delve some more into what can be done to change that narrative. And the other—I think I'll just follow up with a couple more questions related to what you said. You pointed out that if we really want to focus on public safety, we would be focusing more on sexual violence on campus. I think it is also interesting that you and Kristen are the two speakers we have heard so far who have raised this issue. And that police aren't good at addressing it. And so, you know, an obvious follow up is well, how should we, then, can we address it without involving police? And well, let's leave it, I think that's enough for now. Those two issues you brought up about leaving out

the local community, exaggerating the harm that the community members pose, and not focusing on what is more of a danger on campus.

[00:46:08] **Victoria Sanchez**

Yeah, big questions. I think in terms of venturing out into the community, I would point back to what I said about how people from these wealthy backgrounds don't know how to read a neighborhood. So, I live in a neighborhood where I think many of my peers at the law school would walk here and be like, ooh, like this is not where I want to be, right? Like there is trash on the streets, you know, it's the type of place where there are people around who clearly either have mental illness or maybe some sort of addiction, there—it's the type of neighborhood where sometimes people like have screaming arguments outside late at night—

[00:46:53] **Dorothy Roberts**

You're not talking about the frat houses?

[00:46:56] **Victoria Sanchez**

No, I am not. But it's also the type of neighborhood where everyone sits out on their porch, and they know each other, and there is block captains, and the children play on the sidewalks. And my neighbor, who may not all be there, used to greet me every single morning when I was walking to school, even if he wasn't on his porch. If he saw me from the window, he was like hollering at me from the window, right? So, I feel very safe here. And yeah, I think there are certain populations that I would feel much more threatened living with or around.

So, I think part of changing the narrative of not venturing out into the community is just like recognizing where that is coming from. That people don't understand what is safe and what is not. You know, they don't grow up taking public transit like I did. They don't grow up learning how to handle the harassment that can sometimes come with moving through a [array] communities, knowing how to handle it if you do come across someone who maybe needs some help, whether because they have a mental disability or an addiction issue, and when it is safe to intervene and what the safest way to intervene

are and which are not. And these are knowledges that I feel like I have gained just through experience. And so, I think the first thing is challenging that.

In my English class, no one even understood the perspective they are coming into with, right? I was the only one who was like these people are just refusing to interact with the world, and they didn't even recognize that. So, I think that's the first thing. And then, I think college communities tend to be a little bit of a bubble. I think both because of the programming and because they are literally built to be a bubble right? Like we have lots of gates, and you have to sign in places. And so, if we create opportunities to engage with the community, and the caveat I would add to that is I think a lot of the ways that local universities engage with the cities around them is through service, right? Which is valuable, but I think one of the dangers there is falling into the white savior complex, as opposed to recognizing that one, we are guests in this city as students, which means you know, as good guests, I think we owe something. At the very least, a minimum amount of respect, and I think more. And two, if we are going to engage in that service work, that we have just as much to learn if we recognize that ignorance, right, we learn from the service. It is not just about, oh, I am going in here, and I am giving you something. And I would add that—I mention that because I think that's the first thing people often go to when they want to engage with local communities, but there are other ways to engage, right? And to meet your neighbors if you are willing to live outside of Center City or Rittenhouse Square, for example, and to go to events that are not run by Penn and do those sorts of things, intentionally.

There was another question—could we address sexual assaults without involving the police—

[00:50:25] **Dorothy Roberts**

I don't want to put words in your mouth, but you did say that they are notoriously bad at addressing sexual... [I did, and they are.] And we heard that the Penn Police are typically involved in responding to various sorts of crises, and different opinions about whether that was necessary or not, what role they should play. So, it would be helpful to hear what you think about this particular type of assault that ordinarily, the police would be called into, if there are alternatives, that would be helpful.

[00:51:06] **Victoria Sanchez**

I think the police, you know, in an ideal world where the police do not make anyone feel threatened, I think they would be one option for sexual assault survivors on campus. But they are one. And universities have also been notoriously bad at dealing with sexual assaults for a very long time, but I think there is more flexibility within a university than with the police because of criminal standards that universities do not have to meet. So, you know, instead of a police complaint, you can create—and maybe this exists at Penn, right, but you can create internal processes for internal complaints and those own standards for responding to the complaints. And again, universities have historically done a bad job of this, but there are ways to do it that serve survivors. And I think over the past five to ten years; we have started to see some administrators at different universities doing a much better job, not just with the response side, but with the sexual assault prevention side as well.

And so, I think that's, you know, from a university policy standpoint, I think that is within Penn's power, and that is what I would do. I would follow the example, if they are not already, of the schools that are doing a good job with this and they are starting to see better results and replicate that here, so student do not have to go to the police in those situations so that there is an option besides don't do anything and [go to the police], right. And they feel like they have multiple options and those are all presented to them to choose from.

[00:52:49] **Dorothy Roberts**

Thank you.

[00:52:53] **Chaz Howard**

Thank you so much for your sharing. I don't have any further questions, but I do want to affirm one thing you said around how much of what we are discussing, and many of the challenges connected to our conversation around Penn and the police and public safety are almost more cultural. And it is convicting in the thinking about some of our recommendations really need to be aimed at university administration and just the kind of

broad conversations and perceptions we are having with our neighbors in West Philadelphia. And I think you are right that the situation at Yale, New Haven is a different city, Yale is a different school, but there are some real parallels there around the way that people perceive our neighbors and the way that people perceive, for example, black and brown people as threats than they are. So, your comment is well received. Thank you so much for taking the time.

[00:53:45] **Dorothy Roberts**

I actually have one quick... [Okay.] And only because you are the Co-Chair of the Latinx Law Student Association. And most of what we have heard in terms of reports of police harassing students, students feeling they have to wear special garb, that sort of thing, have been about black students. And I just wondered if you had anything to add about Latinx students in particular and their relationship with the Penn Police?

[00:54:17] **Victoria Sanchez**

Yeah, I mean, I think it depends on which Latinx students you are talking about. There are white Latinx people, and there are Afro Latinx people, right? So, the Afro Latinx people are going to have an experience that is very similar to black people because they are black. And then, the white Latinx students are going to experience a whiter experience.

I think, from my perspective, as a brown Latinx person, I personally feel that we can be similarly targeted the way black people are, right? I have experienced that in my family, the videos of brown people being attacked by police are not as common in the current social media hubbub, right? But they are out there, they exist, there are bad numbers there too. So, I actually forgot the original question, but—

[00:55:20] **Dorothy Roberts**

Really, you're answering it.

[00:55:22] **Victoria Sanchez**

That's great! Yeah, my personal perception is that for the subset of Latinx population that is brown, there are similar very grave concerns around safety and I do actually to the point about wearing Penn gear, I don't always think about—you know, it's sort of funny because, in West Philadelphia, I actually don't wear it as often because I think that, in some ways, identifies me as an outsider and might lead to assumptions that are not accurate. But within the Penn campus, I actually do wear Yale and Penn gear quite a bit. And I am aware in the outside world at large that if I am worried about where I am going that wearing something from Yale or Penn can potentially grant me some safety. So, it's not something I am unfamiliar with.

[00:56:24] **Dorothy Roberts**

Thank you. Thanks for all your comments.

[00:56:27] **Victoria Sanchez**

Thank you!

[00:56:30] **Jon Hollway**

Thank you, Ms. Sanchez. And we will turn now to Ms. Brutus for the final session of today. Ms. Brutus, thank you for being here.

[00:56:38] **Lei Brutus**

Hi everyone! My name is Lei Brutus, and I am the President of the Black Law Student Association. And before I begin, I would like to acknowledge Jocelyn Wolcott, who serves as BLSA's Advocacy Chair, for penning this statement.

First, Penn BLSA would like to acknowledge the organizers for commissioning and leading the Penn Public Safety Review and Outreach Initiative. And BLSA greatly appreciates the opportunity to testify as we are deeply committed to the university becoming an anti-racist institution. A crucial look at the university's police force is an important step on its path to anti-racism.

This summer showed the world what black people have known for centuries; police in America are not neutral public servants who protect all people equally. The



murder of Breonna Taylor, an unarmed black woman, killed by police in her apartment, showed us that black people are not safe in their own homes when police are agents in gentrification. The murder of Daniel Prude, a black man who needed mental health and drug overdose intervention but was, instead, asphyxiated by a police restraint, showed us that police are not always the best responders to people in distress. The murder of Tamir Rice, a 12-year-old black boy killed by police for playing with a toy gun, showed us that even black children suffer from the criminalization of blackness, and police are not immune to racial bias.

The murder of George Floyd, an unarmed black man, murdered in the street by police, showed us that police will use their own bodies to kill those who they criminalize and devalue. There are countless others who were murdered by police. Too many to list in this short testimony. There are countless others, like Sandra Bland, who mysteriously died in police custody. There are countless others who were murdered by police whose tragic stories did not receive attention from mainstream media. All their lives mattered, and their death demonstrates that the discretion of black life by police is pervasive and largely unchecked.

Notwithstanding the University of Pennsylvania Police Department's record, the department is a part of the oppressive structure of police in America. It is important that this fact not get lost but instead be a guiding truth for all recommendations of the university concerning on-campus law enforcement. Any determination about the Penn Police Department must be contextualized by the reality of police brutality in America and its dramatic effects.

Throughout this summer, protesters nationwide have called for the abolition and defunding of police, including a group from the University of Pennsylvania named Police Free Penn.

No matter what decision the university makes, there can be no place for racism, racial profiling, or the use of excessive force. As the largest private police department in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and one of the largest police forces amongst all universities nationwide, the Penn Police Department should be held to the highest level of accountability, which will require broad transparency. The Penn Police Department is housed within the University of Pennsylvania Division of Public Safety, which has a

budget of over twenty-seven-million dollars. The allocation of this funding should be evaluated and publicly available. The Penn Police Department has an important diversity initiative; however, diversity does not equate to anti-racist. Any organization charged with caring for and protecting the university campus must be anti-racist. Some say that police cannot be anti-racist given their historical purpose in racially oppressive history that continues today. It is likely true that in America, policing at its core, despite reforms, will protect white elites and preserve capitalism, often at the expense of the poor and people of color.

It is also true that the Penn Police Department has made positive impacts on the university campus and serves a vital purpose. The University of Pennsylvania is one of the oldest and arguably one of the most innovative universities in the United States. The university is fully capable of reimaging and creating an organization designed to ensure the safety of every Penn student who temporarily visits West Philadelphia, as well as the people native to Philadelphia. This organization should be able to provide interventions and services required by the situation without confrontational force as the default response. This organization should have dynamic training and systems for accountability to ensure it does not weaponize biases. An organization like this has the potential to be an example for college campuses in the entire nation.

As Cobretti Williams said, Without critical examination of the enforcement practices of police, an acknowledgement of their noted history of racism in a white supremacy, campus police officers and the higher education institution that hire and create them will continue to reproduce a hostile environment based on law and order rather than safety and care.

The Penn Public Safety Review and Outreach Initiative is the start of this critical examination. The university must adopt an imaginative and inventive perspective when evaluating the Penn Police Department. This perspective will spur an end result that is not merely superficial commitments to equity, but a substantive restructuring that takes into account the racially oppressive history of police in America. The university's role in gentrifying West Philadelphia, and the experience of students, faculty, and staff of color with the Penn Police Department. In the end, all students and community members should be and feel valued and protected. Thank you.

[01:02:24] **Dorothy Roberts**

Thank you, Ms. Brutus. And congratulations on your election as BLSA President. [Thank you.] I haven't had you as a student, but I'd look forward to having you very soon as one.

So, I want to focus on a couple of things you said. One is the Penn Police are part of policing in America, and we should take that into account in our review and recommendations, and I do want to do that. I am also curious, though, if BLSA has had any experience with the Penn Police in particular. I don't want to ignore that if that is something you wanted to talk about, but I do take your point about the relationship between the Penn Police and policing in America more broadly. Well, why don't you answer that and then I will follow up with another question.

[01:03:25] **Lei Brutus**

For sure. So, like a lot of people, I have been sharing some of the feedback that I got when I asked a couple of BLSA members were wearing Penn gear or Penn Law gear around West Philadelphia, or just near campus. That is one of the things that a lot of people mentioned that is common to BLSA students as well. And as a black woman from non-gentrified Brooklyn, my interactions with the Penn Police is similar to my interactions with NYPD officers. There is no sense of protection when I see a Penn Police car or outfit. It's usually okay, let me grab my phone, speak to someone on the phone, and try to look less suspicious as if I look suspicious walking back home from studying. So, that has been my experience and some of the BLSA members' experience.

[01:04:16] **Dorothy Roberts**

Thank you. The other couple points I wanted to ask you about were two aspects of your statement that stood out to me. One is you mentioned accountability, at least two or three times, and that is something that we are very interested in including in our report and that others have talked about. And so, I wondered if you could say a little bit more about what you mean by accountability. And the other is, you mentioned gentrification,

and I wondered if you would say some more about how gentrification in West Philadelphia is related to policing and to our review.

[01:05:02] **Lei Brutus**

Yeah, and so I will speak to accountability first. So, I am not sure if this is available, but just, I guess, records of different officer stops and the reasons for these stops. And having these records be made publicly available that we don't have to, you know, ask for these things, they are already provided to us to be able to be, I guess, a second check to the Penn Police. And what are some things that are in place if it is seen that an officer's record is showing disproportionate stops to minorities? What is the course of action for the university in that situation? So, I guess any form of sanctions, whatever that may look like, it just needs to exist if it doesn't already exist.

And to gentrification, I think—I am not from Philadelphia, obviously, and I have had a lot of conversation with other black students at Penn Law about gentrification in Philadelphia, and there are certain, you know, past 43<sup>rd</sup>, it's like, okay, we're not in Penn anymore, we are actually in Philadelphia. And I think university housing that far out, students who come to Penn and go to these houses that are on the edge of what Penn is, might be more likely to call police if there is something that they haven't seen before that's happening because they are not from the neighborhood, right? And now, the native Philadelphians are being policed because students who are not from here are, and not used to the customs of the neighborhood, et cetera, are feeling threatened because people are just living. So, I think that plays a big role in policing.

[01:06:49] **Dorothy Roberts**

Thank you.

[01:06:53] **Chaz Howard**

I really appreciate your remarks and your wisdom and your perspective, too. I just wanted to follow up on a question Profess Roberts asked to kind of zoom in a little bit more. You mentioned sort of a curiosity about how the budget is broken down within the Division of Public Safety. You also mentioned more further transparency. Can you

articulate why that is important to people? You are not the only person who said that, but no one is curious what my office's budget is for religious life or a person who is in real estate or different parts of the university. Why do you think that is important to some people to hear about the way the budget is broken down, to hear, to have access to the records of specific officers? Can you speak to the importance of that to individuals?

[01:07:41] **Lei Brutus**

Yeah, I think when your organization has been proven to be ineffective and biased, and you know, just filled with discrimination, I think there is a need to see where else could we spend that money that we are basically wasting on this department? And again, I think Victoria was the one who mentioned some types of crime, like theft crimes, are being committed, and maybe Penn could invest in West Philadelphia as opposed to increasing policing in Philadelphia. And I think that is the rationale behind what is your budget looking like? Because we think there is over-policing, so then maybe we can divert these resources toward somewhere else, maybe access to social workers or funding education or better housing for the people of Philadelphia. So, that's my rationale behind budget.

And transparency, I think, any organization, whether you have been proven to have a good track record or not, should be transparent with its constituents, I guess. I think a lot of things can be swept under the rug if no one is keeping an eye on what is happening, especially for a police force, as we have seen being done in numerous state police departments. And I think to think that Penn Police would be somewhat different would be naïve.

[01:09:12] **Chaz Howard**

Okay, thank you so much.

[01:09:13] **Dorothy Roberts**

Thank you. And I just wanted to add; I should have said I look forward to having you again as one of my students. Because Lei was in my Reproductive Rights and Justice

class. I'm losing it... I really appreciate your being here today, and again, congratulations on your presidency of BLSA. It's really exciting.

[01:09:45] **Lei Brutus**

Thank you.

[01:09:47] **John Hollway**

Thanks, Ms. Brutus; we very much appreciate your time. I want to thank both our speakers and our audience today for their participation and thoughtful questions. For any questions that were not answered, please know that we have saved them, and we will continue to take them into consideration as our review continues.

We are going to be concluding the public hearing portion of our process on Thursday, the seventeenth, at 2 p.m. We will hear from Kathleen Anderson, the Executive Director of Operations and Chief of Staff for the Division of Public Safety. And we will hear from additional student voices engaged in criminal justice and social justice activities both on and off-campus.

I want to thank everybody who has participated today for another insightful and thought-provoking afternoon. We will post this recording and a transcript as soon as possible on [pennpublicsafetyreview.org](http://pennpublicsafetyreview.org).

Thanks very much for your time today, and be well.

[01:10:46] **End Hearing 7**