

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Jessica Gooding. I am a rising senior studying history and English at Penn. I appreciate being given the opportunity to contribute my voice towards the Penn Public Safety Review and Outreach Initiative.

As a Philadelphian, I have long been exposed to the varying ways in which state violence impacts Philadelphia communities. I have witnessed the structural racism that undeniably exists in every police system across the nation, in my own community. At Penn, it is rare to see anyone that is not a member of the Penn community on campus. This is because of the unwelcoming culture that exists towards non-Penn community members. That culture's foundation is supported and enforced by the Penn Police Department.

This unwelcoming culture often extends to Black and Brown members of the Penn community. To combat problematic and unsafe interactions, students wear Penn gear to shield and protect themselves from unnecessary interactions with the Penn Police. Black Professors are watched as they walk on campus. The ideology of white supremacy is entrenched in policing. These daily happenings are not physically or emotionally safe for members of the Penn community. Philadelphia community members do not feel physically or emotionally safe on our campus. If they did, they would engage with our campus. We would see them inside the "Penn bubble." We do not see them there.

Last year I was fundraising for a student organization on Locust Walk. I interacted with one non-Penn community member that day. She quickly approached the table because she was hungry. She took one of the baked goods from the table and ate it in a hurry. She did not pay for it. As soon as I realized what she was doing, I was frightened. I looked around, scoping the area for police officers. I was scared that her behavior was witnessed and would be deemed unacceptable on campus. I was nervous that she was going to be swiftly approached by officers. I was fearful that my best explanation would not be enough to save her from being arrested and/or possibly brutalized. I instinctively knew those were plausible outcomes for a Black woman on campus that was not a member of the Penn community. No officers were around at that moment. No one came to apprehend her. This brought me relief. The way I felt at that moment made me realize that our current policing system is a burden at all times, even when we least expect it.

The rhetoric around policing and state violence is mostly defensive. Police systems are infused with fear. Fear protects the use of violence. We must have a transformation around the way we think about policing. We cannot continue to grapple with the aggressive and often deadly outcomes of policing. We must be proactive. An attack on the foundation of the racist and troublesome structure of policing is not a personal attack on any single person or department. It is an attack on a system that was created to control bodies. It is an acknowledgement that something is horribly wrong. Everyone, including all police system members and creators, must concede to the irregularity of policing. That is the only way forward. That is the only way to ensure safety and justice for all community members. That is the only way to uphold true

equality. We do not need a policing structure in our society that advances selfishness and individualism.

It is complex for us to envision what society looks like without the policing system that we know. Generations of American's have inherited the weight of this policing system as a normality, something we think of as second nature. That is an injustice. The era of accepting this system of policing as a "natural" aspect of our society has passed. We know the truth about it. It is not a secret. The system of policing that we know can no longer exist in our communities as a way for officers to engage in criminal activity and racial discrimination. Penn students want their university to have a positive impact on the greater Philadelphia community. We want Penn to stop funding the Philadelphia Police. We do not want Penn to be entangled in the continuous militarization of the Philadelphia Police. Penn should not be proudly supplying money for SWAT weapons. We want an emphasis on wellness. We want our campus to be safe for everyone.

The ideas around policing, the ones that excuse and sweep detrimental behaviors under the rug, must be condemned. That is the only path forward. Policing is the face of mass incarceration. We need superior social systems in place to address the issues that prevail in our society. We do not need inequitable interactions that lead to brutality and punishment.

Ultimately, we cannot solely make assumptions about the Penn Police by the ways in which they engage with most Penn community members. That proximity is irrelevant. We must acknowledge the ways they interact with the non-Penn community. We need to base our thoughts on those interactions. It is obvious that our campus is not safe and welcoming to everyone. What makes Philadelphians not engage with Penn? What are we ignoring? What needs to be done?