

***Public Comment Notes: Community Policing Advisory Committee**

Tuesday, September 11, 2018 | 7:30 p.m.

Chapel Hill Public Library, Room A

-Approximately 60-75 members of the public were in attendance.

Chair Keyes addressed the public's wishes for no police presence at this evening's meeting and let the public know that their comments will be shared with the Chapel Hill Police Department.

Vice Chair Allan Chrisman called each speaker who had signed up to make comments.

Jamie Paulen identified herself as an attorney, a resident of Orange County, and an anti-racist activist. She said she witnessed police violently trying to put a protester's arms behind his back and said there's a problem with the institution of policing. Ms. Paulen said that the police behavior was violent and uncalled for, that the protest had been peaceful, and that the people who were being violent were the police themselves. Ms. Paulen expressed plans to share these comments with the Orange County Board of Commissioners.

Thomas B. said he was arrested on August 25 and was dragged off in a headlock, gasping for air. He expressed concern that police have closed off the planetarium parking lot for Nazis only. He shared that police ran people over with bikes, leaving people bloodied and bruised, and used chemical weapons. He said police tackled protesters, and that he saw police pick up the head of one protester and then put it back to the ground. He said the media narrative is that the students have been violent, but that the police are escalating the violence.

Lindsay A. said police are looking at protest as a criminal element. She said the mayor promised that Orange County deputies would not be part of crowd control on Franklin Street, yet deputies returned on Thursday and perpetrated horrific violence against UNC students. She said police sent an undercover officer to spy on student protesters, and that police pepper sprayed a dance party, were violent toward students at a potluck, and confiscated their property. She said she witnessed horrific violence by police, piling on top her friends, shoving people, and arresting those who tripped and fell. She expressed concern at Sheriff Blackwood's statement that they're not sweet, innocent students.

Margaret M. described being attacked by two counter protesters on August 20 and said that, when she turned to police officers and pointed to the men that attacked her, the police said they were busy and had no way of finding the people who attacked her. She said she had to visit campus health twice because of her injuries, and it was two weeks before she could lift her arm over her head without pain.

Jessica Corvil said she is a graduate student at Duke and expressed amazement at how much of the public is here tonight. Ms. Corvil said she attended the dance party on August 30, not expecting anything violent. She said this was a celebration of a statue that was long overdue to come down and should not be put back up. She described that fifty or so neo-Confederates were escorted in by police who used bikes to shield them. She said that police started pepper spraying protesters when nothing happened to provoke it, adding that pepper spray is illegal in war, but here it's used against students. She remarked that everyone knew Greensboro police are the bad ones and asked why they were invited.

Carl Hintz commented that peaceful protesters have an eye toward safety and that the people who pulled down Silent Sam made sure it didn't fall on anyone. He added that organizers have asked protesters not to resist arrest and expressed concern that these arrests are about intimidating protesters.

Altha Cravey identified herself as a UNC professor and said she has been close to the student-led movement for many years. She said we can't have this amping up of aggressive policing and that someone is going to die. She shared that she was around in 1979 when the KKK attacked her friends and said Greensboro police just stood by when that happened. She said she recently observed Greensboro police use bicycles as weapons at the protests on campus.

Lucy Lewis identified herself as a Chapel Hill native and the former director of the Orange County Human Relations Commission. She said what's been said by young people tonight is important to hear, and she expressed concern about the vilification of protesters. She said the statue should never have been on campus in the first place and called on the CPAC to take specific action that this never happens again.

Hannah Skjellum identified herself as a teaching fellow at UNC. She said she has been threatened by violent homophobes while police looked on. She said that race war advocates have threatened students at the statue, and that police have looked on and done nothing while students were yelled at by angry white men. She asked why violent men were allowed to come on campus and yell at students. She said that police are protecting their friends coming to mourn Silent Sam and aren't there to protect students.

Heather Redding commented that the institution of law enforcement is inherently oppressive, while protesters are called out and shamed for their interactions with law enforcement. She said students fear the police, and rightfully so. She said threats were made toward students on the New Confederate States of America (CSA II) Facebook page, but CSA II was still allowed on campus. She said that peaceful and unarmed students are being arrested for standing up to white supremacists, and that UNC has chosen its side. She said this community has a lot of work it can do to regain the trust of students and called for a thorough review of police action during these protests, as well as an overhaul of campus police leadership.

Candace Midgott identified herself as the former director of the Orange County Historical Museum and said she was at the protest on Saturday. She described having felt protected and served by Hillsborough police in the past and said it was a shock to attend this rally and see a student attacked by police to the point she became afraid for the young man's life. She remarked that many of the police she saw had plain black shirts and vests, but no insignia to show which department they were from. She asked police to deescalate before a student is killed. She shared admiration for the courage and bravery of these students and said there is no need to treat these students like they are criminals.

Miriam Thompson said she wants to turn these stories into outcomes and turn these comments into real policy. She called on those in charge to review the mutual aid agreements with Greensboro police and UNC, and to reexamine the way Chapel Hill police officers are being trained. She called on charges to be removed for all those who were arrested.

Maya Little identified herself as a PhD student and worker at UNC, and said she currently has a charge. She said that UNC police and Chapel Hill police are badged white supremacists. She described being hit with a bike a number of times by Greensboro police officers. She also said she was directly pepper sprayed for no reason and that her skin still burned the next day. She said that on Saturday she watched as a number of her friends were arrested in retaliation, and said that police shoved and hit a number of

students for no reason. She said that Officer Wood, who she said arrested her in April, went out of his way to shove her during the protest. She expressed concern about the number of law enforcement agencies who have been on campus, including officers from Wilmington, Appalachian State, UNC-Greensboro, the SBI, Durham, UNC-Asheville, Winston-Salem, and Fayetteville State. Ms. Little also said she has seen Chapel Hill police aid in the evictions of undocumented people and has observed raids on the Northend community. She asked if police will protect this community or continue to enforce along the color lines.

Jennifer S. said she is a graduate student at UNC and a campus worker. She said we can't just get upset when the police are violent toward white students on campus. She said that one of the most upsetting things, aside from seeing her friends pepper sprayed, is the absence of people like Margaret Spellings, Carol Folt, and Jeff McCracken, who are just as responsible as these white supremacists and just as dangerous as the police.

Samee Siddiqui identified himself as a PhD graduate student at UNC. He said the arrogance and the behavior of the police is something we've witnessed for the last year and a half. He remarked that there's an assumption that we have to be nice to the police, but "I don't have to like you, I don't have to be nice to you, and I have the right to say what I want to you." He said that protesters were not nice to police because they don't deserve for us to be nice to them. He said he believes that police were retaliating and went after people strategically. He said to the CPAC that he doesn't expect them to change the police and make them all quit, but he asked the CPAC to stop the Chapel Hill Police Department from being complicit in what is happening. He said they will continue to embarrass the police until they stop.

Debby Stroman introduced herself as a resident, a faculty member at UNC, and Chair of the Orange County Human Relations Commission. She addressed the CPAC directly about their role. She said she knows their role is to make recommendations and said this is what they can ask of police: (1) Change the logistics of protecting the white supremacists rather than the student protesters. (2) Communicate the coordination process among law enforcement and be transparent about who is in control. (3) Explain how the white supremacists get guarding and protection instead of the UNC community. (4) Communicate the passion that has been displayed tonight. Dr. Stroman concluded by saying, "If you're not going to do this work, don't serve on this committee."

One member of the public asked what they can do to further empower the CPAC's efforts.

Another member of the public asked why our police forces were providing protection to the CSA II.

Committee member Tye Hunter asked people to file a complaint if they feel have been mistreated by the police.

Maya Little responded, "The whole police force has abused us. Why would we file a complaint before the very people who abused us?"

Another member of the public said it's insulting to her that people still believe in the police.

Committee member Liz Wayne said we need more sensitivity, we need to integrate what we heard here and then change. She said the cultural language needs to change so we're having the same conversation, and that the CPAC is trying to figure out how to serve as that liaison. She added that she's trying to bring cultural literacy to the table.

Additional comments from the public included:

- “These aren’t complaints, these are civil rights violations”
- “Y’all need to fire that guy with the Three Percenter tattoo”
- “Arrest reports aren’t thoroughly filled out”
- “Arrests are being made on fuzzy grounds”
- “Comments made today by police were not helpful because they prejudged people who had been arrested before they had their day in court”
- “You have the power to say to police ‘don’t beat them so much””
- “We can build our own protection”
- “There is no liaising to the police; we aren’t one big community with the police”
- “The community needs to be on the side of police abolition”
- “Police are out of the slave patrols”
- “There are things that each of us can do; there are funds that support the 26 who were arrested”
- “Call the DA and ask him to drop the charges”
- “Even though it is traumatizing to keep facing this violence, we can continue to organize”
- “What people want you to take away is that it’s not a single act by a single cop, it’s more overreaching than that”

One person asked if there is a procedure in place for when pepper spray is used and asked what was in the smoke bombs.

Another asked what will come from this meeting and how the public will reconvene to get the CPAC’s report.

Chair Keyes affirmed that the CPAC will address concerns shared tonight with the Chapel Hill Police Department. He invited the public to keep coming to these meetings and to email their feedback, experiences, perspectives and ideas. He concluded with, “We hear you, we support you, and we thank you.”

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.