

From the desk of Tazkia Shah
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I am writing in support of SB0276 to repeal the Johns Hopkins Private Police Dept. Johns Hopkins as an institution has cut the head off its body, here being the student and Baltimorean body. When the university won't listen to the overwhelming 75% of its student body that rejects the private police force, and the surrounding Charles Village and Middle East communities that are predominantly Black and being actively gentrified by Hopkins every day, it has lost touch with what those making up the body want and deserve.

At a time where all eyes and ears are on the Bloomberg School of Public Health, and Hopkins has profited and prided themselves on the cutting-edge work that is leading the fight against the novel coronavirus pandemic, Hopkins itself chooses to ignore its own world-renown Center for Gun Policy Research. Faculty and academics at the Center have pumped out paper after paper, op-ed after op-ed on the dangers of increasing police and gun presence on college campuses, in BIPOC and low-income communities, and in American society. And yet Hopkins turns away from the very research that they laud so happily every other day of the year.

A college that recently discovered its namesake owned enslaved people well past the Emancipation Proclamation, it has barely committed to reckoning with its past and acknowledging that anti-Blackness is NOT a thing of Hopkins' past, it happens every day. Current Black students, staff, and faculty have reported countless encounters with current unarmed security forces that profile, harass, and stalk them as they simply exist while being Black.

Hopkins continues to buy up low-income housing and take housing meant for burgeoning Black families and communities off the market, without doing anything with the housing units, and contributing to the very housing insecurity that it will spend millions of dollars researching.

At the root of the Hopkins private police force efforts is anti-Blackness, plain and simple. After the cold-blooded murder of George Floyd at the hands of cops in May 2020, Hopkins put out statement after statement voicing concern for its Black student and faculty body. And yet when push comes to shove, quite literally, we see that the administrative head is so far cut off from the body. But unlike the historical quote that indicates it would prevent the body from growing, Hopkins students, faculty, staff, alumni, and most importantly, Baltimorean neighbors, have only grown in voice, in anger, in indignation. And rightfully so.