THE YALE POLICE DEPARTMENT (YPD)
is a private police force overseen by Yale University that is recognized as a full service police force in the state of Connecticut. As such, its officers ‘have all the powers conferred upon municipal police officers for the city of New Haven.’

The Triple Occupation: New Haven is currently policed by NHPD, Hamden Police Department, and the Yale Police Department, according to a Memorandum of Understanding allowing all three to conduct arrests, joint patrols, and investigations.
LIKE MANY PRIVATE UNIVERSITY POLICE FORCES, YPD IS UNACCOUNTABLE TO THE COMMUNITY IT POLICES.

Operating under a state statute, YPD officers have the power to arrest anyone in New Haven, a city of 130,000, and their felony arrest powers extend to the borders of Connecticut, expanding their jurisdiction to encompass over 3 million people who are unaffiliated with Yale. However, as Yale University employees, the officers are only accountable to University administration, which maintains control over promotion, termination, discipline and employment.

YPD is not accountable to New Haven: If NHPD enacts moratoriums or implements reforms, YPD is not required to follow suit. For example, YPD officers are exempt from oversight from the city’s community police review board.

YPD is not transparent: Even though YPD officers exercise full police power under a statutory grant of authority from the state, the department has historically failed to disclose information on arrest reports, traffic stop data, or off-campus patrols. Most recently, the YPD has failed to release a report, which they promised to make public last summer, investigating their policies and practices in the wake of the racist shooting of Stephanie Washington and Paul Witherspoon.

YPD is not accountable to civilians: Those who wish to file complaints about YPD conduct go either to the Office of the Chief (Ronnell Higgins) OR the Police Advisory Board. The Board itself has no public website or list of members.
YPD’s History has always been entangled with histories of racial capitalism, segregation, suppressing labor and racial unrest, and an extractive relationship to New Haven.

1894: In the midst of community riots against Yale medical students’ practice of grave robbing in the New Haven community, two NHPD officers volunteered to patrol Yale’s campus, and the YPD was born, making it the oldest university police force in the country.

The earliest accounts of YPD’s first officer Bill Wiser dates the racially targeted behaviors of YPD back to its inception. In his memoir, Wiser wrote that his first duty was to prevent all “suspicious characters” from coming on campus. A memory of when he “found a colored gentleman prowling around one of the entrances,” exemplifies what the officer really meant when he wrote of “such characters” against whom the campus’ borders must be reinforced. Since then, the YPD has been instrumental in the suppression of Black expression against economic and political oppression in New Haven and at Yale.

1969: During the May Day protests, YPD officers are boarded on campus and asked to work 40-hour shifts in order to control unrest.

1971: 7-week-strikes of food-service and maintenance employees. YPD officers are placed under similarly intense hours and conditions to control the labor unrest.

1989: At the third annual conference of the Yale Lesbian and Gay, YPD unleash violence on the conference attendees and arrest ACT UP activist Bill Dobbs.
2007: The YPD arrest a 16-year old black boy sitting on his bicycle a few blocks away from Yale’s campus, on false suspicion of involvement in a mugging. The New Haven public defender believes that the boy has been racially profiled, and files a Freedom of Information Request for the personnel files of the officers. YPD refuses to disclose these files, claiming that YPD is a private entity. Following a lawsuit, the Freedom of Information Commission rules that YPD must follow rules of public disclosure under the FOIA.

2015: Tahj Blow, an unarmed Black Yale undergraduate student is held at gunpoint by YPD. The incident causes campus unrest, and Tahj’s father, the New York Times columnist Charles Blow, publicizes the incident of violent racial profiling, spotlighting YPD’s misconduct and perpetuation of police brutality. In response, the YPD conducts an internal investigation.

2018: A white graduate student calls the YPD on a black graduate napping in a common area on campus. Though the incident and identities of the students are widely publicized, Yale refuses to provide the YPD bodycam footage in order to “protect the students’ identities.”

2019: YPD officer Terrance Pollock and Hamden officers Devon Eaton shoot Stephanie Washington and Paul Witherspoon, an unarmed Black couple. Black Students for Disarmament in conjunction with community organizers demand disarmament of the YPD and immediate termination of the officers in question. Eight months later, the University announces that officer Pollock, who had not been charged by the state, would be moved to an administrative, non-patrol, position.

*This is not a comprehensive timeline, and does not capture all of the recorded and unrecorded instances of YPD harassment or brutality.*
Black Students for Disarmament are calling on Yale to:

- **DISARM, DEFUND, AND DISMANTLE THE YALE POLICE DEPARTMENT**

- **REDIRECT FUNDING FROM YPD TO EDUCATION, HOUSING, HEALTHCARE, SCHOOLS, AND YOUTH SERVICES**

We know that strong communities don’t need police to be safe. We know that safety (protecting people) is not the same as security (protecting property). Yale MUST divest from YPD and invest in community-driven safety. This looks like supporting healthcare, housing, education, harm reduction, and programs for violence intervention. **For example, many New Haven public schools do not have a single full-time guidance counselor, the cost of which is equal to four of YPD’s motorized scooters. We ask: which allocation of funds will keep the community safer in the long term.** It is also worth noting that campus police forces are uniquely American. Virtually no other campus in the world has its own police force, nor have they felt the need to create them.
HOW CAN I SUPPORT?

Sign our petition and email the Yale administration, Mayor Elicker, and the Board of Alders at:

DEFUNDYPD.COM
2020: A coalition of Yale students and New Haven organizers and community members successfully organize to disarm, defund, and dismantle the YPD