



November 30, 2020



Hundreds of Students Protest Walter Wallace Jr.'s Death and Haverford's Response

BY STAFF ON OCTOBER 29, 2020

Editor's note: Due to a trend of doxxing and targeted harassment of protestors, The Clerk has chosen to anonymize the students quoted and photographed in this article. We recognize that this robs many BIPOC students of due credit for their labor, and would like to extend our gratitude for the important work that members of our community are forced to do on campus and in Philadelphia, time and time again, to enact change. If you are troubled by this decision, please reach out to hcclerk@gmail.com.

We also would like to acknowledge the call for Haverford students to strike from classes, jobs, and clubs to draw attention to the labor of BIPOC students on campus. However, The Clerk has decided to continue coverage to highlight the activism of BIPOC students, their demands, and the

overall need for institutional change. The staff of *The Clerk* will be donating compensation for this article to the [Bi-Co Mutual Aid Fund](#).

By Maxwell Mondress '23, with photos from Maxwell Cox '23

At 2:37 PM on Wednesday, October 28, President Wendy Raymond and Interim Dean of the College Joyce Bylander sent an email to all students concerning renewed Black Lives Matter protests in Philadelphia. These protests are taking place in response to the [killing of Walter Wallace Jr.](#), a Black man from West Philadelphia, by police officers a mere five miles from campus.

[The email](#) immediately sparked outrage on campus. Many felt it was tone-deaf and hypocritical for the college, which had taken great pains to declare itself an anti-racist institution, to discourage community members from engaging with the protests in Philadelphia.

Now is not the time to go to Philadelphia. Our fear is that for every righteous protestor in the street, there are other actors afoot; we have seen this across the nation far too often, in cities large and small, in college towns and urban centers. There are individuals who might seek to spin this moment out of control and cause harm and havoc. Joining a protest off campus not only would not bring Walter Wallace back: it could play into the hands of those who might seek to sow division and conflict especially in vulnerable communities.

The October 28 email from President Raymond and Dean Bylander

Many students understood this passage to be in reference to the ongoing “rioters and looters” narrative which has plagued conversations around the Black Lives Matter movement in an attempt to delegitimize the protests. That the college, in their first formal statement on the matter, focused not on Wallace’s murder but instead policing the student response stoked further anger.

An opinion piece by Soha Saghir '21, [published in *The Clerk*](#), catalogs many of the frustrations surrounding the statement by President Raymond and Dean Bylander; Saghir’s piece was shared widely on social media.

In response to the administration’s email, students of color immediately began to organize. A digital flyer began to make its way through the web of group chats and social media platforms used by different on-campus groups, before being confirmed by a 7:48 pm email

sent from the Students' Council email address. The email, from a group of BIPOC students under the banner Students in Concern, confirmed that there would be a protest on Founders Green for 10 pm that night.



The digital flyer announcing the protest on October 28

As the Founders Hall bell rang out over a packed, but silent green, [a second email](#) from President Raymond arrived in students' inboxes. This email clarified the wording of the original email—that the “other actors” referred to were “paramilitary individuals and groups from afar,” likely in reference to the far-right militias who were present at some Black Lives Matter protests this summer.

In the second email, Raymond and Bylander also stated that they “do not and did not seek to deprive [students] of the power or suppress the will to choose how to express what is in the hearts and minds of so many.” Though an exact count is hard to measure, several hundred students from both Haverford and Bryn Mawr, along with a smattering of faculty members and staff, were already gathered on Founders Green to do just that.



Students gather, socially distanced, on Founders Green

There were about a dozen people on the Founders Hall steps, framed by BLAST-supplied speakers, who intermittently reminded the crowd to socially distance.

The protest began with a long moment of silence in acknowledgement of Walter Wallace Jr.'s death. The first speech, from a representative of the Black Students' League, enunciated the purpose of the rally. They affirmed that "protesting is not the problem," as President Raymond had seemed to suggest in her first email, responding that "we know the risk, and we are responsible." At 10:19 pm, the organizers opened the floor for students to come forward and speak.

Students highlighted a number of concerns during the open mic. Many brought up what they saw as institutional issues, such as the exhaustion BIPOC students face as a result of the administration constantly calling on them for solutions to institutional shortcomings; the unpaid labor of Black students, especially Black women; and the exploitation by the administration of Black students in admissions materials, without actually supporting these communities on campus. Some raised specific issues, including Haverford's displacement of a majority Black community when it purchased the Haverford College Apartments.

Other speakers brought attention to the harm caused by Raymond and Bylander's original statement. Students reflected on the hurt and outrage the email caused and proposed that, instead of pushing students not to protest, the college should support those who choose to

with additional COVID tests, masks, and hand sanitizer. In fact, the college's actions stand in sharp juxtaposition with Swarthmore, who recently sent out an email informing students they were creating quarantine spaces on campus for students who wanted to go protest in Philadelphia.

Many of the speeches addressed Haverford's white students. Though some speakers extended thanks to those in attendance, most speakers made it clear that merely showing up was not enough—tangible action is also required. Suggested courses of action included donating to community aid organizations such as [Bi-Co Mutual Aid](#), paying Black peers directly, and standing up to racism from friends and family.

Between speeches, Rico Nasty's "Smack a Bitch" and Nicki Minaj's "Yikes" were blasted from the sound system, echoing the flyer distributed earlier in the evening: "F*CK A SILENT PROTEST". These were among the more light-hearted moments of the evening.

After around half an hour, word spread to the front of the crowd that President Raymond was in attendance. Several students called on her to come forward and address the crowd.

President Raymond thanked the organizers for inviting her forward, before apologizing for the harm she caused with the email. "I understand you don't feel heard, you don't feel safe." When someone from the crowd yelled out, "What tangible systems are you going to implement to support your black students?" Raymond reiterated the school's anti-racist platform, including a \$40,000 reparations fund housed in the Dean's Office, curricular adjustments under consideration by the Educational Policy Committee, and an ongoing effort to hire more Black faculty—all efforts that stemmed from demands in the [June letter](#) to President Raymond by Black Students Refusing Further Inaction (BSRFI), a coalition of Black students at the Bi-Co.

However, in her remarks, President Raymond did not attribute the impetus for these changes to BSRFI—an omission that prompted many students and alumni to comment on the continued co-option of Black students' labor on campus. Indeed, at times it almost seemed like Raymond was at a loss for words, echoing her talking points but unable to answer the key question demanded by the community: Is Haverford really committed to anti-racist action, or is it just for show?



President Wendy Raymond looks on as Interim Dean of the College Joyce Bylander addresses the audience

After a few more speeches at the open mic, including some attendees who joined remotely through Zoom, Dean Bylander took her turn to address the crowd.

She shared her experience growing up as a teenager in Cleveland during the [Hough riots of 1966](#). With a voice that sounded like it was occasionally on the verge of cracking, she told the crowd she was “Black before it was beautiful.” Though she said that she was proud of Haverford students’ courage, “I worry sometimes,” she added, “that the world is sometimes not worthy of your courage.” She called on all students to ask themselves what their work in the fight against racism is and urged them to “be patient with me, and forgive me when I make mistakes.”

By this point, Founders Green was entirely full. Some attendees estimated that around 800 people had come to the green—an extraordinary turnout, given that fewer than 1,000 students are living on Haverford’s campus this semester. Another 150 attendees or so joined a Zoom call, set up by the protest organizers, that broadcasted the entire event to students living off campus and alumni.



Students march along College Lane towards Ardmore

Around 11:30, speeches were concluded, and the next phase of the protest began: a march. The rally organizers led students down College Lane towards the Duck Pond, repeating slogans like “No justice, no peace!” and “Black Lives Matter!” before stalling outside of the Railroad Apartments at the edge of campus. Students had noisemakers and a cowbell, and called on residents to “turn the lights on.” After a few minutes, they turned and began to march towards the campus entrance onto Lancaster Avenue. A Campus Safety vehicle, parked blocking the exit, quickly pulled out of the way.

There was a police presence from the moment students left campus. A vehicle from the Lower Merion Township Police Department followed students down the road towards Ardmore with lights on, but no siren. Students began to chant more enthusiastically as they made their way down the nearly abandoned street. The crowd spanned all four lanes of the road and extended several blocks up and down the avenue.



The crowd continues down the middle of Lancaster Avenue

Around midnight, students turned west along Ardmore Avenue. Now in a residential area, they began to draw some attention with their chants. Some neighbors watched silently from their porches, while others shouted their support and encouragement.

After passing the Haverford College Apartments, students turned right and began to march down Haverford Road, bordering the college's Pinetum. Those at the front of the group could see flashing police lights at the next intersection. Those in the back were still being tailed by three cars.

When students arrived at the intersection, they were met with a five-cruiser blockade. Five officers were outside of their cars, in a line, watching the growing crowd of students as it came to a halt before them. The crowd seemed unsure of what to do next: as the police officers stood silently, students chanted at them: "No good cops in a racist system! Say his name: Walter Wallace!" More police cars arrived—several from Radnor Township. After about twenty minutes at a standstill, students linked arms, did a few more chants, and made their way back to Haverford College.

At around 1 am, students regrouped on Founders Green, where a few more students spoke before the group disbanded.



Students meet a police presence at the intersection of Haverford Road and College Avenue

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