



## The People's University Press Statement on the events of 4/16-4/17

Yesterday, April 16th, 2025 at approximately 6:15 pm, we launched the People's University, a liberated zone encampment on Howard University's campus. We aimed to create a much needed space of radical community, political education, creativity, unity, and amplification of four demands:

1. We want Howard to be a sanctuary campus for international students. In other words, Howard University must be non compliant to state sanctioned orders against undocumented students.
2. We demand that ICE is banned from campus. No Agents and No Recruiters.
3. We want Howard University to protect ethnic studies programs (Africana studies, Women, Gender, and Sexuality studies)
4. We demand student organizers not face any disciplinary or legal consequences.

We put up three tents and almost immediately by 6:30pm, the **Dean of Chapel Reverend Dr. Bernard L. Richardson** arrived on scene and began questioning students, stating we were not allowed to have tents set up, and **threatened several students with suspension if we did not comply**. He claimed to be “in solidarity” with us, but ultimately made his allegiance to HUPD and MPD clear as he continued to collude with them while attempting to engage with us multiple times throughout the early evening.

We continued on with our opening townhall, with around 40 students present and participating in establishing the space. Around 6:45pm three cops came and took videos and photos, and left. We began checking in with folks present at this time about their risk assessment, and established some community agreements to keep each other safe.

At 8:30 pm Dean Richardson returned stating that “they” were coming to get rid of the tents by 9pm. Around this time, members of the Howard University administration arrived—**Cynthia Evers (V.P. of Student Affairs), Rashad Young (V.P. for Administration & Chief Administrative Officer), and a “Mr. Vincent” (N/A)**—probing students for information such as our “Howard intros” and where we live. We collectively agreed to stand firm in the space regardless of this cutoff time. It was around this time we made our call to action for support to defend the zone using both social media and interpersonal connections with other Howard students, students from other campuses, community organizers, and organizations. This call was made due to increased harassment and threats from HUPD, security guards, K-9 officers, and MPD. 9pm came and no raid occurred, but police presence around the encampment continued to

increase: by 10:20pm, a minimum of 15 cops were surveilling the zone from 6th st with various police cars and vans littered in the area.

Folks remained steadfast and continued to defend the zone, engaging in cop watches, setting up a community security team, and physically surrounding the largest tent to act as a human barrier. Several “standoffs” occurred throughout the evening with police, but morale was high as music was played, more tents were pitched, risk assessments/check-ins continued, and community organizations continued showing up to support students. To maintain energy, folks began rallying with some chants, such as “Free, free Palestine,” “Free, free Africa,” “ICE off our campus now,” and so forth. We continued to update folks on the status of the zone through our telegram.

At around 3:30 am April 17th, **hoards of police showed up with zip ties, dogs, and police vans**. Folks immediately set up a line using their bodies and rallied again, chanting “We can’t hear you!” as MPD began making announcements that we were being asked to leave. As more police continued to arrive however, folks collectively decided that we should gather our things (including all the tents) to prevent items being destroyed or taken, and disperse to ensure everyone's safety. Everyone made it home without any brutalization, or arrests.

We held the space for 9 hours, remaining steadfast the entire time against police repression and threats from administration on our academic status; all of this was done by a group of students and community members united in resistance. We want to be very clear that while Howard University claims that this was all done by an “outside Pro-Palestine protestor,” **this is not true**. The People’s University was established and led by Black, Howard Students, not people “unaffiliated with the university” as Howard claims. There were pro-Palestinian organizers present due to our call for support, we chanted pro-Palestine chants for energy, but we also chanted various other things in support of workers, Africa, and all colonized people. **Anti-semitic statements were never made**. Howard is attempting to **shift the narrative** to one of “anti-semitism” to absolve themselves of responsibility for sending an **army of police** to arrest and brutalize folks present.

Ultimately, we had to disperse to keep folks safe after maintaining the space for almost 10 hours. The goal is never to be taken away from the movement, unable to organize, or to allow ourselves to get brutalized. These were things we considered seriously in our decision to disperse at around 3:30 AM.

What we experienced last night was Howard University’s complete collusion with MPD and submission to the Trump administration. **Howard does not care about anti-semitism**, they do not care about protecting free speech, they care about maintaining the status quo of a colonial, and ultimately anti-Black institution. **Sending hoards of police after students is anti-Black, and we will continue to name it as such.**

In the words of our ancestor Fred Hampton, “You can kill a revolutionary, but you can never kill the revolution.” The People’s University will be back. We were serious when we said **no repression will deter us**, no attacks will scare us. We will remain steadfast in building a movement.