

Hi. I'm Kelly Lo, I'm here as a representative of Phoenix Survivors Alliance, and today I'm going to talk about preventing sexual violence on campus and what safety means to survivors.

The 2019 campus climate survey revealed that 21.8% of undergraduate women and 7.8% of undergraduate men have experienced sexual violence since entering UChicago. This means that, statistically speaking, there are probably close to a thousand survivors on campus. Specifically, there are a thousand survivors on campus who were victimized in their time here at the University of Chicago. From the moment a new student steps onto campus, there is an almost 1 in 7 chance that they will fall victim to sexual misconduct. This school has failed to protect them. This is not safety.

What is safety, then? What does it mean to protect everyone on campus, to care for everyone who has already been victimized here? Does the University's apparent primary safety resource, the UCPD, protect students from sexual violence? The answer is a resounding no.

The 2017 National Crime Victimization Survey indicates that only 1 out of every 4 sexual assaults is reported to police. It's not hard to understand why. Police reports generally lead to nothing, and by necessity force the survivor to relive their trauma as they go through the reporting process. Over 400 police officers were charged with rape between 2005 and 2013. This is the number of cases that were officially brought to court, and it is dwarfed by the actual number of instances that police in America have committed sexual violence against the people they were supposed to protect. Victims of sexual violence do not trust the police, and clearly have no reason to do so. The UCPD does not protect students from sexual violence, and it never will. Additionally, perpetrators of sexual violence on campus include people who occupy prestigious positions in Greek life, whose families finance the University's operation, who have never been part of America's most policed demographics. Safety that is cognizant of wealth and race is not safety. The UCPD has never been and never will be the solution to sexual violence on campus. I would go so far as to say that policing is an active deterrent against our mission to create a safe campus community where survivors can heal.

What about the University's other safety resources? Currently, SCS only offers group therapy for survivors at one predetermined time per week during winter quarter, and the trauma resources that they do have available are badly marketed and hard for students to find. The Title IX process is notoriously difficult and retraumatizing for survivors to go through. I can say that, in my experience as a survivor and a survivor's advocate, that nearly none of the survivors I know have chosen to report to Title IX, let alone go through the disciplinary process. The resources that Title IX does provide for reporting students, like the ability to change on-campus living and dining arrangements, is not available to those who do not choose to report. The University continues to refuse to recognize Greek life, and as a result fraternities are allowed to operate on campus with minimal accountability and restrictions. Sexual assault cases at fraternities, such as the recent Delta Upsilon case, are described by the University as having happened "off-campus", when in fact they happen in powerful, unregulated communities within campus confines. Clearly, the University's support resources have fallen short, and

what beneficial resources that we do have access to are limited and underfunded. None of this is safety. What is safety, then?

I have not known what true safety feels like, but I know what it is not:

When I was 8, I was harassed by a man in my building's back staircase. The police did nothing. I lived in that building for six more years and never walked those stairs again. When I was 10, I was assaulted by an authority figure at school, and my school did nothing. Like UChicago, it was not an institution built to protect or nurture students. My first year at UChicago, I struggled endlessly with my old traumas and a learning environment that was unsympathetic and actively damaging. My mental health deteriorated. I reached out to SDS and SCS, and was granted only limited reprieve. I hold no grudges towards the people working in those services, who did everything they could to help, but could only do so much within the limiting confines of school regulation. Like other survivors on campus, as well as a large portion of the broader student body, my tenure at the University has been marked by the reemergence of trauma and mental health struggles exacerbated by the University's lack of support. Whatever safety means, I'm sure this is the opposite.

I also know that safety is not the hovering intrusion of monitoring bodies. It certainly isn't the UCPD, which belongs to a long global tradition of failing survivors of sexual violence and the mentally ill, which lurks around every corner and does nothing but remind me of the times that institutions and their armed guards have failed to protect me and the people I love. I feel less safe at night knowing that people with guns are watching me from their University-funded cars. Every time I see the UCPD, I am reminded of how this school has demonstrated that it puts property and power over the wellbeing of its students. Ten years ago, an officer put Maurice Dawson in a chokehold simply because he was making noise in the Regenstein A-Level. Two years ago, another officer shot Charles Thomas, who was going through a mental health breakdown. Today, we know that nearly a thousand undergrads have fallen victim to sexual violence on campus. All of these people are students. UChicago did not keep them safe. UChicago hurt and traumatized the very people they were supposed to protect. How are we supposed to believe that the University is invested in our safety, when they have directly harmed those in our ranks?

The truth is that UChicago creates a cycle: first, students are put in environments where they are easily victimized, or asked to push themselves to the brink of breakdown. Then they are penalized for collapsing and left to struggle alone as they sink further and further from the pressures of this institution. Then, finally, those vulnerable students are irrevocably traumatized by an institution that has demonstrated it values reputation over education and property over life. This self-fulfilling prophecy is the only true Chicago Principle.

The only times I've felt safe at UChicago are when the student community itself has extended a hand in support. I feel safe in the support that I've received and reciprocated through Phoenix Survivors Alliance, in the solidarity that I've experienced through the student-run mutual aid network. Safety

exists in the spaces where investment is given into healing and community instead of policing. The University itself has failed to protect survivors, and now our only option is the independent spaces where we try to take care of each other and ourselves.

The University asked me to come talk about what safety means to me. Safety is a world where I'm not scared that my professors will take advantage of me. Where I'm not afraid to be in a room alone with my TA. Safety is Greek life recognition and transparency about the budget allocated to mental health resources and policing. It is financial aid for survivors who face economic instability from not being able to work due to trauma. Safety is police defunding and abolition, a well-funded SCS with full trauma support, and restorative and transformative justice from within our community instead of through hostile monitoring bodies. I don't know if I can see all of the details. But whatever safety is, I know it's not the life I lead on campus now.

Thank you.