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Jan 24, 2021

Dear Harvard School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (SEAS):

We are writing to you in response to an email sent out to the SEAS graduate student listserv promoting a course entitled *ENG-SCI 298R: Data Fusion in Complex Systems: A Case Study*.

The course aims to engage unpaid student researchers to analyze the efficacy of a domestic policing technique, C3, modeled after counterinsurgency (COIN) tactics used in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. As Harvard graduate and undergraduate students in the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences and in other departments, we have grave concerns about the nature of this work, its academic legitimacy, and ethical implications for marginalized communities around the world.

Among our concerns:
- Does the research at the heart of this course, specifically the experimental usage of C3, meet ethical obligations to ensure research does not harm human subjects both in the near and long term?
- What urgent privacy concerns for the residents of Springfield are posed by the collection and usage of a gang database by Harvard University?
- How does the computational nature of the initiative and proposed coursework naturalize policies and practices that have had disparate impacts on Black and Brown communities?
- Does the framing of the course present significant, yet unacknowledged, professional risks to the students who may choose to enroll?
- Is it appropriate for Professor Parker to engage students as unpaid labor to perform cleaning and analysis of his research data used to market a commercial policing product?

The course is presented by SEAS professor, Kevin Kit Parker, who has conducted research on cell biology, tissue engineering, brain injuries, and nanotechnologies. Professor Parker has little apparent background in the fields of data science or policing, and his email advertising the course has failed to appropriately center the ways in which policing and surveillance in the United States disproportionately affects Black and Brown communities. In both the course catalogue description and Professor Parker's email, there is no analysis of structural racism, political economy, inequity in criminal justice, or residential segregation -- the purported social science aspect of the course is rooted in outdated behavioral science and culture of poverty theory that pathologizes marginalized communities. All the while, soldiers are constructed as "buddies" and the militarization of society is normalized with no acknowledgement of last year's largest civil rights movement against police brutality and militarized police forces in America's history. Parker's own statements point to explicit racial biases he holds, which make his involvement in this project all the more dubious. For example, in a recent editorial published in

Matter he is quoted as saying, "the surge of Taliban or whatever other bunch of jackasses that were shooting us" (p. 624).

In addition to the problematic nature of the course material, there are numerous conflicts of interest that raise concerns. First, this project has been funded by and may continue to be funded by the Springfield PD. In his email, Parker refers to (but does not name) his friend Michael Cutone -- a Massachusetts State Trooper -- who co-founded Trinity Project, a consultancy company training officers in the C3 program, and profits from offering such training. He is also noted for calling the Springfield community a "laboratory".The lack of transparency surrounding the relationship between Trinity Project and Kit Parker gives rise to questions about Professor Parker's interests in profiting off of the course's research findings.

The work promoted in this course represents an academic stamp of approval of predictive policing, COIN tactics deployed against Black and brown neighborhoods, and the use of data driven methods to support militarized policing of US communities. Further, this course and Professor Parker's research highlight the disturbing historical trend of universities like Harvard in supporting violence against marginalized communities. Harvard continues to be at the cutting edge of providing the next generation tools of oppression -- a distinction we are not proud of and do not wish to uphold.

Springfield residents have reached out to us with concern. Professor Parker has denied local community members access to a call he has planned to allow Harvard students to speak with supporters of C3. Despite alleged support from "community elders" in Springfield, much recent work has been written on the failure of these approaches to keep communities safe and address root causes of crime in underserved areas. Perhaps in part as a result of these failures, members of the Springfield Police Department remain under indictment by the U.S. Attorney's Office for assaults against Black and Latinx men and youth by officers, while a U.S. Department of Justice pattern-or-practice investigation into Springfield's policing resulted in a finding that "the Narcotics Bureau of the Springfield, Massachusetts, Police Department (SPD) engages in a pattern or practice of using excessive force in violation of the Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution." Further, the Springfield Police Department has bristled at implementing recent, basic police reforms restricting use of force; within the last two weeks, a Springfield Police Officer used a taser on a pregnant woman. In the last few years, predictive policing & police militarization in the US have come under sharp scrutiny by the academic community and citizens around the world. And since Dean Doyle's June 2020 email warning of the "twin pandemics" of COVID and police violence, SEAS students have been increasingly concerned about the University's own research and teaching at the intersection of policing and applied computation.

While COIN tactics are promoted by supporters as a means to address "holistic" issues by utilizing community engagement and armed social work, COIN as practiced by the US in Afghanistan and Iraq prompted violence against civilians and is widely cited as a failed initiative. It is completely inappropriate for Harvard to help facilitate a military occupation on a local civilian population. The course runs on assumptions that occupying forces, who understand almost

none of the history, cultures, or social networks of the occupied, know what is best for local communities. These approaches to violence prevention are not only paternalistic and smack of imperial hubris, they actually bring more harm and violence to vulnerable communities as well as police-citizen interactions which, for many citizens, result in death. Moreover, they do nothing to address the widespread corruption and racism within law enforcement agencies nor do they hold those departments accountable for the violence they instigate, encourage, and enact.

The setup of this course also raises concerns about the ethics and legality of Professor Parker's recruitment of students. In essence, he is requesting that students take this course, pay the tuition associated with attendance, and carry out free labor for his personal project. In a time when the value of graduate student worker labor is both underestimated and unfortunately precarious, it is critical to pay students for their work. The data cleaning and processing the professor outlines in the email advertising the course, which reads more like that of a job advertisement, is certainly not unlike the work graduate students do as part of their dissertations or as paid research assistants in faculty-run labs. This course should not exist in its current structure, and any current or future courses that adopt this model should promptly be reclassified as a paid, in-unit research assistantship. These worrying labor practices only further motivate the need for a third-party investigation into Professor Parker's work at Harvard.

The undersigned groups and individuals stand with students and student workers in condemning the decision to offer *ENG-SCI 298r Data Fusion in Complex Systems: A Case Study* in Professor Parker's dangerous framing.

We are making the following demands of Harvard University's School of Engineering and Applied Sciences:

1. Withdraw *ENG-SCI 298r Data Fusion in Complex Systems: A Case Study* from enrollment for the Spring 2021 semester.
2. Conduct a full review of the process through which this *ENG-SCI 298r* was approved for instruction and make public the results of this review.
3. Establish a fellowship fund for third party, interdisciplinary student-led research on the potential harms caused by the C3 intervention that include, at minimum, data on: SPD misconduct; SPD internal reviews of police abuse; legal investigations of SPD police violence being led by the Department of Justice, ACLU, US Attorney's Office, DA Gullini in Hampden County and others; police dash/body cam footage; Springfield police officer gang affiliations; internal statistics about racial profiling, arrests, and use of force; any other known or uncovered external audits of the department.
4. Fully fund and implement the HDSI Graduate Student proposal for *A Participatory Approach to Incorporating Fairness Best Practices in Data Science Education*, which is designed to develop, deploy, and evaluate curriculum that integrates fairness best practices in data science education and admit new Womxn and People of Color into the Data Science program.
5. Consult with appropriate experts on race, law, and the prison industrial complex across campus and other institutions and support existing initiatives to expand SEAS curriculum

on racism in computing and anti-racist and abolitionist frameworks for technological development.
6. Engage SEAS faculty in existing campus initiatives that seek to educate Harvard community members on harm reduction, transformative justice, and abolition.
7. Launch a full independent, third-party review of Prof. Kit Parker to determine if his involvement with C3 and the proposed research meets the ethical standards of Harvard's IRB and any professional associations of which he is a part.
8. Review all research funding and conflicts of interest that may prohibit Professor Parker from being able to engage in this research in good faith and without a predetermined outcome that benefits him financially.

Signed (in alphabetical order),
Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice
GSAS Society of Underrepresented Students in STEM
Harvard Alliance Against Campus Cops
Harvard Applied Physics Graduate Student Council
Harvard College Young Democratic Socialists of America
Harvard Ethnic Studies Coalition
Harvard Graduate Advisory Committee on Diversity, Inclusion & Leadership in Applied Computation
Harvard Graduate Students Union
Harvard Graduate Women in Science and Engineering
Harvard GSAS Latinx Student Association
Harvard Prison Divestment Campaign
Harvard Women in Computer Science
Jewish Coalition for Peace
Our Harvard Can Do Better

(879 total signatures)
Harvard Supporters

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External Organizations

Data for Black Lives
DeeperThanWater Coalition

CSUN's Asian American Studies Pathways Project
Out Now
Anthem, LLC
TEN DEMANDS
The Bountiful Bag
Pioneer Valley Workers Center, Springfield, MA
Asian American Resource Workshop, Dorchester, MA
The Real Cost of Prisons Project
Stop LAPD Spying Coalition
Jewish Voice for Peace-Boston
URMentor
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The Scientific Workers Collective (SWC)
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Criminology Department, University of Southern Maine
March For Our Lives: Massachusetts and March For Our Lives: Boston

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Martha Nathan MD , Retired family physician in North Springfield where c3 was implemented.
Rebecca Jones , Springfield MA resident
Meredith Alberta Palmer , Cornell University, Presidential Postdoc
Sayash Kapoor , PhD student, Princeton University
Caislin ODalaigh , NY State
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James Lent, Disgusted Neighbor
Becky Blackhawk , College educator of Indigenous ethnicity
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Erin Pleasants , BU
Hannah Gauthier , Springfield resident
Jeannette Iannacone , Graduate student at the University of Maryland, former staff in Springfield MA public school
Elise Mason, Springfield Resident
Izamar Rivera-Diaz , Grad Student, Widener University
Aisha Cruse , A black person living in Arlington and a former Cambridge resident
Emma W. , None, but change is needed. Anyway I can help I will.
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Bridgit Boulahanis , Recent PhD, Columbia University, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences
Meredith Alberta Palmer , Cornell University, Presidential Postdoc
William Liem , Staff, Washington University in St. Louis
Kenneth O. , US of A
Stephanie Torres , Bridge to Faculty Research Associate
Marina Reyes Lopez Mautner , PhD Candidate, University of California, Davis
Ángel Fabián, MD MNA , Stanford Alumni, University of San Francisco Alumni
Alexander Mancevice
Isabella Revett , Cambridge resident
Alex Reilly
Quinn Wilson , Concerned Citizen
Will Fraker , Wesleyan University
Kendra Calhoun , Graduate student, UC Santa Barbara
Kyna D
Nishant Subramani , ML/NLP Researcher @ Masakhane
Daniel Bullman , Ball State University, Teachers College. Retired Police Officer, Indianapolis Metro Police Department.
Alyssa Rivera , Software Engineer , Cambridge MA
Daniel Smolyak , Phd Student in Computer Science, University of Maryland, College Park
Dolan Murvihill , Cambridge resident & Software Engineer
Eric Vazquez , Assistant Professor, U of Iowa
Rebecca BurWei , Senior Data Scientist
Marina Grozdanova , Not associated, found via Instagram and want to support, as a former academic
Kris Fortmann , MLIS Grad Student, University of Washington
Angela Pan , Student at University of Maryland
Stephanie Torres , Bridge to Faculty Research Associate
Grace Chadwick , Arlington Resident
Ivón Padilla-Rodríguez , Columbia University, Department of History
Eric W Smith
Agustin Diaz, Ph. D. , Concerned citizen
Tyler H , CSU Northridge CECS graduate

Ella Wod , Concerned citizen
Ethan Li , PhD Student in Bioengineering, Stanford University
Karima Baptiste-McCann
Johana Castillo , Parent advocate, family educator
Emily Smith , Building Up People Not Prisons, Black and Pink MA, SURJ Boston
Caley Valdez , Undergraduate Honors student in the department of Biomedical Sciences at Colorado State University
Dominique Malloy , University of Virginia, Student, CLAS 2022
Jaclyn Bellando , New York City resident; College of the Holy Cross alum
Gisell Fernandez , Student
Alex Ahmed , postdoc, Carnegie Mellon University School of Computer Science
Elijah Sciammas
Jill Hughes , UMass Amherst grad student, live very near Springfield
Mary , Student - McGeorge School of Law
Hannah Mummey , Graduate student, University of California, San Diego
Srivarshini Parameswaran , Student at University of Maryland, College Park
Allison Mickel , Assistant Professor, Lehigh University
Alma Solis , Student, Duke University
Crystal Simmons , Columbia University Alumni
Sarah Schwarzschild
Julie Lee , Postdoctoral research fellow, University College London
Ciara Brewer , USC Graduate student
Melissa Pereira , Local
Christina Liverett , Assistant Professor
JR Mahung , Decarcerate Western Mass, Umass Amherst Grad Student
Marsalis Gibson , UC Berkeley, Department of Electrical engineering and Computer science, graduate student
Shreya Sodhi , Social Psychology Ph.D. Student, UC Santa Barbara
Isabelle ohman , None
Grace , South End resident, Oracle Corporation
Naomi Suzuki , Criminology and Criminal Justice grad student at California State University Long Beach
Gabriel Reyes , Tufts University student
Natalie Curtin , Student at Northeastern University
Jessica Hatrick , Doctoral Student, University of Southern California
Mary vorpahl , No affiliation, concerned citizen
Carol Hansen , Professional Software Engineer
Jeannette Iannacone , Graduate student at the University of Maryland, former staff in Springfield MA public school
Zachary Harris , Concerned human being
Jasmine Kwasa , Carnegie Mellon University, PhD candidate, Electrical and Computer Engineering
Jordan G
Drake Slansky

Alex Bernstein , student at Williams
Dri Tattersfield , Claremont McKenna College student & MIT Summer Research Program alumni
Therese Oshiro , Student, Scripps College
Autumn Ni
Rosalyn Price-Waldman , Princeton University
Corban Swain , Massachusetts Institute Of Technology, Biological Engineering, Graduate
Student
Chinasa T. Okolo , Computer Science PhD Student, Cornell University
Josia DeChiara , was Harvard forest summer program participant in 2015
Mishana Green , Graduate student at Eastern Michigan University (interracial and intercultural
communication)
Rachel Szabo , PhD student, MIT, Microbiology
Kaylen Sanders
Marsalis Gibson , UC Berkeley, Department of Electrical engineering and Computer science,
graduate student
Naela Patel , Texas Woman's University undergraduate student
sheyla v , Boston Resident
Andrea barnett , Citizen
Grace Hwang , Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health
Thomas George , PhD student in Engineering Science (SEAS)
isabella , student
Kristina Gavin Bigsby , Lecturer, Business Analytics, Henry B. Tippie College of Business,
University of Iowa
Hati Kobusingye
Asa Wilder , Reference and Instruction Librarian
Tessa Adair
Sofia Fedele , North Essex Community College
Brianna Payne
Francis Roberts , Tech Employee
Lori Ashikawa , Musician and concerned citizen
Yoni Sternberg
Heather Ver Meer
Tess Jacobson , Columbia University PhD Student in Earth & Environmental Sciences
Jennifer L Lambert , Concerned American
uan Pablo Alvarado , None
Des Dannenbring , Just a concerned librarian (MLISc, MEd)
Monica Mocogni , Illinois Wesleyan University Alumna
Lanay M , N/a
Juan Pablo Alvarado , None
Elliot Oberholtzer , Northeastern University School of Law
Sahil Shah , Tech Workers Coalition
Vanessa Grant Coats , National community member (Portland, OR.)
Andreea Marinescu , Faculty, Colorado College
Aminatou Fall , Not an affiliate

Mehr Ansari , Barnard alum
Alannah Campion , Concerned Citizen
Mariluz Blandon , nan
Nava Haghighi , PhD student, Stanford
Emily Di Dodo , Dphil candidate, modern languages, university of oxford
Ryan Owens , Graduate student
Ruby Vail , Cambridge resident
Erin Bond , Unaffiliated
Vance Rogers , Springfield resident
Alice Wu , MIT, EECS, PhD student
Kaleigh O'Keefe , Harvard Book Store Union UAW Local 1596, Greater Boston Labor Council,
AFL-CIO MA State Fed
Emily Berkowitz , UPenn School of Social Policy & Practice, Actionable Intelligence for Social
Policy staff
Diana Barry Frazier , Human being
Kowe Kadoma , student, Florida A&M University
Clay Tantlinger , Concerned fellow citizen of the United States
Lori Ashikawa , Musician and concerned citizen
Rachel Hagan , Concerned citizen
Ian Herel , UMass Amherst Student
Becca Greenstein , STEM Librarian, Northwestern University Libraries
Tavia Jackson , Black woman
Katie Halloran , Graduate student, MIT
Derrick , Technical Assistant to the CEO at Allen Institute of Artificial Intelligence
Corinna Hertweck , PhD student (algorithmic fairness) at the University of Zurich and Zurich
University of Applied Sciences
Savanna Berman
Melissa Merin , Mills College Alum
Cara Fantini , Drexel University, Program Coordinator
Jason Hunt , anti militarism
Cassius Adair , NYU
Dean Colpack , LCSW
Wendy , AF
J. Nyla McNeill , Independent scholar
Amy Duong , student - Occidental College '23
Rachael Conway , Master of Public Policy Candidate at Brandeis University
Alexander Isaiah Darby Lester , Director of Education, The Black Scranton Project
Sheshera Mysore , UMass Amherst, College of Information and Computer Sciences
Jackie Wang , Northwestern University student
Ksenia Voropaeva , USAF Veteran, The New School, Milano School of Public Engagement
David Anders-Richards , Technology Professional
Amanda Holman , Brad's Deals
Hannah Kim
Luke Stiles , UC Berkeley Student, Political Economy Major

Olyvia Ratliff
Lelia Hampton , Student
Wendy Chen
Susana Baltazar
Violet Miller , Friend of grad student - teacher at KIPP
Jennifer Woronow
Patrick Burke , UAW Local 2322
John Amante , University of Massachusetts Amherst BME PHD student
Daniel Cione , CUNY Law School
Shane Wade , Resident
Alvaro J. Castro Rivadeneira , Epidemiology graduate student (UMass Amherst)
Christine Farolan , Northeastern Law student
Marcy Delos , George Mason University
Armaan Ajani , Student at peer institution
Susana Toro Isaza , New York University staff
Terrell James , UMass Graduate Student, Springfield Resident.
Jessica Brown , Smith College student
Tyler Hogsett , Concerned citizen
Kavi Kaushik , Boston area resident
Ruth Sangree , Student, NYU Law
Shyamala Ramakrishna , Yale College 2017, Yale Law School 2024
Eitana McClerklin , WUSTL Student
Ravi Rajah , Concerned citizen
Harold Milton-Gorvie
Amiel Padayhag
Erika Shepard , University of Minnesota graduate student
Yeji Jung , NYU School of Law '23
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Tyler
Jon Beltrano
Johnpaul Morton
Aliza Kenney
Jax Padilla
Eva Favreau
Lowell Iporac
Tyler Simonds
Killian Ruck

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Resources:
1. Defund the Global Policeman | Issue 38 | n+1
2. 'One of the worst police departments in the country': Reign of brutality brings a reckoning in Springfield
3. Mayor Sarno, Commissioner Barbieri, Massachusetts State Police, North End Neighborhood and Harvard University Continue Team Up on C3 Policing Successes, Expansion and Replication
4. Justice Department Announces Findings of Investigation into Narcotics Bureau of Springfield, Massachusetts Police Department
5. The Punishment Bureaucracy: How to Think About "Criminal Justice Reform"
6. In wake of police scandals and controversies, councilors call for close review of Springfield police department
7. 2 Springfield Cops Indicted For Excessive Force During Arrests Of Latino Teens
8. Hampden DA's office to review altercation between student, Springfield officer
9. Hampden DA to review 2017 altercation involving Springfield Police officer
10. Springfield City Council Approves $450,000 for Police Brutality Settlement
11. 14 Officers Indicted on Assault or Cover-Up Charges in Beating of Black Men (Published 2019)

12. Fourteen Springfield police officers indicted in alleged off-duty beating of civilians after 2015 barroom argument
13. Man goes to Springfield Police HQ to dispute ticket, is grabbed by throat and tackled by officers in confrontation
14. City of Springfield was 'deliberately indifferent to civil rights of citizens,' federal jury says
15. Springfield police officer flunks 2 drug tests, attempts fake urine sample and stays on the job
16. Victim of alleged Springfield police beating files $10M lawsuit against police, claiming cover-up and corruption
17. Two Massachusetts officers indicted on charges they beat Latino teens
18. Five Springfield police officers and bar owner charged in alleged 2015 beating of civilians after barroom argument
19. Springfield police officer Anthony Bedinelli fired for 2nd time in 11 years
20. Dirty Data, Bad Predictions: How Civil Rights Violations Impact Police Data, Predictive Policing Systems, and Justice
21. Machine Bias — ProPublica
22. Unconstitutional Patfrisk Requires High Court Intervention
23. How black people really feel about the police, explained - Vox