

University of Virginia Student Council

General Body Meeting

August 22, 2017

Meeting called to order at 6:43 PM.

Sarah: Hi everyone, thanks for coming today to join us for a community town hall. First, please look at the banner of hand prints on the back table from a university in Kentucky which held a vigil for us. That is an example of the support we are getting from all over the country. Also, I want to explain today's format. We will have speakers come to the microphones who have signed the sign up sheet for 2 minute periods. We want to hear as many people as possible. Also please leave us your contact info if you want us to follow up. StudCo's job is to listen, we are hear to gather concerns hear anger, and feel your pain. Once we've established where we're at, we can move forward with the steps we can take. This is a space of respect, coming together, unity, and having each other's backs. I would also like to address BSA's demands presented last night. We need more black students, professors, and education on white supremacy and Thomas Jefferson's full legacy. We haven't yet convened our entire representative body, but once we speak, we can produce policy and resolutions,

David: Every StudCo representative is free to speak their minds and concerns.

Alex: I'm a third year in the college. I have a concern about the discussions. We know racism and bigotry is bad, and want to show unity, peace, solidarity. We should prevent white supremacists from expanding by using historical context. We need to dive deeper into racism.

Chad: Going off of that, as a first year, I have a problem with the rhetoric used. People are saying love and unity, but love in this scenario doesn't do anything to help us. When people talk about the feelings of progressive parties to combat hate groups, just saying love beats hate doesn't do much. My problem is that all of the language throughout from spokespeople, people are saying we need to have open minds and become friends with peers, but that is essentially saying that if you are part of a group that these people want to kill, what good is it to become their friend? All of the spokespeople are condemning the events, but aren't offering action.

Kate: I'm a fourth year in the college. From a safety viewpoint, I don't feel safe or protected. I want to know how StudCo and the university will prevent this from happening again. If StudCo is going to demand that UVA approaches white supremacy and racism on grounds, could you articulate the demands?

Wes: I want to go into the history of StudCo. In the 1970s, StudCo was in support of integration, along with BSA. StudCo has great potential to join us, and work on active legislation and partnership going forward.

Adam: My first point is that I am not sure if President Sullivan's note about Democrats and Republicans was in response to these events or not. If so, it was not appropriate. This isn't a left versus right thing. This ideology is not a legitimate political force. My main point is that people are underestimating the potential of students and groups to play a role. The vigil was student

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run and organized, as well as the march. Groups can play a large role in combating hatred in the future. I encourage student groups to take active roles in combating racism.

Evelyn: I am the chair of Minority Rights Coalition and a StudCo rep. StudCo doesn't have the greatest reputation, and we are known for inaction. I joined because I believe we can make change, but commitment is nothing if it's not backed by action. StudCo should become an ally for all students. During the next legislative session, a number of reps will introduce a resolution that supports a lot of the demands we've seen. The march was led by BSA, but the demands were signed on by over 20 minority organizations and is very intersectional. Someone asked that I ask what role with the StudCo Diversity committee had in engaging a response, and what future programming there will be?

Gen Bod 1: I am also in MRC, and now is the time to be bold. The MRC, BSA, and other groups want to work with you to improve the university. Now is the time to take action.

Devin: I am in BSA, and I am speaking because I want to express my support for these demands. Please read them closely. I think that everyday this university benefits from foul play and hurts the memory and legacy of those who suffered to give us this space. I would like to know if you are committed to standing what's right, and if you are willing to oppose the university to stand for what's right.

Hannah: I am a second year, and want to drive home the BSA demands for the working group and the students affected by the events. The group can affect a lot of change, and right now there is only one student included. Get involved.

Francesca: At the march, there was a sentiment that in the past at many universities, minorities have had to take up their own struggle to fight for what is right. This is an opportunity to have more groups exercise their power in representing the entire student body, including Honor and UJC.

Jocelyn: I am second year. After the march last night, I was troubled by the disconnect between the university and Charlottesville communities. What steps will be taken to inform university students about the Charlottesville community and vice versa, and how can we build that relationship? Right now, it is prime time to make changes but after the media dies down, how can we sustain and maintain that dialogue?

Belle: This is my motion of support for BSA as a representative for the Animal Justice Advocates. We have a platform that states that UVA should recognize its responsibility to educate us about the institution and its history.

Kate: Will you take questions? How do you see yourselves working with the administration and student body? There were no emails about the march last night, and the resources you sent weren't very helpful. Who do you work with to make those emails? I support the BSA demands.

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Lou: I was part of the group that surrounded the statue and the counterprotest. On Saturday after 2 pm, I spent 36 hours in the hospital with a friend who was hit by the car. I heard the staff get more and more reports of cars swerving at people, and unconfirmed reports of a shooter. I was safe but heard panic and overwhelmed employees. The balance of power was up for grabs in the city. People were fleeing and I don't know why the Nazis didn't come back. If they had, I fear our city officials wouldn't have been in control. This institution is not eternal, and neither is our safety and security. I am grappling with what administration would do in that situation. This summer, we had several events of crisis where Nazis took over the city and hurt people. Sarah, your email felt like President Sullivan's bullet points. Where is the real power in this university? Right now it's the BOV, which consists of businessmen who don't live here. How can we actually take power? StudCo seems to be essentially symbolic power.

Michael: I am a fourth year in the college. I know a lot of people who have contributed to the university without being a student. I was wondering if StudCo could promote the GoFundMe page of a community member that was in a car that was rammed into. Charlottesville members are often included in UVA events, so we should support to them as well.

Ariana: I am a second year in the college. I saw a UVA Students United video of a student confronting President Sullivan about where she was on Friday night. In the video, she says she didn't know this would happen. How can we feel protected if the president doesn't know what's going on? My brother was in India and asked me if I was safe before President Sullivan said anything.

Gen Bod 2: I am an international student, and over the last year, my family didn't know where Charlottesville was. After last week, they knew. Instead of asking about my experience and classes, they ask about my safety and preparedness. I now feel unsafe, and this was the first time I wasn't excited to come back. I spoke to deans who tried to help me, but I feel that Charlottesville is gaining a worse and worse image. A lot of students counter protest, but the world doesn't know that.

Ellie: I am a second year and StudCo rep. After the rallies on Saturday, a first year told me she didn't want to come here anymore. I didn't want to come back, it felt like they took UVA away from us. They didn't warn us enough. We knew it was happening, but the administration didn't seem to. We didn't get a UVA alert about the rallies, but did about the eclipse. StudCo is drafting resolutions in support of BSA and the students affected.

Kelsey: I was working in the hospital for both rallies, and we were on lockdown. There was a lot of police and security guards, which isn't feasible for when the students are back. What safety precautions can we take? We got no alerts, and I want to be sure that information would be disseminated if it happens during the semester.

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Clara: I'm a fourth year, and was not planning to speak up here. It feels like speaking into a void. I have seen no action from StudCo to respond to student demands. You refused to sign onto our demands at the march, which means refusing to boost student voices and their needs. That is really frustrating. It's on us to hold leadership accountable. Send emails and talk to people. I want StudCo to allow us to speak to those who hold power, like the working group which needs more student voices. More students should talk to BOV, and workers as well.

Tiffany: This event received the most coverage, but other events happened in Charlottesville this summer. Charlottesville police maced and pepper sprayed peaceful protesters. UPD buses released people who committed these acts. We need to align our actions with our ideals in order to protect peaceful citizens.

Victoria: The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and expecting different results. These efforts need to be protected. We should include those who aren't religious and ethnic minorities to show solidarity and inclusion. Please remain courteous and productive in times of such emotional distress. Our best efforts are when we are on a common ground.

Kate: There's been concern about student voices, but we aren't mentioning workers and staff who are part of the community even if they don't live here. What are we going to do as Student Council to help facilities and dining services?

Maeve: There was a lack of police presence at the torch rally, and a delayed reaction on Saturday. UPD has failed to prioritize student safety in the past, particularly for students of color. What is Student Council going to do to improve the relationship and ensure that we are protected?

Eddie: I am a rep, and a lot of this is directed towards reps for next week. When we voted for the Dreamers resolution, a lot of reps abstained. Reps, please show up and don't abstain. Disagree if you disagree, but don't say that you don't know enough. This hateful attack is still fresh, and we can make impactful change here.

Kendall: Maeve, you were right that UPD didn't act as they should have, but they were there, in addition to state and Charlottesville police. They stood on the sidelines and didn't respond until people were already hurt. They didn't account for people receiving medical attention when making arrests. In these situations, President Sullivan is talking about increasing Ambassadors and more security, but those people either don't do their job or don't do it well. Reroute that money, don't spend it on beefing up the police force. The Nazis will probably keep coming back, and the police don't know how to deal with it. Demilitarize and scale back on police forces.

Michael: I was wondering if we'd be in support of reviewing the regulations against students carrying arms. The police and university have not done a good job of maintaining safety so maybe they should be reviewed so students can bear arms on grounds. If the white

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supremacists can carry weapons, burn us, and hit us with cars, maybe we should be able to defend ourselves.

Allie: I am a member of the Jewish community here, which hasn't been spoken for. The synagogue asked to have security during the event, and they only sent one person. It is my job to bring that up. I don't feel safe going to pray in my place of worship, and StudCo should reach out to Jewish groups to figure out what can be done.

Evelyn: The demands can be found on the BSA Facebook page. Please meet with us, we want to get engaged with you. Reach out to your reps to voice your opinions.

Lukas: I am a college rep, and you've brought up great points. Please take these conversations to higher levels and state legislators. Talk to the city councillors and mayor offices. As a state institution, there is a lot we can't regulate without getting the state involved.

Adam: I second that. I agree with the sentiment of almost all the BSA demands. But I suggest that we try to keep it realistic. Obviously there should be more black students, but there won't be an overhaul of admissions soon. Additionally banning Jason Kessler is a good idea but not realistic.

Sarah: Thank you for coming tonight. This is what democracy looks like.

The General Body meeting ended at 7:45 PM.