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Syracuse & the Imperial University: Militarizing Police and Criminalizing Dissent in Response to the #NotAgainSU Movement

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

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and Renée Crown University Honors
Spring 2021

Honors Thesis in English & Textual Studies

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Abstract

Drawing from scholarship on the military-prison-industrial complex (MPIC), this paper understands the university as a site of abolitionist struggle. Specifically, I examine how Syracuse University functions as what scholars have referred to as an "academic-MPIC" or "imperial university." I pay particular attention to SU's response to #NotAgainSU, a Black student-led coalition organizing against SU's complicities in the MPIC. My paper seeks to understand how this specific moment of crisis makes visible the university's broader investments in imperial projects and how those investments structure life on campus during and outside times of crisis.

I begin by overviewing the theoretical frameworks I use to understand how the university increasingly invests in imperial projects, especially through military, carceral, and neoliberal logics. Next, I apply these frameworks to Syracuse University to highlight SU's own investments in the MPIC. Moving to a focus on #NotAgainSU, I explore how the administration enforces these investments by 1.) threatening campus protestors with militarized police forces, and 2.) legitimizing those threats by criminalizing dissent. Finally, I consider how campus movements like #NotAgainSU challenge us to reimagine our relationship to the university in the context of liberation struggles. Ultimately, I argue that by deploying a militarized police force and criminalizing dissent, Syracuse University participates in the production of an academic-military-prison-industrial complex, as is especially evident in its response to #NotAgainSU.

Executive Summary

In fall 2019, Black students at Syracuse University began organizing the #NotAgainSU movement in response to an ongoing history of administrative decisions that have compromised the safety and well-being of Black students and other people of color navigating a predominately white institution. As a coalition of students, faculty, staff, and other members of the campus community, #NotAgainSU has refused the logics of a university that has raised the cost of attendance by 44% over fewer than 10 years (Sessa, "How Costs, Spending, and Enrollment Have Evolved"), invested donations from wealthy corporations into military and carceral projects, and defunded programs and scholarships for Black students and other students of color. In response to the administration's attempt to cover up a series of racist graffiti incidents on campus, #NotAgainSU organized an occupation of the Barnes Center, SU's latest construction project that cost an estimated $50 million in renovations. Continuing this dissent, #NotAgainSU organized a 31-day occupation of Crouse-Hinds Hall—a campus building housing classrooms, admissions, and administrators' offices—only leaving the building as the emergence of the Covid-19 crisis impeded the ability to gather in physical space. #NotAgainSU draws from a history of student protest movements on and off SU's campus, including THE General Body, a campus coalition that similarly occupied Crouse-Hinds Hall just five years earlier to demand that the SU administration address the "grievances and problems that students of various socio-economic class, disability, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, and race experience on a day to day basis" (THE General Body, "About"). #NotAgainSU may be a response to a moment of crisis, but that crisis is a result of, not an exception to, the university's increasing reliance on military, carceral, and neoliberal logics.

My paper seeks to understand how this specific moment of crisis makes visible the university's broader investments in projects of militarization, incarceration, and the U.S.'s ability to assert "political, economic, and military dominance around the globe" (Chatterjee and Maira 7). In addition to highlighting SU's specific complicities in these projects, my paper examines SU's response to #NotAgainSU to better understand how the university enforces those complicities by attempting to nullify dissent. Throughout my argument, I attempt to balance the specific with the broad, which is to say, I hope to connect this close examination of a specific moment of crisis (#NotAgainSU) to the broader projects of imperialism against which campus movements organize.

For this analysis, I draw from abolitionist scholarship on the military-prison-industrial complex (MPIC). The term "MPIC" highlights how the state-funded military and prison systems are mutually reinforced by private industries that profit from large state spending on arms manufacturing, policing, surveillance, and other technologies of imperialism. Within this context, scholars have theorized an "academic-MPIC" or "imperial university" to understand how higher education, while often viewed as antithetical to military and carceral logics, increasingly perpetuates the MPIC. My paper, then, is an intervention in how these broad frameworks on the academic-MPIC operate at Syracuse University.

For instance, I apply Julia C. Oparah's observation that universities "produce an educated workforce for the prison-industrial complex" to the specific context of SU (110). The U.S. Department of Defense sponsors two Military Visual Journalism programs in SU's prestigious S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications ("Newhouse MVJ"). SU's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs offers certification in National Security Studies for "senior civilian and military executives in both the public and private sectors" ("National Security

Studies”). Additionally, the Whitman School of Management offers a Defense Comptrollership Program to train “financial managers to handle multibillion-dollar resources for the Department of Defense” (“Defense Programs”). In an explicit reference to connections between the military, academia, and industry, Whitman advertises this program by highlighting its alumni “found at the highest levels of financial management in DOD, as well as in business, academia, and all levels of government” (“Defense Programs”). The National Veterans Resource Center’s “Get Skills to Work” program prepares students for manufacturing jobs at General Electric, Boeing, Alcoa, and Lockheed Martin, all of which hold military contracts (Syracuse University, “Get Skills”). A Vice President of Lockheed Martin even sits on IVMF’s external advisory board (Syracuse University, “IVMF Announces”). Throughout its campus, SU not only participates in but advertises itself as a creator of and training ground for workers of the MPIC.

In addition to examining SU’s broad investments in the academic-MPIC, I look at how SU enforces those investments when contending with #NotAgainSU, a campus movement that dissents to such complicities. One key strategy SU deploys is by threatening protestors with militarized police forces. For instance, SU employs a police force focused entirely on SU’s campus, the Department of Public Safety (DPS). Although DPS markets itself as adopting an ill-defined “community policing” model, the fact that all DPS officers are armed contradicts the language of their official title as so-called “peace officers.” Furthermore, DPS “enjoys an excellent working relationship with the Syracuse Police Department (SPD)” in part by using a communications system “interoperable with all local and regional law enforcement agencies” (“Syracuse Police Department Partnership”). Consequently, incidents reported by one agency can be made available to others. This even extends to federal agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Another key strategy SU deploys to enforce its complicities in the academic-MPIC is by criminalizing dissent. Criminalization is a process of determining *who* and *what* gets marked as "criminal." In this section of my paper, I investigate how SU labels participation in #NotAgainSU as criminal activity, largely by portraying student protestors as campus disrupters and by enforcing University sanctions against #NotAgainSU participants (and in some cases, against Black people who did not even participate in #NotAgainSU).

I begin the paper by overviewing the theoretical frameworks I use to understand how the university increasingly invests in imperial projects, especially through military, carceral, and neoliberal logics. Next, I apply these frameworks to Syracuse University to highlight SU's own investments in the MPIC. Moving to a focus on #NotAgainSU, I explore how the administration enforces these investments by 1.) threatening campus protestors with militarized police forces, and 2.) legitimizing those threats by criminalizing dissent. Finally, I consider how campus movements like #NotAgainSU challenge us to reimagine our relationship to the university in the context of liberation struggles. Ultimately, I argue that by deploying a militarized police force and criminalizing dissent, Syracuse University participates in the production of an academic-military-prison-industrial complex, as is especially evident in its response to #NotAgainSU.

With this paper, I hope to support the work of the #NotAgainSU movement, in part by considering how #NotAgainSU builds what Robin D.G. Kelley calls spaces of "love, study, and struggle" where our pursuit of freedom leaves us "no choice but to love all… to fight relentlessly to end exploitation and oppression everywhere." By applying frameworks on the academic-MPIC to SU, we can better understand how the university sustains its complicities in systems of oppression and how those complicities structure life on campus during and outside times of crisis.

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Introduction

We will not issue a statement saying that the University is complicit in perpetuating oppressive systems, specifically white supremacy.

— Syracuse University, "Concerns of #NotAgainSU Students."

Claiming the voice of the University as their own, the Syracuse University administration published this statement on the University website during the spring semester of 2020. They crafted it in response to a demand from #NotAgainSU, a Black student-led movement that organized a 31-day occupation of Crouse-Hinds Hall—a campus building housing classrooms, admissions, and administrators' offices. In response to the administration's attempt to cover up a series of racist graffiti incidents on campus during the fall of 2019, Black students organized a coalition of students, faculty, staff, and other members of the campus community to demand an end to the types of administrative decisions that have continuously compromised the safety and well-being of Black students and other people of color navigating a predominately white institution.[1] Some of #NotAgainSU's demands include a university-wide anti-racist curriculum, a tuition freeze, scholarships for students of color, and the disarming of campus police officers (#NotAgainSU, *Official Negotiation Document*). One such demand is for the SU administration to release a statement acknowledging that these incidents "are not simply acts of hatred, but rather they are indicative of larger systemic and institutional violence" (#NotAgainSU, *A Response to the Inadequacies of the Administration*). In response, the administration issued this direct refusal.[2]

This paper seeks to understand how this specific moment of crisis makes visible the university's broader investments in imperial projects, especially through military, carceral, and neoliberal logics. In addition to highlighting SU's specific complicities in these imperial projects,

this paper examines SU's response to #NotAgainSU to better understand how the university enforces those complicities by attempting to nullify dissent. Throughout my argument, I attempt to balance the specific with the broad, which is to say, I hope to connect this close examination of a specific moment of crisis (#NotAgainSU) to the broader projects of imperialism against which campus movements organize.

#NotAgainSU is not the first campus movement to challenge these types of complicities. SU's campus alone has long been a site of student protest movements. Working in solidarity with #NotAgainSU, coalitions of Indigenous students (Indigenous Students at Syracuse and Native Student Program) and international students (Syracuse University, "International Student Concerns") also submitted demands and recommendations to the administration in fall 2019. Further, the same Crouse-Hinds Hall occupied by #NotAgainSU was similarly occupied for 18 days just five years earlier by THE General Body, a campus coalition demanding that the SU administration address the "grievances and problems that students of various socio-economic class, disability, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, and race experience on a day to day basis" (THE General Body, "About"). An important earlier moment of crisis on SU's campus occurred in 1969, when about 100 Black students protested in front of the SU Administration Building, leading to SU's reluctant establishment of the African American Studies program and the Martin Luther King Jr. Library (Alessandrini). In 1970, nine Black football players—mistakenly named the "Syracuse 8"—boycotted practices and games to demand an end to racism in SU's athletic department (Croyle). That same year, anti-war protests effectively shut down campus for the final two weeks of the semester (Ronayne). Looking beyond SU's campus, in 2016, the organization We, The Protesters compiled demands of campus movements from 80 colleges and universities across the U.S. and Canada. Universities within and beyond the U.S.

have long been sites of struggle. #NotAgainSU may be a response to a specific moment of crisis, but that crisis is a continuity of, not an exception to, the university's increasing reliance on military, carceral, and neoliberal logics.

Scholars have echoed challenges to these complicities in their scholarship. Much of this work has focused on the militarization of the academy. John Armitage, for instance, conceptualizes the university as a "militarized knowledge factory" in which knowledge production is increasingly organized for military ends. Henry A. Giroux situates the accelerating corporatization and militarization of the academy within a broader "biopolitics of militarization" that has grown in power in the U.S. since 9/11. Expanding beyond frameworks that focus on militarization, essays from Piya Chatterjee and Sunaina Maira's 2014 edited volume *The Imperial University* offer important interventions in exploring different facets of the university's investments in a U.S.-led global imperial project. Additionally, the authors of "Abolitionist University Studies: An Invitation" offer a periodization that highlights the role of racial capitalism in the history of the university in the U.S. In her article "Refusing the University," Sandy Grande understands the university through a settler colonial framework, offering strategies for us to organize against the imperial university while working within it. Each of these frameworks, which Grande asserts are fundamentally distinct from one another, offer important insights into how universities operate in ways antithetical to mission statements touting the importance of a liberal arts education or even "diversity, equity, and inclusion."

My paper is an intervention in how these broad frameworks apply to Syracuse University. More specifically, I use these frameworks to understand how #NotAgainSU and the administration's response to it highlight SU's investments in imperial projects, which structure campus life during and outside moments of crisis. As #NotAgainSU itself asserts, imperialism,

settler colonialism, militarization, neoliberalism, and racial capitalism are related in specific and complex ways. In order to grapple with the broad scope of these investments without glossing over the particularities of this crisis, I narrow my analysis to focus primarily on SU's use of military, carceral, and neoliberal logics because those are the logics most explicitly challenged by #NotAgainSU.

I begin the paper by overviewing the theoretical frameworks I use to understand how the university increasingly invests in imperial projects, especially through military, carceral, and neoliberal logics. Next, I apply these frameworks to Syracuse University to highlight SU's own investments in the MPIC. Moving to a focus on #NotAgainSU, I explore how the administration enforces these investments by 1.) threatening campus protestors with militarized police forces, and 2.) legitimizing those threats by criminalizing dissent. Finally, I consider how campus movements like #NotAgainSU challenge us to reimagine our relationship to the university in the context of liberation struggles. Ultimately, I argue that by deploying a militarized police force and criminalizing dissent, Syracuse University[3] participates in the production of an academic-military-prison-industrial complex, as is especially evident in its response to #NotAgainSU.

My own arrival to this project stems from my experiences at SU during this time of crisis. When #NotAgainSU formed in fall 2019, I had just transferred to SU as a third-year undergraduate student. As each day brought new reports of racist graffiti found on campus, and as #NotAgainSU began to organize, several of my classrooms became sites for contextualizing the present moment within a broader history of liberation movements. Although I participated in several of #NotAgainSU's demonstrations, I cannot and do not speak for #NotAgainSU. I cannot speak to the experiences of the students who continued to occupy Crouse-Hinds despite being denied access to outside food and other essentials, nor can I speak to the experiences of the

students who continued to voice their dissent despite SU's violent, militarized response. More broadly, I cannot speak to the challenges of navigating a predominately white institution while Black. As a white student, my relationship with #NotAgainSU is one of solidarity.

Over the course of working on this project, I pursued the possibility of conducting interviews with members of #NotAgainSU to better understand their perspectives on topics such as campus policing, the administration's narrative of their movement, and the challenges of organizing within and against their own university. As necessary as their perspectives are to this analysis, working on this project throughout the 2020-2021 academic year has necessitated my attention to the realities of the Covid-19 crisis. Not only has Covid-19 prevented #NotAgainSU from meeting in physical space, but it has led to exhaustion among the SU community as a whole. As a result, I eventually decided to drop the interview component of this project rather than try to rush an interview study, especially given the time necessary to gain approval from the Institutional Review Board. That said, hearing from the perspectives of campus organizers themselves is imperative to understanding how the university's investments in imperial projects structure the university's response to dissent. Perhaps this is an area for further research.[4]

While this paper is not informed by interviews with members of #NotAgainSU, the perspective of #NotAgainSU as a collective is fundamental to this paper's analysis, largely through my use of negotiation documents, public statements, and social media posts. Furthermore, I would never have arrived to this project without their organizing efforts since the fall 2019 semester. With this paper, I hope to support the work of the #NotAgainSU movement. By applying frameworks on the "imperial university" to SU, we can better understand how the university sustains its complicities in systems of oppression and how those complicities structure life on campus during and outside times of crisis.

Understanding the Imperial University

When critiquing the university, scholars center a variety of perspectives, including militarization (Armitage) (Giroux), incarceration (Oparah), neoliberalism (Giroux) (Godrej), racial capitalism (Boggs et al.), imperialism (Chatterjee and Maira) (Godrej) (Oparah), and settler colonialism (Grande). Not only are these frameworks distinct from one another, but some, as Tuck and Yang assert, are incommensurable ("Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor" 28–35). This paper is not an attempt to commensurate these frameworks and develop a comprehensive analysis of SU. Instead, my paper examines several complicities brought to light by the #NotAgainSU movement. As a result, my paper focuses primarily on SU's use of military, carceral, and neoliberal logics not because those frameworks are the most important but because they are especially useful at understanding how this specific moment of crisis highlights SU's broader investments in imperial projects.

To fully understand the institutional investments that #NotAgainSU challenges, it is important to contextualize SU within the U.S.'s broader investments in militarization and incarceration.[5] Not only does the U.S. spend more on defense than any other nation, but it spends more than the next ten nations combined (Peter G. Peterson Foundation). Additionally, with the exception of China and the U.S. itself, U.S. state and local governments collectively spend more on policing than all other nations spend on their militaries (People's City Council - Los Angeles). While home to less than 5% of the world's total population, the U.S. is responsible for at least 20% of the world's incarcerated population (Wagner and Bertram). Whether measured by total numbers or rate per 100,000 population, the U.S. incarcerates more people than any nation in the world (Walmsley 19). Although the expansion of the carceral state is often framed as an issue of "mass incarceration," prison demographics do not encompass everyone equally, and it is

important to note their "exclusive domination of working or workless poor, most of whom are not white" (Gilmore 15). 57% of men and 72% of women incarcerated in the U.S. are poor (Rabuy and Kopf). The carceral state also targets trans and queer people, perpetuating cycles of poverty, homelessness, and imprisonment (Sylvia Rivera Law Project 9). Further, the carceral state targets people of color, especially Black people, who make up 13% of the total U.S. population but 40% of the incarcerated U.S. population (Sawyer and Wagner). These statistics are not to suggest that militarization and incarceration are unique to the U.S. In fact, anti-imperialist critique necessitates a framework that transcends national borders.[6] Instead, these statistics offer a useful introduction to the centrality of carceral and military logics in a U.S.-led global imperial project. In other words, militarization and incarceration are key strategies for the U.S. to assert "political, economic, and military dominance around the globe" (Chatterjee and Maira 7).

Another key technology of imperialism is neoliberal economics. According to neoliberalism, human prosperity is predicated on "strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey 2). This free-market logic leads to so-called austerity measures in which the state attempts to lower budget deficits by cutting social programs that reduce "group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death," thus rendering impoverished communities increasingly vulnerable to the carceral state. (Gilmore 28). At the same time, neoliberal logics lead to enormous military and policing budgets. While some aspects of militarization and incarceration may be privatized, the fact that these systems are largely controlled and funded by the state may appear to violate free-market logics. However, according to neoliberalism, the role of the state is to preserve a free market by setting up "those military, defense, police, and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if

need be, the proper functioning of markets" (Harvey 2). As a result, neoliberalism cuts state spending on social programs under the guise of balancing budgets while simultaneously expanding state spending on military and carceral projects. Furthermore, the fact that the U.S. secures these private property rights by displacing Indigenous peoples from—and replacing them on—land exemplifies how the state sustains racial capitalism through violent systems such as the military, and in this case, the settler colonial "logic of elimination" (Wolfe 387). Neoliberalism is not only supported by military and carceral logics, but each of these logics support the broader imperial project in which the university is increasingly invested.

A few key terms here are useful to discuss the close relationship between the military/carceral state and private industry. In his 1960 farewell speech, U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower used the term "military-industrial complex" to describe the "conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry" that profits from military spending (Eisenhower 1038). This connection between military and private industry is perhaps most visible in corporations such as Lockheed Martin, the "world's largest defense conglomerate," which receives more funds in government contracts than the entire U.S. State Department (Hartung). Through the military-industrial complex, the U.S. plays a key role in the militarization of the globe, as indicated in part by the U.S.'s consistent status as the world's largest arms supplier every year since 1950 (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute).

As the U.S. has increasingly adopted neoliberal policies, it has expanded its prison system to unprecedented levels. Between 1975 and 2005, the U.S. incarceration rate increased 342% from 111 to 491 per 100,000 people, the largest carceral expansion in U.S. history (DeFina and Hannon). Drawing from the work of incarcerated activists, Mike Davis popularized the term "prison-industrial complex" to describe California's $10 billion dollar prison-building project

that he argued “rivals agribusiness as the dominant force in the life of rural California and competes with land developers as the chief seducer of legislators in Sacramento” (M. Davis 229). As Ruth Wilson Gilmore points out, California’s prison expansion, like similar projects throughout the U.S., occurred after crime rates were already declining, suggesting that prison does not actually function to prevent so-called crimes (18).

Since Eisenhower’s use of the term “military-industrial complex” and Mike Davis’s use of the term “prison-industrial complex,” scholars and activists have continued to describe a military-prison-industrial complex (MPIC) to emphasize “the structural similarities and profitability of business-government linkages in the realms of military production and public punishment” (A. Davis). In other words, the term MPIC describes how the state and private industry operate together to enact military, carceral, and neoliberal logics. Demands for the abolition of the MPIC are demands to build a world that operates outside that imperialist system.

Within this context, scholars have theorized an “academic-industrial complex” or “imperial university” to challenge the “collusion of the university with militarism and occupation, the privatization of higher education, and economies of knowledge from within the U.S. university” (Chatterjee and Maira 6). While academia can serve as a site for anti-imperial critique, the term “imperial university” implicates the university within an academic-MPIC, which is comprised of complex relationships between academia, the military/carceral state, and private industries, all of which operate together to further a larger imperial project.

Many scholars have studied the militarization of the university. For example, John Armitage conceives of the university as a “hypermodern militarized knowledge factory,” which he defines as a “collection of buildings where militarized graduates are produced” that engages in “the militarization of knowledge” (221). For Armitage, universities, as militarized knowledge

factories, increasingly produce and conceive of knowledge "merely as something to be obtained for military purposes" (226). Henry A. Giroux situates the university's militarization within a broader "biopolitics of militarization" which has become increasingly influential in the U.S. since 9/11. Giroux distinguishes between militarism, defined as the general dominance of military values, and militarization, characterized by civil society becoming increasingly organized toward military ends (Giroux 59–60). For Giroux, the normalization of militarization in everyday life in a post-9/11 U.S. is an extension of the U.S.'s global military imperialism, and universities play a key role in legitimizing this militarization.

Although this scholarship focuses on how the university has become increasingly invested in imperial projects over the past two decades, these types of investments are not unique to the 21st century. The authors of "Abolition University Studies: An Invitation," contextualize the university's neoliberal logics within a historical materialist periodization of the university. In this periodization, the authors understand the development of the university as shifting "modes of accumulation" (Boggs et al. 9). According to this periodization, universities in the U.S. have always operated as imperial universities, albeit in different ways over time. For instance, many universities in the U.S. were founded on wealth generated by slavery and colonization (Boggs et al. 13). During what the authors define as the "Military Keynesian/Cold War Era" (1928-1960s), universities accumulated populations by "absorbing people from the labor force for years at a time, then reinserting them," often for military ends (Boggs et al. 13). Neoliberalism, in this framework, is only the most recent form of racial capitalism perpetuated by the university.

A central component of the history of the university is the removal of Indigenous peoples from land. Drawing from critical Indigenous studies, Sandy Grande theorizes the university "as *an arm of the settler state*—a site where the logics of elimination, capital accumulation, and

dispossession are reconstituted—which is distinct from other frameworks that critique the academy as fundamentally neoliberal, Eurocentric, and/or patriarchal" (47, original emphasis). In other words, Grande intervenes here by offering a decolonial critique of the university that accounts for the particularities of settler colonialism, which are not accounted for in other frameworks. By occupying land from which Indigenous peoples have been displaced, universities in the U.S. are sites at which the close relationships between settler colonialism, militarization, and other imperial projects are especially apparent.

The university also operates under prison-industrial logics. In addition to hiring their own police forces, universities also rely on state-funded police forces, which Farah Godrej argues play a key role in enforcing universities' investments in the MPIC by threatening campus movements. In her chapter "Challenging Complicity: The Neoliberal University and the Prison-Industrial Complex," Julia C. Oparah identifies four key ties between the university and the MPIC: endowments invested in private prison and military projects, training programs for a military-prison-industrial workforce, the subjection of incarcerated persons to experimentation, and knowledge production that legitimizes penal technologies (110–12). While each campus has its own particular connections to military, prison, and corporate contexts, Oparah's framework offers a useful approach to begin discovering those connections.

Syracuse University as an Imperial University

In this section, I apply many of the frameworks developed in the previous section to understand how Syracuse University functions as an "imperial university," with particular attention to its use of military, carceral, and neoliberal logics. While this section cannot possibly cover all of SU's complicities in the academic-MPIC, its focus on the logics most explicitly challenged by #NotAgainSU allow room for a discussion on how a specific moment of crisis

connects to broader imperial projects. Thus, while necessarily incomplete, this section offers an overview of how the university's investments in the academic-MPIC structure life at the university during and outside moments of crisis.

Oparah is careful to note that while scholars often focus "on the large 'research one' universities that receive the most government and corporate funding," smaller liberal arts colleges "are increasingly borrowing architecture, priorities, and language from corporate elites in order to compete in the global knowledge marketplace" (101). As a mid-size private university with "research one" designation and a mission to balance "professional studies with an intensive liberal arts education," SU is positioned to adopt neoliberal strategies of both large research universities and smaller liberal arts colleges ("Vision and Mission Statements"). Like other research institutions, SU seeks corporate funding, as partly indicated by JPMorgan Chase & Co.'s role as the "Founding Partner" of the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) ("Partners & Funders"). Notably, the IVMF moved in August 2020 to SU's new National Veterans Resource Center (NVRC), a $62.5 million dollar facility constructed in large part due to a donation from the co-founder and chairman emeritus of the Carlyle Group ("About the NVRC"), "one of the U.S. military's top vendors" (Asif Ismail). At the same time, SU, as an institution claiming to invest in liberal arts learning, can "provide much needed *moral* capital" to corporations using philanthropic arms to appear invested in higher education (Oparah 101, original emphasis).

One important characteristic of the academic-MPIC is the use of "endowment management companies that own sizeable stakes in prison corporations and the defense industry" (Oparah 110). SU sits on a $1.4 billion dollar endowment invested in a "global, multi-asset class portfolio" (Syracuse University, *2020 Financial Report* 12). After the University Senate, Student

Association, and Graduate Student Organization all passed resolutions calling for SU to commit to divest from private prisons and their suppliers, Chancellor Kent Syverud wrote in an open letter to Janice Dowell in 2018, a professor who spearheaded the Syracuse Divest movement, that given SU's "robust socially-responsible investing policy and practices, the Committee will not make public declarations about any individual prospective investment, including — but not limited to — private prisons" (qtd. in Strauss). However, just three years earlier, such "socially-responsible" policy and practices did not prevent Syverud from publicly announcing SU's commitment to divest from fossil fuels (News Staff, "University Formalizes Commitment"). The administration's selective transparency about the endowment operates to portray SU as socially responsible while obscuring its actual investments in the prison-industrial complex.

Another insight from Oparah's framework particularly relevant to SU is that universities "produce an educated workforce for the prison-industrial complex" (110). According to SU's *Academic Strategic Plan*, SU seeks to "sustain an inclusive, accessible campus of opportunity for a richly diverse student body, including international students, students with disabilities, underrepresented students, and veterans" (8). Of those named groups, "veterans" is the only one with an entire dedicated section of the *Academic Strategic Plan* and the only one that did not participate as a group in THE General Body's occupation. Perhaps SU's veteran population felt no need to organize in solidarity with THE General Body considering that *Military Times* recognized SU as the #1 private school for veterans (News Staff, "Military Times Names Syracuse No. 1"). This is not necessarily to criticize SU's commitment to veterans, but there is a clear disparity between the groups for which SU claims to foster an inclusive environment and which groups are actually prioritized.

SU produces a military-prison-industrial workforce across its schools and colleges. For instance, the U.S. Department of Defense sponsors two Military Visual Journalism programs in SU's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications ("Newhouse MVJ"). SU's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs offers certification in National Security Studies for "senior civilian and military executives in both the public and private sectors" ("National Security Studies"). Additionally, the Whitman School of Management offers a Defense Comptrollership Program to train "financial managers to handle multibillion-dollar resources for the Department of Defense" ("Defense Programs"). In an explicit reference to connections between the military, academia, and industry, Whitman advertises this program by highlighting its alumni "found at the highest levels of financial management in DOD, as well as in business, academia, and all levels of government" ("Defense Programs"). The NVRC's "Get Skills to Work" program prepares students for manufacturing jobs at General Electric, Boeing, Alcoa, and Lockheed Martin, all of which hold military contracts (Syracuse University, "Get Skills"). A Vice President of Lockheed Martin even sits on IVMF's external advisory board (Syracuse University, "IVMF Announces"). Throughout its campus, SU not only participates in but markets itself as a creator of and training ground for workers of the military-industrial complex.

SU operates under settler colonial logics as well. As SU's land acknowledgement reads, SU occupies the land of the Onondaga people, firekeepers of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (Syracuse University, "Native American Acknowledgment"). SU continues to accumulate property throughout the city of Syracuse. In fact, 51% of property in the city of Syracuse is tax-exempt, and SU owns the largest portion (Tim Knauss). Syracuse has one of the highest rates of concentrated poverty among Black and Hispanic residents in the U.S., and the loss of property taxes when SU purchases land decreases the funds available for schools and other community

investments (Semuels). Instead, those dollars accumulate in SU's $1.4 billion dollar endowment. Of course, the city of Syracuse itself occupies Onondaga land, but SU's continued land accumulation is an extension of a settler colonial logic. Notably, Indigenous organizers have not only supported #NotAgainSU, but they also drafted their own demands specific to the needs of SU's Indigenous community, such as an expansion of the land acknowledgement, scholarships for Indigenous students, and greater academic and curricular support for Indigenous Studies (Indigenous Students at Syracuse and Native Student Program).

By legitimizing penal and military technologies, educating a military-industrial workforce, and operating under settler colonial logics, SU, like other universities, "is not just complicit with the prison-industrial complex; it is a constitutive, if overlooked, part of it" (Oparah 114). As it invests corporate funding into programs that perpetuate military and carceral logics, SU has simultaneously raised tuition and defunded programs that benefit marginalized students, adopting the types of austerity measures characteristic of neoliberalism. Between the 2010-11 and 2019-20 academic years, SU increased its total cost of attendance by 44% (Sessa, "How Costs, Spending, and Enrollment Have Evolved"). Mere months after the Covid-19 pandemic shut down campus and displaced students from University housing, SU raised tuition by 3.9% (News Staff, "SU Announces Historic Commitment"). At the same time, SU has defunded the Higher Education Opportunity Program, the Posse program, the Department of African American Studies, and other programs that benefit low-income students and students of color (THE General Body, "Needs and Solutions"). In an email to various deans in August 2020, Vice Chancellor Mike Haynie asserted that SU must prioritize the needs of its "customers" (i.e., students and parents), making explicit the neoliberal logics at play in the administration's financial decisions (qtd. in CitrusTV News, "In an Email").

Reversing these types of austerity measures is a central focus of #NotAgainSU's demands. For instance, #NotAgainSU has demanded a tuition freeze, as well as at least $4 million invested in the Posse program and another $5 million invested in other scholarship programs for Black students and other students of color. Additionally, #NotAgainSU's call to disarm of campus police officers indicates their dissent to SU's use of carceral logics (#NotAgainSU, *Official Negotiation Document* 13). By challenging these logics, #NotAgainSU highlights complicities that are so deeply embedded into the everyday operations of the university that outside moments of crisis, they remain largely unquestioned. When campus movements such as #NotAgainSU render these investments more visible, they force the university to contend with dissent. How the university responds to this dissent, then, is central to its ability to continue investing in these imperial projects.

Enforcement Strategies Against #NotAgainSU

In this section, I examine SU's response to #NotAgainSU to understand how the university enforces its investments in the academic-MPIC by attempting to nullify dissent. To do this, I build on the framework Farah Godrej develops in her article "Neoliberalism, Militarization, and the Price of Dissent" in which she argues that the privatization of the University of California "engenders—and in fact, *requires*—a militarized enforcement strategy that relies on criminalizing those who dissent and on being able to engage in legitimized violence against such dissenters" (125, original emphasis). Working from Godrej's framework, this section examines 1.) how SU has threatened #NotAgainSU with a number of militarized police forces, and 2.) how SU has legitimized such threats by criminalizing #NotAgainSU's dissent. When forced to contend with a movement highlighting SU's complicities in the academic-MPIC, the SU administration has relied on these strategies to enforce those complicities.

Militarizing Police

As Godrej points out, one of the imperial university's key strategies to enforce its complicity in the academic-MPIC is to use "a militarized police force in order to inflict injury and violence upon any protestors" (127). In the context of #NotAgainSU, university administrators threatened campus protesters not only with SU's own campus police force, but with several local, state, and federal agencies as well.

Although SU is under the jurisdiction of the Syracuse Police Department (SPD), SU also houses its own police force in the form of the Department of Public Safety (DPS), marketing its "community policing" model as more appropriate for SU than a "traditional response" model (SU DPS). Although DPS does not offer a precise definition, the U.S. Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services defines community policing as "a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues" (1). However, DPS largely responds to events *after* they occur, and at SU, proactive measures take the form of DPS officers patrolling in and around campus. Notably, these measures did not prevent the "more than 30 incidents of racist, anti-Semitic, and homophobic graffiti incidents" that occurred on campus between November 2019 and March 2020 and which led Black students to organize #NotAgainSU in the first place (Daily Orange News Staff). Further, DPS's "community policing" model did not prevent a violent response to #NotAgainSU.

One violent tactic executed by DPS against #NotAgainSU was the weaponization of food. The morning after #NotAgainSU organizers began occupying Crouse-Hinds, SU sealed off the building, ordering DPS to prevent supporters from delivering food and medicine to those already inside (Hippensteel and Hicks). Even after "essentials" were officially permitted, DPS

officers continued to search bags and threw food onto the ground (@notagain.su, "Just When #NotAgainSU"). During a DPS shift change, protesters attempted to throw food inside, but DPS officers stepped on it, one yelling to the protestors, "Now look, the food is all over the floor. They ain't gonna eat shit now" (qtd. in Lynch). When the University finally provided food, DPS officers stipulated that the protestors could only eat if they agreed to negotiate with DPS under their terms (Hippensteel and Hicks). This was not the first time DPS had weaponized food against student protestors. During THE General Body's occupation of Crouse-Hinds, DPS offered pizza to protestors and took photos of the IDs of students who accepted it, only to later deliver personalized letters demanding that they leave the building or face suspension (CitrusTV). The weaponization of food against #NotAgainSU organizers is not exceptional but rather a continuation of an ongoing history of campus police asserting violence on measured, nonviolent demonstrations.

DPS's threats to students are not limited to food. During their occupation of Crouse-Hinds, #NotAgainSU published videos of several DPS officers shoving protestors standing outside the door (@notagain.su, "DPS Is Assaulting Students"). Deputy Chief John Sardino even reached for his handgun while struggling with student and faculty protesters (@notagain.su, "DPS Is Assaulting Students"). #NotAgainSU had already called for Sardino's resignation after Chancellor Syverud refused to sign all their demands, but these altercations led #NotAgainSU to add to their list of demands the disarming of DPS (#NotAgainSU, *Official Negotiation Document* 13). Currently, every DPS "peace officer" is armed, further calling the distinction between "community policing" and a "traditional response" model into question (Sessa, "Explainer").

This distinction is rendered more illusory by the close relationship between DPS and other arms of the carceral state. For instance, DPS "enjoys an excellent working relationship with

the Syracuse Police Department" ("Syracuse Police Department Partnership"). In fact, DPS officers are granted their right to carry guns by the SPD police chief (Sessa, "Explainer"). Furthermore, DPS uses a communications system that is "interoperable with all local and regional law enforcement agencies" ("Syracuse Police Department Partnership"). Although DPS obscures how the communications system works, this cross-agency collaboration indicates that information uploaded by DPS could be made available to SPD and other policing agencies.

SU's ability to rely on SPD enables SU administrators to threaten campus protesters with an even more militarized police force. After activist group The People's Agenda for Policing pressured the city of Syracuse to disclose all military equipment possessed by SPD, the city released that SPD has obtained surplus military equipment at no cost through the 1033 Program run by the U.S. Department of Defense, including a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle (MRAP), described as a "$658,000 terrorist fighting machine" (Breidenbach). The MRAP is nearly three times as expensive as SPD's military-style BearCat vehicle, which had already drawn criticism from Syracuse residents after SPD purchased it despite the fact that the Onondaga County Sheriff's Office already owned one (Breidenbach). In addition to deploying an armed campus police force, SU has access to three military vehicles through its relationship with SPD and the Onondaga County Sherriff's Office. The prevalence of the 1033 Program and similar programs that militarize police forces will continue to bring military equipment to the city of Syracuse, including SU's campus.

SU flexed its power to call on SPD against #NotAgainSU when protesters blocked the intersection of South Crouse and Waverly Avenue outside Crouse-Hinds. Professor Jenn Jackson, an SU faculty member, livestreamed the demonstration. In the video, SPD officers are seen taking photographs of demonstrators, but they refuse to answer Jackson's requests to

identify themselves or disclose the purpose of the photographs (Jackson). Having anticipated such surveillance, #NotAgainSU protesters wore masks to avoid identification (Jackson).[7] Given the information exchange between agencies within the police state, it seems reasonable to infer that photographs of students taken by SPD officers could theoretically be entered into databases accessible to several police forces, not just DPS.

This information exchange is not limited to police but extends to federal agencies as well. For instance, SPD could potentially make photographs accessible to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). ICE, along with other agencies within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as well as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), cooperate with local law enforcement agencies to exchange data, including photographs taken on cell phone cameras (*Untangling the Immigration Enforcement Web* 13). ICE officers made this collaboration known in Syracuse when they threatened to call SPD while pushing members of the activist group CNY Solidarity for protesting the detainment of an undocumented resident of Syracuse (Eisenstadt). By participating in this data exchange, information that DPS collects on student protesters could theoretically be shared with federal agencies.

SU made its ability to call on federal agencies especially clear when the FBI joined SPD investigations into the distribution of a white supremacist manifesto on campus (McMahon). Although the manifesto was reported by several sources, University officials claimed that "police believed there was no direct or credible threat to SU students, faculty, or staff" (McMahon). Chancellor Syverud even called the manifesto's distribution "probably a hoax" (qtd. in Ogozalek). Meanwhile, despite DPS, SPD, and FBI cooperation, as well as a campus surveillance system that was used to deliver interim suspensions to #NotAgainSU student protesters, no arrests have been made related to either the manifesto or the more than 30

instances of racist, anti-Semitic, and homophobic graffiti on campus (Lynch 18). SPD did, however, arrest and publicly identify a first-year student for making graffiti in *support* of #NotAgainSU (Baker). This example challenges the assumption that arms of the carceral state—including federal agencies, city police, and campus "peace officers"—function to protect students' safety. The fact that police only made an arrest for someone supporting #NotAgainSU illustrates how police "reinforce the dominant ideology of the state that employs them," and when campus movements refuse that ideology, militarized police forces punish their dissent under the guise of "law and order." (Taylor 108).

The close collaboration between these policing agencies not only fractures any apparent separation between them, but it also empowers the university to call upon a number of militarized agencies to support the investigation and prosecution of activities it deems "crime" on its campus. As I contend in the next section, this militarized response is problematically legitimized by the university's ability to criminalize activities that threaten its investments in the academic-MPIC.

Criminalizing Dissent

Criminalization is a process of determining *who* and *what* is considered "criminal." In this section of my paper, I investigate how SU labels participation in #NotAgainSU as criminal activity, largely by portraying protesters as campus disrupters and by enforcing University sanctions against them (and in some cases, against Black students who did not even participate in #NotAgainSU). By strategically criminalizing dissent to its investments in the academic-MPIC, SU legitimizes the use of militarized police forces against ostensibly "criminal" activism.

When analyzing how University of California administrators legitimize the use of militarized force, Godrej notes two distinct but related strategies. First, UC administrators

employed rhetoric "designed to justify the need for such violent response by casting the protests as potentially threatening and even perhaps criminal, with the idea that the extended occupation of public spaces by citizens… posed a threat to law and order (Godrej 131). Second, UC administrators used "the legal power of the neoliberal state and its complicity with the forces of capital to criminalize nonviolent protestors through legal channels" (Godrej 137–38). In other words, UC legitimized militarized force by criminalizing dissent through both rhetorical and legal strategies. While these strategies may manifest differently across specific campuses, Godrej's framework offers important parallels to the techniques used by SU administrators to legitimize violence against #NotAgainSU.

The SU administration crafted a #NotAgainSU narrative that removed blame from University officials and placed it onto student protestors. For instance, when asked about Deputy Chief Sardino reaching for his handgun, Assistant Provost and Dean of Student Success Amanda Nicholson commented, "When you see a lot of people rushing against a police officer, it may look like the police officer is doing something wrong" (qtd. in Hippensteel and Hicks). By offering a general statement rather than denying the specific accusation, Nicholson subtly shifts the blame from Sardino to the protestors. By characterizing them as a mass "rushing against a police officer," Nicholson draws attention away from the systemic racism which led students to mobilize and instead speculates about behavior and motivation in general. In fact, video from the incident shows that protestors did not rush against Sardino, but rather, Sardino approached the protestors first by grabbing and pushing them out of his way (@notagain.su, "DPS Is Assaulting Students"). Nicholson's comment obscures the fact that DPS, not the protestors, escalated a measured, nonviolent demonstration. It exemplifies the rhetorical violence SU leadership has employed to characterize #NotAgainSU as an aggressor.

Even when individual administrators have used private apologies to admit to using violent tactics, the administration as a whole publicizes a different narrative. #NotAgainSU recorded a conversation in which Dean of Students Rob Hradsky and Diversity & Inclusion Officer Keith Alford apologized to protestors for preventing food from entering Crouse-Hinds (@notagain.su, "I'm Sorry"). However, Chancellor Syverud's official apology did not reference starvation tactics at all, instead focusing on how the protests "distracted from the good work that has been done since November on our *Campus Commitments*" (Syverud). Furthermore, SU's official website states that Chancellor Syverud signed #NotAgainSU's list of "concerns" on November 21st, 2019 (Syracuse University, "Concerns of #NotAgainSU Students"). While a Syverud spokesperson attempted to deliver a modified copy of the demands after #NotAgainSU staged a walk-out at a public forum, #NotAgainSU rejected the modifications (@notagain.su, "Read #NotAgainSU's Response"). By feigning a willingness to negotiate, SU leadership violently co-opts the narrative of #NotAgainSU to criminalize protesters.

In addition to rhetorical techniques, the SU administration uses University sanctions to criminalize #NotAgainSU's dissent. During the first night of #NotAgainSU's Crouse-Hinds occupation, the University placed more than 30 students on interim suspensions (#NotAgainSU, *Official Negotiation Document*). After #NotAgainSU pointed out that no students offered identification to university officials, SU administrators admitted to using footage from Crouse-Hinds security cameras as well as DPS officers' body cameras to identify the students (Darnell). Of those who received suspensions, four Black female students and one Latina student had never even entered Crouse-Hinds after the building's 9pm closing time (#NotAgainSU, *Official Negotiation Document*). When asked about the suspensions, Amanda Nicholson responded, "they hadn't shown us their IDs. That's their right, but it's difficult to protect people… if they

don't want to tell you who they are" (qtd. in CitrusTV News, "SU Administrator Amanda Nicholson"). The notion that surveillance offers protection often justifies the installation of security cameras, but SU's suspension of #NotAgainSU protestors raises the question of who, or what, surveillance actually protects.

Reflecting on a fatal shooting at Purdue University, Eliot Blackburn notes how Purdue's administration justified the widespread installation of surveillance cameras by arguing that it would make "campus safer by warding off misconduct" (qtd. in Decker et al. 212). Of course, university administrators, not campus movements, have the authority to define "misconduct" for their own purposes. As Blackburn points out, "the security cameras did not prevent the [shooting]" (Decker et al. 212). Similarly, the SU surveillance cameras failed to aid the investigation of the white supremacist manifesto. Even DPS's body cameras, intended to hold officers accountable, failed to prevent DPS from weaponizing food, using physical force, or reaching for their handguns when dealing with student protesters. No DPS officer has been suspended as a result of the violence at Crouse-Hinds. As Nicholson contends, Sardino "was just doing what [SU administration] asked him to do" (qtd. in Hippensteel and Hicks). If this use of violence against protestors constitutes a "job well done," then DPS operates to protect SU's investments in the academic-MPIC even at the expense of student safety.

Given that DPS officers are certified by SPD, their criminalization of a movement led by Black students is not an isolated instance, as suggested by SPD's history of racist policing tactics. A 2010 study published on SPD's own website found that "there is differential treatment by race for police-citizen encounters in the city of Syracuse" (Horrace and Rohlin 7). SPD attempted to dispute this claim by publishing a response alongside the study, arguing that "the rate of differential treatment is minor and can be associated to a number of factors other than

racial discrimination" (Syracuse Police Department). Specifically, SPD argues that the disparity came from their recent switch to a "proactive style of policing" in which SPD will strategically "deploy its officers based on areas of high crime and the focus will be on the known offenders" (2). Consequently, according to the SPD, "officers will be frisking and searching African Americans more frequently due to the violent nature of the crime and the possibility of a weapon being involved" (2). In an attempt to challenge the accusation of "racial discrimination," SPD admits to increasing police presence in Black neighborhoods under the assumption that its residents are predisposed to violence. Such policing tactics perpetuate the notion that violence is a result of inherent criminal tendencies (that supposedly tend to be found in Black and low-income residents) rather than a result of poverty and organized abandonment. By threatening student protests with SPD, SU legitimizes and relies on systemic racist policing logics.

SU leadership responded to #NotAgainSU's demands about DPS by hiring former U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch to conduct an independent review of DPS. This is worth noting not because it fulfills #NotAgainSU's actual demands but because it illustrates another key strategy university administrators employ to dismantle campus protest: delay. #NotAgainSU called for the resignations of Sardino as well as DPS Chief Bobby Maldonado in November 2019, before the Crouse-Hinds sit-in (#NotAgainSU, *A Response to the Inadequacies of the Administration*). Even with several videos of DPS's weaponization of food and Sardino's use of force, Lynch did not publish her report until February 2021, nearly a year after Syverud announced her involvement (Lynch). If SU administrators considered #NotAgainSU's safety concerns seriously, they would not have allowed Sardino to continue serving on DPS while an independent investigation into his conduct was underway. This stalling tactic is not new. #NotAgainSU posted a video created by THE General Body in which an organizer criticizes the

administration for releasing surveys, developing task forces, and waiting for the Board of Trustees to decide that protestors' concerns are worth considering (#NotAgainSU, "The General Body"). Meanwhile, final exams begin, students leave for winter break, organizers graduate, and the administration successfully stalls substantive change until dissent quiets down (#NotAgainSU, "The General Body"). These are the exact strategies administrators used during #NotAgainSU's Barnes Center sit-in, which is why #NotAgainSU called for Chancellor Syverud's resignation after he failed to sign their demands by their deadline. #NotAgainSU further resists these stalling tactics by refusing to elect official leaders, ensuring that the movement sustains its strength as a collective even after key organizers graduate.

As much momentum as #NotAgainSU had, however, the Covid-19 crisis has impeded #NotAgainSU's ability to organize. Not only did the pandemic force #NotAgainSU to end their occupation of Crouse-Hinds, but it has prevented them from gathering in-person for over a year. Meanwhile, students across the globe are exhausted from their personal experiences with the Covid-19 crisis. In this way, the Covid-19 crisis has paused #NotAgainSU's ability to mobilize their dissent to SU's investments in the academic-MPIC. However, given SU's long history of campus organizing, it will not be surprising when campus organizers pick up where #NotAgainSU left off as students are able to meet in-person again.

Conclusion: Refusing the University

As we study and organize against the academy's investments in imperial projects, how do we reimagine our relationship to the university? If the university operates as an arm of the imperialist state, can the university be a site of liberation? In this final section, I overview a few models for the future of the university and consider how #NotAgainSU practices what Sandy Grande describes as "academic refusal."

Rather than "seeking to eradicate or replace higher educational institutions altogether," Oparah suggests "that we demand the popular and antiracist democratization of higher education" (116). In Oparah's vision of what she terms a "postcarceral academy," university administrators align with student organizers to abolish the MPIC to which the university once belonged (116–17). To consider Oparah's postcarceral academy, we need to contend with the question: Can we abolish the imperial university while preserving the university itself? Oparah herself points out that universities can be a site of anti-imperial scholarship, and particularly for undergraduates, a site of transformation (100). I can personally attest to this. My understanding the academic-MPIC stems from my experiences in the university. For me, this transformation has occurred both within the classroom—with the support of faculty and classmates engaged in this type of critique—as well as outside the classroom, notably during #NotAgainSU's occupations. Even so, if we plan to abolish the academic-MPIC, we need to grapple with whether and to what extent the university, as an arm of the imperial state, can be a site of liberation.

Drawing from Oparah's work, among others, Chatterjee and Maira refer to the move toward a post-carceral academy as a process of "decolonizing the university" (43). Incorporating a framework of decolonization into our understanding of the university requires that we not gloss over the specific demands of decolonization. In their article "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," Tuck and Yang criticize the ways in which the language of decolonization "is far too often subsumed into the directives of [other social justice projects], with no regard for how decolonization wants something different than those forms of justice" ("Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor" 2). They contend that "decolonization in the settler colonial context must involve the repatriation of land simultaneous to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always already been differently understood and enacted; that is, *all* of the land, and not just

symbolically" ("Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor" 7). For Tuck and Yang, the postcarceral academy Oparah theorizes is fundamentally distinct from and largely incompatible with decolonization if the academy is still owned and controlled by the settler. To decolonize SU under Tuck and Yang's framework would be to return the land on which it sits to the Onondaga people. While realizing Oparah's postcarceral academy may be an important project, it is ultimately incommensurate with decolonization in this sense. There is no "liberation of academy from the machinery of empire" without the repatriation of land (Oparah 116).

Tuck and Yang are not the only ones whose work questions the role of the university in liberation projects. The writers of "Abolitionist University Studies: An Invitation" directly oppose their conception of "abolitionist university studies" against "critical university studies," arguing that even public universities cannot be divorced from the imperial logics underlying their expansion (Boggs et al. 5–8). Additionally, in his article "Black Study, Black Struggle," Robin D.G. Kelley draws from a history of Black radicalism to argue that "the fully racialized social and epistemological architecture upon which the modern university is built cannot be radically transformed by 'simply' adding darker faces, safer spaces, better training, and a curriculum that acknowledges historical and contemporary oppressions." For Kelley, "universities can and will become more diverse and marginally more welcoming for black students, but as institutions they will never be engines of social transformation. Such a task is ultimately the work of political education and activism. By definition it takes place outside the university." Drawing on Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's theory of the "undercommons," Kelley asks us to consider spaces of "fugitive study" that have existed and continue to exist beyond the borders of university campuses, such as Mississippi Freedom Schools and political study groups. In Kelley's vision, students are "*in* the university but not *of* the university."

Grande enters directly into conversation with Kelley by understanding his critique as resonant with critical Indigenous understandings of a "politics of recognition" (49). According to critical Indigenous studies, a politics of recognition "functions as a technology of the state by which it maintains its power (as sole arbiter of recognition), and, thus, settler colonial relations" (Grande 49–50). For example, SU's land acknowledgement invokes a politics of recognition by legitimizing SU's claims to the land rather than fundamentally challenging them. Furthermore, SU's stated commitments to "diversity, equity, and inclusion" understands multiculturalism as evidence that the University has somehow transcended the systems of oppression in which it is embedded. After all, SU funds an Office of Multicultural Affairs, but it does not have a center of critical race and ethnic studies, which would engage more critically with issues of power.

While #NotAgainSU has engaged with a politics of recognition,[8] they have increasingly moved toward what Grande defines as a "politics of refusal" (50), which is distinct from resistance in that it "does not take authority as a given" (59). For instance, #NotAgainSU's decision not to accept food from the administration during their Crouse-Hinds occupation refused to give leverage to administrators. Instead, #NotAgainSU demanded that negotiations take place under their terms, not the administration's. One year after their occupation of Crouse-Hinds, #NotAgainSU published a statement situating their struggle in relation to "massive Black and Indigenous-led movements for abolition, defunding the police, land back, along with movements outside the U.S. that are actively fighting against global white supremacy, colonialism, imperialism and the U.S. empire" (@notagain.su, "One-Year Statement"). Tired of the lack of progress organizers experience when negotiating with administrators or sitting on university committees, the organizers of #NotAgainSU have "unanimously decided to not work with the administration in any capacity moving forward" (@notagain.su, "One-Year Statement").

By connecting their struggles to broader liberation movements and by refusing to cooperate with the administration, #NotAgainSU makes clear that they are moving beyond seeking a more hospitable university and are instead engaged in a refusal of the university.

As we organize against the imperial university, we must consider whether the university itself can play a role in liberation from imperialism, settler colonialism, and other systems of oppression. Perhaps there are ways we can use university resources to organize against it, such as publishing critique of the university in academic journals. Of course, "the production of 'better,' more progressive or countercarceral knowledge can also be co-opted and put to work by the academic-MPIC" (Oparah 115). At the same time, this knowledge can be read outside the university by the kinds of radical study groups Kelley describes. As we navigate our complex relationship to the academic-MPIC, the university can be a site of struggle, but the university itself may not offer a path toward liberation. Within and outside the classroom, we must continue to build sites of what Kelley describes as "love, study, and struggle," where our pursuit of freedom leaves us "no choice but to love all… to fight relentlessly to end exploitation and oppression everywhere." Academic refusal, then, is fundamentally an act of love. To this end, #NotAgainSU is already working, as they tell us in the closing words of their one-year statement:

Take care of yourself and each other. In these trying times, we must do our best to practice radical self-love and community love.

In love and struggle,

#NotAgainSU

Notes

[1] According to the Syracuse University Fall 2020 Census, 52.6% of SU's fall 2020 student body was white, and 7.3% was Black (Office of Institutional Research).
[2] As revealing as the SU administration's explicit refusal to admit SU's complicities in systems of oppression might be, Sarah Ahmed points out that when other administrations have published an "institutional confession," they have done so in ways to placate anti-racist movements and deflect substantive change. According to Ahmed, institutions that co-opt the language of institutional racism do so to deflect critique, often by framing themselves as "on the road to recovery" (46–47).
[3] Throughout this paper, I often use "Syracuse University" when a more precise term might be "the Syracuse University administration." I hesitate to echo the type of rhetoric administrators use to claim the university for themselves. After all, classrooms, faculty offices, and campus buildings are often sites of anti-imperial scholarship and organizing. For the sake of clarity, I reluctantly use the shorthand SU not because the administration has sole claim over the university, but because my paper argues that the university perpetuates imperialism at an institutional level. The particular persons who happen to occupy the positions of Chancellor, Trustee, and so on at any given time have far less influence on this than the positions themselves. I draw from a theoretical perspective that understands the anti-imperial work done by members of the campus community as *in* the university but not *of* the university.
[4] Given the ongoing history of social scientists collecting pain narratives through research on marginalized groups, close attention must be paid to the ethical framework of conducting an interview study with campus organizers. See Tuck and Yang's "R Words."
[5] See the Appendix for useful visualizations of statistics related to the U.S.'s investments in militarization and incarceration.
[6] For examples of this type of transnational anti-imperialist framework, see Sudbury. Also see Naber.
[7] Notably, this occurred more than a month before the emerging Covid-19 crisis led to widespread university closures across the U.S. At the time, wearing masks on SU's campus had not yet been normalized, indicating that #NotAgainSU protestors wore masks at this demonstration for the sole purpose of protecting their identities.
[8] While Kelley and Grande both critique this type of politics of recognition, they each make clear the necessity of contending with the circumstances in which Black and Indigenous students find themselves. Similarly, I consider #NotAgainSU's demands for recognition and belonging as speaking not only to their initial willingness to negotiate with administrators, but also to their politics of love for the communities they have built within the university (but not *of* the university).

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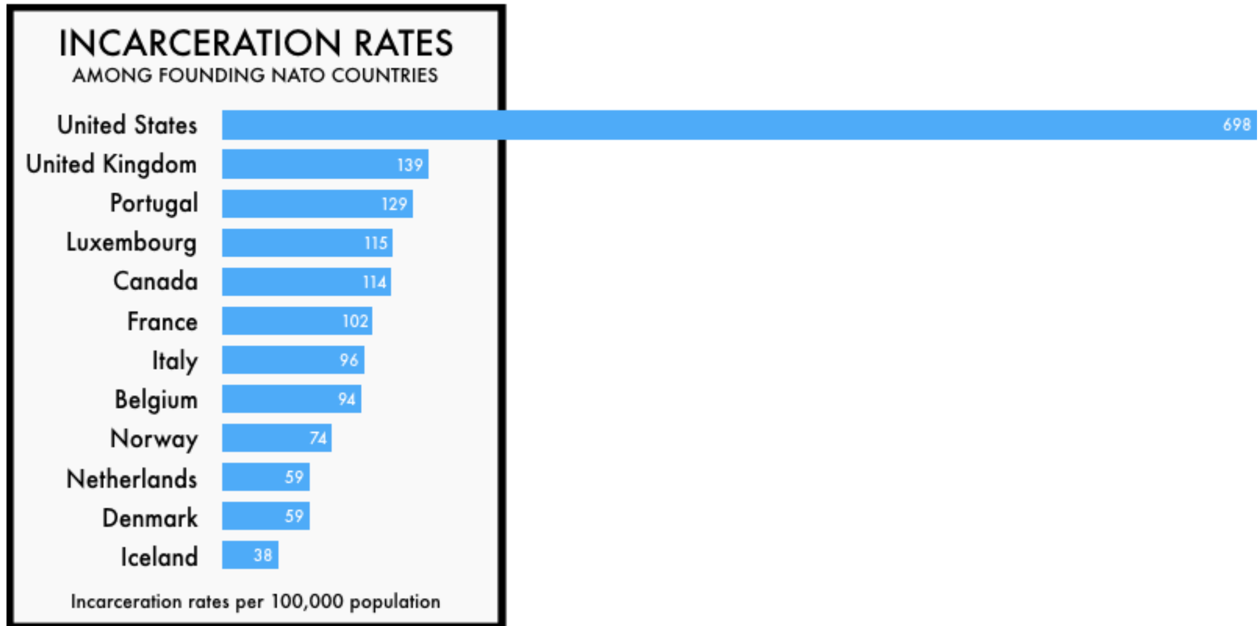
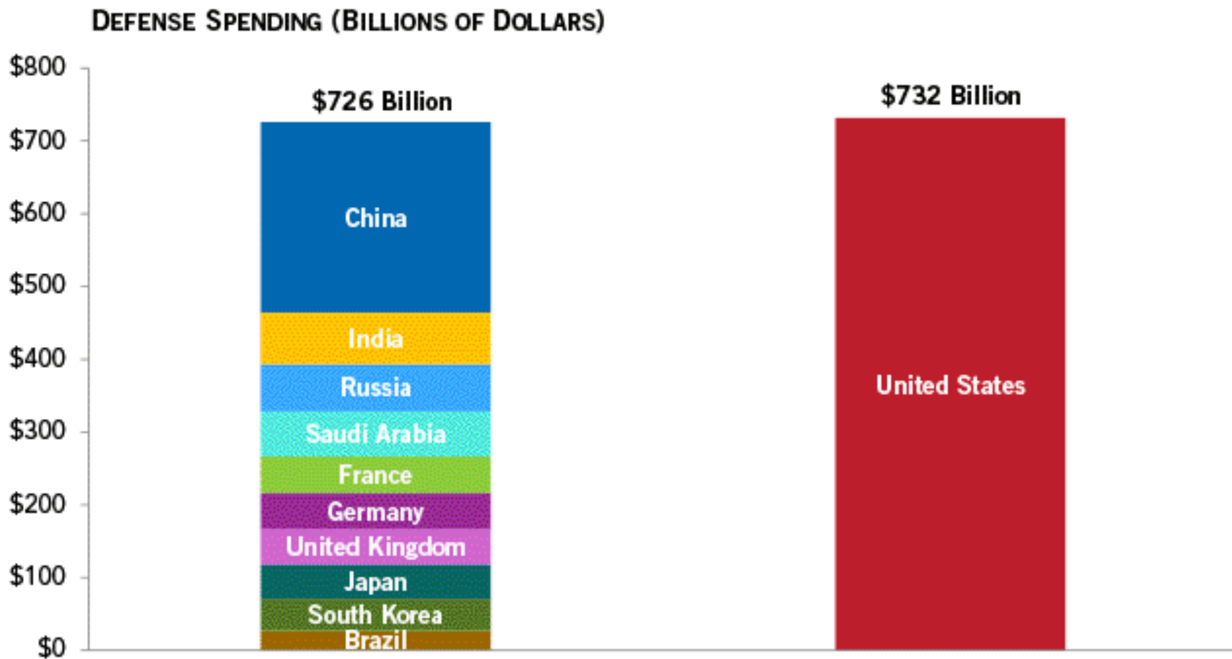
Appendix: Data Visualizations on the Military-Prison-Industrial Complex



Incarceration Rates Among Founding Nato Countries; This graph helps to illustrate the extent of the U.S.'s investment in incarceration, especially in relation to its peer countries.

The United States spends more on defense than the next 10 countries combined



SOURCE: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Military Expenditure Database*, April 2020.
NOTES: Figures are in U.S. dollars converted from local currencies using market exchange rates. Data for the United States are for fiscal year 2019, which ran from October 1, 2018 through September 30, 2019. Data for the other countries are for calendar year 2019. The source for this chart uses a definition of defense spending that is more broad than budget function 050 and defense discretionary spending.

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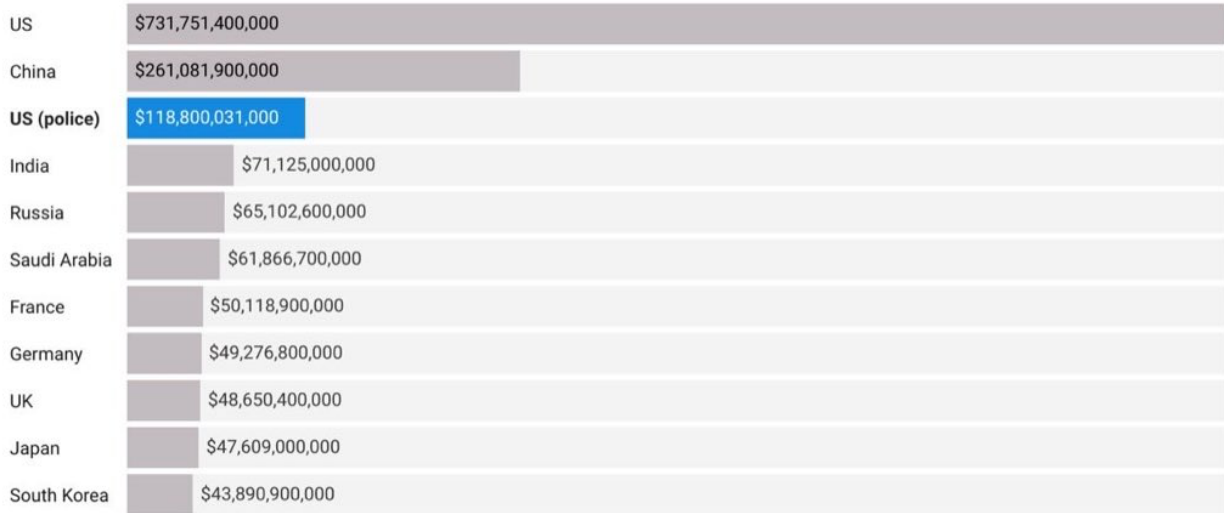
The United States spends more on defense than the next 10 countries combined; This graph helps to illustrate the extent of the U.S.'s investment in militarization, especially in the context of other nations.



Where U.S. police spending ranks among worldwide military expenditres; This graph illustrates that U.S. state and local governments collectively spend more on police than every other nation does on their military, with the exceptions of China and the U.S. itself.