Forgotten Pasts: Cornell’s Third President Jacob Gould Schurman
Former Cornell President Jacob Gould Schurman

- the Chairman of the **Schurman Commission**, appointed by President William McKinley in 1899 to decide the structure of **American imperial rule in the Philippines after the brutal American conquest**
- "the United States cannot withdraw. ... We are there and duty binds us to remain. The Filipinos are wholly unprepared for independence ... there being no Philippine nation, but only a collection of different peoples”
- Rudyard Kipling’s **White Man’s Burden**, in which Filipinos would be “taught to govern themselves as Americans or Englishmen govern themselves”
Former Cornell President Jacob Gould Schurman

- Called Muslim Filipinos are “heathens”, declared that America “must first eliminate the Mohammedan”
- Viewed all Filipinos as inferior, writing that “even educated Filipinos do not possess our conception of civil liberty or of official responsibility”
Outcomes and Lasting Impacts

- 20,000 Filipinos were directly killed in the subsequent American war of conquest; 200k died of famine and disease. After war in 1902, the Philippines was ruled as a colony, with its resources and people exploited for America’s benefit → US Imperialism and tutelage sustained

- 1946 Bell Trade Act, Subic Bay Naval Base, Clark Air Naval Base, Visiting Forces Agreement all used to this day as a tool for the US government to control and subject the people of the Philippines, even after the granting of “independence”
Current State of the Philippines today

- United States’ donations of over 6 million COVID-19 vaccines motivated Pres. Duterte to extend the two nations’ Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), a pact that he has repeatedly threatened to scrap.
  - “We did a give and take. We thank them and I made a concession.” - Pres. Duterte (August 2021)
- Why must the Philippines feel pressured to extend US imperialism and imperialist legislation to obtain COVID-19 Vaccines?
Cornell’s Endorsement of Schurman

- **None** of Cornell’s biographical information on Schurman on official websites makes any reference to his viewpoint and comments on Filipinos.
- There is no reference or explanation of Schurman’s role in Filipino colonization and genocide on the premises of Schurman Hall.
- Cornell has **never officially apologized** for Schurman’s role in the imperialist conquest of the Philippines by America.
Schurman’s impact has not only affected the Filipinos at the time of his imperial rule. The words and actions of Schurman have and are currently harming and killing countless lives belonging to Muslim, Indigenous, Filipino, Filipino-American communities.

What does it mean to enroll thousands of students belonging to marginalized communities at a university that has ignored its oppressive histories? What does it mean to supposedly uphold students of color while also upholding an individual that caused direct terror on Indigenous and Muslim communities in the Philippines? What does inclusion mean to Cornell?
Summary of Demands

- Formally apologize for President Schurman’s role in American imperialism in the PH.
- Establish corrective measures by dedicating a memorial in Schurman Hall to the countless Filipino lives lost under American rule and imperialist conquest,
- Rename Schurman Hall,
- Expand all Ethnic Studies departments/programs by increasing efforts, funding, and allowing them all as majors to make these histories available to all students,
- Address the history of military exploitation and the continued military involvement of Filipino people and students in the US and abroad,
- Condemn the VFA