The guide you’re holding was made by a group of NYU student activists of varying political perspectives. Our purpose here is to introduce incoming students to their new school in a way that cuts against the University’s Welcome Week programs. We hope to provide you with an understanding of what NYU is, what it does, and where to go if you want to change it.

This guide offers a glimpse of some of the buried histories and casualties of NYU’s policies and actions. We hope these articles will lead to a discussion about the University as an institution: its status as the generator of massive student debt; the ruthless exploitation, labor abuses, and displacement that undergird its unending expansion in
the Village and around the world (“The Global Network University”); our Board of Trustees, comprised almost entirely of businesspeople, lawyers, and real estate moguls at the expense of students or faculty; the startling gap between the salary and working conditions of the graduate students and adjunct faculty that teach your classes and those at the top of Bobst who rake in the cash; and how NYU policy reinforces existing racial and sexual hierarchies. Despite the diversity of its content, the guide has a few broad themes: NYU functioning as a multinational corporation that operates at a distance from those affected by its decisions, the unsustainable and ballooning debt crisis that NYU board members profit from, and the on-campus movements working to confront these intersecting trends.

We seek to defamiliarize NYU by exposing the power structures that regulate and define student life and “legitimate” political discourse. We wish to break the hackneyed cliches that the University feeds incoming students during Welcome Week; to show you that despite a rhetoric of “liberal education,” “personal development,” and “academic freedom,” NYU is more concerned with the interests of profit and business than its students. We’ve developed this guide to challenge the prevailing view of the University as a haven of liberal, educational goodness. Due to restrictions of time and space, many things have been left out. This guide is not a summative statement on NYU student politics. We just hope to get the conversation started.

If you’re interested in what you read, please get in touch. Hit us up at nyudisorient@gmail.com, find us online at nyudisorient.wordpress.com, or find any of the radical clubs at Club Fest. We look forward to meeting and working with you.
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Meet the Board of Trustees

What is the Board of Trustees?
Whom does it Serve?

The Board of Trustees is NYU’s governing body. It’s responsible for determining NYU’s purpose, reviewing existing programs, and selecting NYU’s president. The extent to which the Board of Trustees controls the
University is striking. As NYU itself notes: “the President and Chancellor are appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Board.”[1] What this means is that all matters of University governance ultimately end with the desires of the Board of Trustees. The way our school is run, and hence student life, is subject to their whims. Students, faculty, and alumni have no say in who serves on the Board. In fact, the only people who have any say are Board members themselves.[2] Thus, the Board is free to protect its own interests and to further its own projects at the expense of students, faculty, and workers with no consequences or oversight. As this guide seeks to illustrate, this is exactly what the Board does.

What are the Interests of NYU’s Board of Trustees?

The NYU Board of Trustees’ chief interest is furthering and protecting the interests of individual members. So who are the members and what are their interests? Since the NYU Board of Trustees is around seventy people strong—it resembles the governing body of a major corporation more than that of a university—we cannot detail every single member’s background and interests here. Just know that nearly all of these men and women have backgrounds in speculative real estate, Wall Street, and/or international business, perhaps explaining why NYU may be more accurately described as an international real estate development firm with an expensive and promising educational wing, than as a university. There is a total disconnect between Board members and anyone you will ever come into contact with as a student. Until last year’s meeting with NYU Divest from Fossil Fuels, the Board had somehow never met with students in its 68 year history. Even if the Board cared about student and faculty interests
and concerns, they wouldn’t even know what they are. The governing body of our school is composed of men and women who are looking to profit, often in incredibly exploitative and racist ways. What’s more, they have the power and legal know-how to do this. They are intimately connected to and ultimately responsible for the injustices discussed in this guide and ones beyond its scope. For many of members of the Board, their presence alone is a flagrant conflict of interest. Here are a few examples:

William R. Berkley

Berkeley is the Chairman of the Board. He has been on the Board since 1995. He is the 29th best-compensated CEO in
the world according to Forbes magazine. Millions of dollars in Berkley’s fortune come from his involvement with First Marblehead Corporation, where he served on the Board of Directors from 1995-2007. First Marblehead is a private student loan firm. In 2007, the interest rate on a Marblehead loan was 11 %, while the rate on a federal loan was 6.8 %.[3]

It’s evident that First Marblehead has a vested interest in universities raising their tuition to unpayable levels, and that Berkley profited off this while on the NYU board of trustees. He literally made millions by impoverishing students and plunging them into extreme debt. He is now one of powerful people in the NYU administrative hierarchy.

Khaldoon Al-Mubarak

Aside from being the Chairman of the Executive Affairs Authority, Al-Mubarak is also the CEO of Mubadala and the chairman of Manchester City Football Club. This Mubadala corporation was one of the main firms responsible for the construction of NYU Abu Dhabi, and was one of
the companies exempt from NYU’s commitment to labor conditions that are safe and livable. Pretty fucking fishy that a Board member’s corporation was contracted to build NYU Abu Dhabi and then that his company was exempt from NYU’s commitment to labor protections. The decision to add Al-Mubarak to NYU’s board coincides exactly with the University’s announcement that it would open a portal campus in Abu Dhabi.[4]

Catherine Reynolds

Another lover of indebted students, Catherine Reynolds splits her time between being an NYU trustee and the Chairman of EduCap, a private not-for-profit student loan firm. Despite its non-profit status, EduCap has issued loans at interest rates substantially higher than those of for-profit
lending companies. So there may be no “profit,” but there is enough money lying around EduCap for Reynolds to buy a private airplane and donate 38 million to the Smithsonian?

Daniel Tisch

Daniel Tisch is heir to the enormous Tisch family fortune (Forbes estimates this to be around 1.2 billion dollars). This fortune was made primarily from the Lorillard Tobacco Company. Lorillard is the parent company of Newport Cigarettes, whose claim to fame is aggressively
marketing menthol cigarettes to black Americans. Much of the Tisch family’s money was made from getting as many Black Americans addicted to the most harmful form of cigarette tobacco. Their overwhelming presence at NYU is a consistent reminder of the violent racism that our school was built on, and on which it continues to operate.

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[2] Ibid.
NYU, Gentrification, and the Cost of Prestige

Bulldozing the Village

While NYU speaks proudly and confidently of its nearly 200-year tenure in downtown Manhattan’s Greenwich Village, it is not a neutral actor within New York City’s urban landscape. NYU’s program of ruthless expansion has and will continue to displace longtime, working-class residents.

As an incoming NYU student in 2016, you are entering a metropolis at a crossroads. An affordable housing crisis is plaguing the city—a crisis that NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio made a central component of his campaign and mayoralty. Pledging to solve the crisis, de Blasio has codified his plans through the wildly ambitious and hotly contested 2014 housing agenda titled *Housing New York: A Five-Borough, Ten Year Plan.*

The lack of affordable housing and rising rents has led to a process known as gentrification, a word that seems to be on the lips of most New Yorkers these days. The term, coined by British sociologist Ruth Glass in 1964, is defined as “the process of renewal and rebuilding accompanying the influx
of middle-class or affluent people into deteriorating areas that often displaces poorer residents.” [2] Synonymous with gentrification is the process of cultural transformation, wherein the character of a neighborhood is altered in favor of its newer, more educated, and wealthier inhabitants. This change in character is often contingent on and enforced by an increased police presence and arrest rate in the area—one of the more disturbing components of the process.

Gentrification in New York can be attributed to a variety of factors including the city’s sheer desirability and the general trend of wealthy folks migrating and “returning” to cities in the past decade. [3] With these factors in mind, it is crucial to understand how NYU accelerates and profits from the process of gentrification, particularly within the surrounding neighborhoods of the East Village and the Lower East Side.
A prominent example of NYU’s effect on the real estate and culture of its vicinity is the utter transformation of the portion of the East Village known as Alphabet City, bordered by Avenue A to the west and Avenue D to the east, 14th Street to the north and Houston Street to the south. Colloquially referred to as “Loisaida” by its predominantly lower-income Latinx/Nuyorican residents of the 1970s, the area has seen a rapid increase in real estate prices over three decades, as well as a change in its demographics and street culture.

An undeniable cause and catalyst of this urban sea change was the influx of NYU students to the area in the 1990s and early 2000s as NYU transformed from a mainly commuter school into a massive, prestigious university. With the influx of wealthier students, developers began residentially converting many of Alphabet City’s warehouse buildings and refurbishing its tenements and subquality apartment buildings in the hopes of attracting relatively affluent NYU students—and, in turn, converting the formerly working-class neighborhood into a whiter, wealthier middle-class one. [4]

NYU students, typically eager to move to off-campus apartments in their junior and senior years, are often first-time lease signers and are therefore naive to the ins-and-outs of the rental market. This, along with the East Village’s transformation over the last 40 years, allowed landlords to prey on the ignorance of young renters and increase prices for new tenants by 20% each school year (which is legal, as most of the East Village’s buildings fall under the city’s rent regulation laws). [5]

Prices of East Village co-ops and condo units quadrupled between 1996 and 2000, and between 2000 and 2012, East Village rents increased 42%, with the median household
income spiking from $37,000 to $62,000 a year. [6] Jack Bick of Charaton Realty, along with other local real estate brokers, openly attribute these price increases and the surge in desirability of the neighborhood to young professionals and the influx of New York University students to the area. [7]

Further demographic research shows that between 2000 and 2012, Alphabet City lost over 1,000 Hispanic and black residents while gaining about 4,000 new white residents and 2,000 new Asian residents. [8] It is estimated that whites now make up 67% of the once primarily Latin neighborhood’s population. [9] This process of displacement is the underside to NYU’s rise in college rankings and prestige; a history often buried in the official histories and stories NYU tells about itself.

When discussing the way in which NYU has altered the surrounding neighborhood’s racial and socioeconomic character, it is crucial to acknowledge the complex backdrop of civic racism and mass incarceration upon which the university’s expansion has occurred.

Beginning in 1994, Mayor Rudy Giuliani and his NYPD Commissioner William Bratton put the “Broken Windows” theory into practice, in which laws against small, non-violent quality-of-life crimes such as graffiti, public intoxication, and subway fare dodging were more strictly enforced. [10] In the NYPD’s attempt to “get tough on crime” in the supposedly “unmanageable city,” misdemeanor arrests increased 70% in New York City during the 90s, while more serious felony arrests—resulting in incarceration—increased an astounding 50% to 70%. [11]

While NYU is not necessarily to blame for the aggressive
and classist policies of its home city’s police department, it is undeniable that, when observing NYU’s expansion into Union Square in the 90s and subsequent growth (in property, prestige, tuition, and admission rates) in the 2000s, the university has a vested interest in the Village’s reputation as a “safe” and well-policed area. This attitude seeps into the university’s real estate acquisitions, wherein more and more of the area surrounding NYU’s Washington Square hub is purchased by the university, all in the interest of protecting its supposedly vulnerable student population from the dangers of New York City, with a moat of University property and Campus Police patrolled-streets. We must remember that our education and transformation into “elite citizen(s)” (a term taken directly from the “About” page of NYU’s College of Arts and Sciences)\(^1\) takes place against a background of the criminalization and displacement of a whole other urban population. “In and of the city,” indeed.

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Aside from hard numerical statistics, it is inarguable that NYU has radically and somewhat carelessly altered the physical layout, scale, and feel of its surrounding neighborhoods—a less discussed but extremely important aspect of gentrification.

There are countless instances in which NYU has transgressed the physical and cultural history of Greenwich Village and the Lower East Side. What follows is an (extremely) abridged list of these activities:

1. Together with the Mayor’s Committee on Slum Clearance, polarizing New York City planning icon (and part-time NYU professor) Robert Moses acquired and destroyed vast swathes of factories and tenements south of Washington Square Park in the 1950s,
displacing thousands of working class residents in the process.\[^{[13]}\] With the newly gained land, he designated the area into three “superblocks” and constructed the sleek, three-building University Village Complex. Two of the three buildings were eventually gifted to NYU and used for faculty housing.\[^{[14]}\]

2 In 2010, the University announced a plan to build a 38-story, 270,000 square foot tower intended for use as both faculty housing and as a hotel for NYU visitors in the University Village complex.\[^{[15]}\] Aside from horrifying longtime Village residents and Community Board members, the tower would be the tallest building in Greenwich Village, requiring immense and widely unpopular zoning changes to facilitate the neighborhood’s transformation into a Midtown South.\[^{[16]}\]

3 In 2005, NYU acquired St. Ann’s, a historic Roman Catholic parish on East 12th Street between Third and Fourth Avenues, and announced plans to develop a 26-story dormitory building on the site.\[^{[16]}\] Amid pleas by the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation not to demolish the structure, the university made the condescending concession of allowing the church’s façade—entirely hollowed out—to stand in the foreground of the towering dormitory, Founder’s Hall.\[^{[17]}\]

4 NYU 2031, a far-reaching, multi-billion dollar expansion plan centered on the South Village, will make the neighborhood unrecognizable, while turning it into a construction zone for the next two decades. The plan, as the CAS Economics Department points out, will be financed by a “combination of higher tuition rates, a larger student body, lower teacher-student ratios,
fewer tenure-eligible faculty, reductions in real faculty salaries over time, and smaller benefits.” [18]

While NYU administrators may speak of the school’s “locational endowment,” [19] it is of the utmost importance to acknowledge the ongoing hostility between the university and its surrounding community. With a record of flooding the once-working class area with affluent and transient students, purchasing large swathes of Greenwich Village real estate for use by pupils and faculty only, consistently attempting to defy zoning ordinances to build taller buildings, and indirectly profiting from larger systems of oppression such as mass incarceration and racist policing, NYU has established itself as a powerful gentrifying force.

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If you are interested in anti-gentrification movements there are some listed in the back.

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.


[9] Ibid.


[14] Ibid.


END THE BROKEN WINDOWS
Birthright and the Destruction of Palestine

Welcome to Israel!

Welcome to NYU! The next few weeks are going to be filled with many exciting opportunities to join several kinds of groups: academic, entertainment, activist, and volunteer. You’ll receive many flyers, some you wanted and others that were handed to you amidst the chaos of Welcome Week. One table you’ll most definitely encounter, not only this week, but throughout your time at NYU, will be decorated with signs advertising “Free Trips to Israel,” or asking you to “Join Taglit-Birthright.” While exclusive to Jewish students and marked as an all-expenses-paid vacation that allows students to connect with their heritage, this “vacation” is pure propaganda.

In an effort to remain a purely “cultural trip,” Taglit-Birthright will present itself with a sanitized image of a depoliticized Israel devoid of conflict, something we all know to be quite untrue. The trip will never present you with the cities in the West Bank or Gaza living under brutal military occupation and siege. It will not explain to you that the millions of refugees created by Israel are not able to claim this “birthright,” despite the generations of their family members who lived or live in Israel-Palestine. Taglit-Birthright will conveniently leave out the fact that the
West Bank has been under military occupation since 1967, something that is not disputed by any nation in the world. Well, except for Israel, that is. The tables around campus won’t include information about Israel’s siege on the Gaza strip, where Israel controls the airspace and waterways, as well as the movement of anything that enters or leaves, be it food, construction materials or people. These human rights abuses have even affected some of your fellow students who have attempted to study at NYU through the Pathways to Peace program. Unfortunately, many have either missed the program entirely, been unable to even interview for it, or have had to join late because Israel restricted their travel. Additionally, some of your fellow students have been denied entry to Israel-Palestine at the hands of Israeli security, which controls all borders.

As NYU students you should be critical of the Birthright advertisements you will repeatedly encounter on campus. For those of you who are American, understand that our government sends nearly four billion dollars a year to the Israeli army (the IDF), which maintains domination over Palestinians by denying them basic human rights and overseeing the destruction of Palestinian cities, towns and villages. Israel has a defense budget of 16 billion dollars and is the only nation in the Middle East that possesses nuclear capabilities. But again, you will not see these facts on the Taglit-Birthright tables. Understand that not all Jewish people support Israel and that criticizing Israeli policies is not in itself anti-Semitic. There are several organizations, such as Jewish Voices for Peace, that oppose Israel’s human rights violations. The trip, however, will make no mention of such groups.

Nor will you hear of the plight of Israeli citizens who are themselves Palestinian. Comprising nearly twenty percent of the Israeli population, they are legally and systematically
discriminated against simply because they are not Jewish. The Citizenship and Entry Law enacted in 2003, for instance, denies citizenship to Palestinians who reside in the West Bank or Gaza, and who marry Israelis. Compare this with the fact that any Jewish person in the world can claim Israeli citizenship.

Palestinians living in occupied territory are at least as threatened by Israeli settlement and demolition as their non-Jewish Israeli-citizen counterparts. According to Israeli human rights organization B’Tselem, the past decade has seen the demolition of at least 1,113 Palestinian homes in the West Bank, leaving 5,199 people, including at least 2,602 minors, homeless as a result. [1] Despite consistent
intentional pressure and being in constant violation of Article 54 of the Geneva Convention (which prohibits the destruction of “objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population”) \(^2\), Israel has only increased its program of mass destruction and displacement in recent months; more Palestinian homes were demolished in the first half of 2016 than in all of 2015. \(^3\)

A Jewish NYU student who has never been to Israel, regardless of their nationality, can board a flight from JFK to Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv without a visa, pass through security, and arrive at a hostel in Tel Aviv in less than
a day. A Palestinian who was born in Israel and subsequently exiled cannot return to Israel without first acquiring the citizenship of another country—an extremely difficult process—and even then may not be let in. If a Jewish person wants to move to Israel, they face very few barriers. In fact, the Israeli government will actively aid them in their efforts. Yet it is impossible for any Palestinian to permanently return to their home or their family’s home in Israel proper.

These facts have not been pointed out to guilt or depress you if you’ve ever thought Birthright looked interesting, but did not understand its purpose. They are to show you that this seemingly harmless, all-expenses-paid vacation is actually a tool funded by the Israeli government to legitimize and obscure the displacement of Palestinians, and the removal of the “demographic threat” that they are deemed to pose. As an NYU student, you will encounter these ads more frequently than others. After all, our very own Michael Steinhardt and Charles Bronfman co-founded Taglit-Birthright with the hope of facilitating greater Jewish settlement of Israel-Palestine.

There are ways to visit Israel-Palestine that give accurate accounts of life there that are not funded by the government. In addition, you can also check out some of the activist organizations on campus, such as Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP). A group of students from diverse backgrounds (including Palestinian and Jewish), SJP believes in equal rights for Palestinians and Israelis. We meet weekly in the Kimmel Center, and hold events throughout the year. Look out for us at Club Fest or on the OrgSync website!
Birthright is a propaganda trip designed to obscure the destruction of Palestinian homes, lives, history, and culture, with images of smiling kids having the vacation of their lives. There are ways to responsibly and justly travel to and learn about the region; Birthright is not one of them. To go on one of their “vacations” is to be complicit in the occupation, destruction, and colonization of Palestine. That NYU sponsors an official Birthright trip, and bears the names of the founders of Taglit-Birthright in its institutional structure, and operates a portal campus in Tel-Aviv is testament to its own complicity in this violence.

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[3] “Israel…”
In May 2015, in a cavernous, state-of-the-art building, NYU Abu Dhabi’s inaugural graduating class celebrated. The ceremony was joyous, featuring more pomp, regalia, and applause than the typical university commencement. Speaker after speaker extolled the virtues of NYU’s degree-granting portal campus in the oil-rich absolute monarchy. A slick promotional video featured students praising NYU Abu Dhabi for “exporting hope and exporting future... and stand[ing] for investing in people and investing in a generation,” and breathless, tearful lamentations that their four years in an educational paradise with the Future Leaders Of The World were over.

Of course, the elephant in the room went unmentioned. Just a month before, the international investigation firm Nardello and Co. had published an NYU-commissioned report detailing widespread labor abuses during the construction of NYU’s Abu Dhabi campus. The report confirmed labor violations previously reported in The New York Times, The Guardian, The New Yorker, Human Rights Watch, VICE, and other outlets.
The 72-page report details several abuses: NYU’s failure to reimburse recruitment fees for any of the 30,000 migrant workers who built NYU Abu Dhabi; the deportation of 250 striking workers in 2013; and, worst of all, an institutionalized policy allowing exemptions to certain subcontractors from all of NYU’s (already sub-par) labor protections. These exceptions resulted in over 10,000 workers facing conditions which amounted to little more than indentured servitude: poverty wages that required migrant laborers to work for upwards of a year to repay devious recruiters who coerced them with promises of much higher wages, employers seizing and holding passports (a practice universally condemned by human rights organizations), 12-hour workdays in 110 degree heat; and overcrowded residences in work camps without transportation to leave, apart from going to work at NYU Abu Dhabi. These are men who left penury in their respective home countries in search of something better and were instead met with repression and exploitation.

Consider the living conditions of 27 workers employed as painters at NYU Abu Dhabi:

All 27 men were living in a two-room apartment in Abu Dhabi city. Insects were crawling around the kitchen, and there were exposed electrical wires wrapped around a showerhead. Some of the men slept on makeshift beds on the floor underneath bunk beds, and there was a hole punched in the fire escape door, which was locked. [1]

Or consider how Abu Dhabi police abused alleged strikers and labor organizers:
"It was the first time in my adult life that I cried, because I was so scared," said Matur Rehman, an NYU Abu Dhabi worker deported back to Bangladesh. "One police officer was shouting, ‘Are you a strike leader? Are you a strike leader?’ And the other one beat me with his shoe and slapped me on the neck. I was crying and begging him to stop."

Another striker recalled being slapped on the face at the prison because he didn’t look straight ahead during an iris scan used to ensure he never returns to the UAE.

About 40 men had no change of clothes for at least nine days while they were held in Dubai central prison. They were not allowed to exercise, mix with other prisoners or use the prison mosque. [2]

It is not surprising that police arrested and jailed the workers; striking is illegal in Abu Dhabi. So is identifying as gay. Israeli citizens are banned from entering the country. Unionizing is illegal and there is no minimum wage. One can be imprisoned for “insulting” the government. The Emirates are run by a monarchy without even the pretense of democracy. While former President John Sexton may label these policies “a cultural context that is very different from our own...in my mind...a good thing,” there are blatant injustices endemic to the “cultural context.” [3]

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NYU Abu Dhabi is built on top of a metaphoric graveyard. The university’s website touts its construction in the passive voice, giving the impression that the glistening facilities sprouted from the ground. Official histories and promotional materials have nothing to say of the migrant workers who sweated, died, lived in indentured servitude, were beaten and arrested by police, and eventually deported.

NYU’s alliance with The United Arab Emirates reveals how uninterested NYU is in ethical treatment of workers, people, or academic freedom. Who could have foreseen a conflict between NYU’s ostensibly liberal, educational values and a ruthless, autocratic state that criminalizes worker protections? Is anyone really surprised at the massive abuse NYU has participated in and profited from, or that an NYU professor has been barred from entering Abu Dhabi? Above all else, NYU is concerned with expansion and its concomitant business, profit, and executive bonuses. NYU administrators are more eager to sell its brand and a veneer of progressiveness to oligarchic, reactionary states than any other university in the world: truly the best Global Network University in the business.

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In an email following the release of Nardello and Co.’s report, former president John Sexton promised limited restitution measures, including the creation of a research project into the exploitative labor recruitment system NYU relied on to build its campus and to provide back pay to the at least 10,000 workers excluded from NYU’s $217 minimum monthly rate. The deported strikers are unmentioned and the administration has not provided any updates as to the progress of its restitution measures over a year later.

These promises are wholly inadequate. The administration
has time and again demonstrated its lack of concern for anyone harmed by its never-ending expansion. A promise of minor restitution measures to be executed by the same group of people who looked the other way while at least 10,000 workers were ruthlessly exploited and abused is far from compelling. A good start would be to follow Professor Andrew Ross’s advice: “If liberal cultural and educational institutions are to operate with any integrity in that environment, they must insist on a change of the rules: abolish the recruitment debt system, pay a living wage, allow workers to change employers at will and legalize the right to collective bargaining.” [5]

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NYU’s labor abuses in the Gulf point to some of the more pernicious aspects of the greater ideology underpinning the university’s Global Network project. Though Sexton—the project’s chief architect and strongest advocate—may claim that NYU’s global ambitions play no role in “perpetuating or compounding old patterns of dominance and subordination,” [6] it is vital to note, as the Abu Dhabi scandal makes clear, that NYU is not a neutral actor on the international scene. As various critical scholars have pointed out, the rhetoric of education and enlightenment has often accompanied Western excursions into the greater world, playing a vital role in the establishment of a complex and extensive set of unequal power relations.

Such relations are particularly evident in the University’s operations within the global South. Campus brochures portray our study-abroad sites in Accra, Buenos Aires and Tel-Aviv as beacons of liberalism within their respective regions, devoid of the political and economic instability that plagues other non-Western climes. Yet the tree-lined streets that house our Academic Centers in the upper-
class neighborhoods of Labone, Recoleta or the Old North mask the segregative, calculated cycle of global and local inequality that ghettoizes the invisibilized masses of the urban poor in these cities. As students, we are inundated by talk of global citizenry and the importance of international education in the crafting of a more socially just order. But we have to ask: to whom do the educational benefits of our “unparalleled cultural and intellectual experiences” accrue?

Besides the issue of international power and inequality, the profit motive undergirding NYU’s global project has to be addressed. The university charges us the same tuition overseas as it does on the Square, despite the fact that the real cost of studying abroad is substantially lower, due to differences in living expenses (in almost every case) and the lower wage bill abroad (since almost all lecturers are adjuncts with meager salaries and work security). The Global Network University can also be read as a strategy that siphons off students abroad as a means of increasing total enrollment on the Square and in the university at large. For every freshman sent abroad with the Liberal Studies program, the university is able to admit another student on the Square, bringing in an additional $49k or so in tuition. Add to all of this the aggressive marketing that accompanies these programs, and we have yet another instance of NYU’s profit-driven, corporate governance, invested as it is in a status quo of racialized global inequality and unabated expansion.

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If you go to NYU Abu Dhabi, you will see an educational paradise of personal development, incubating the Future Leaders Of The World. You will see the buildings glittering in sunlight, world-class professors and students, and a cornerstone of a cultural utopia soon to be joined by the
Louvre and Guggenheim. But NYU did not build NYU Abu Dhabi, the coerced and indentured workers did. They built the campus locked in overwhelming debt, working 12-hour shifts in temperatures over 100 degrees, with their passports locked away, and often living in dangerous conditions. You will not see their names engraved on donor lists, in front of esteemed professorships, or on the doors of beautiful seminar rooms. You will not hear them at graduation.

Campus Sex, Campus Rape

With the new school year come new students who are unaware of the risk they present to the university. Bringing thousands of young people into a space together, many who will be taking care of themselves for the first time, undoubtedly forces NYU to consider the safety and security of their student body. However, for the corporate university, and in the neoliberal age of “risk management,” this support does not come from a place of love and care, but instead from a fear of the university being accused of violating laws and/or social order—both of which make the university vulnerable to fines, lawsuits, and a poor public image. In the eyes of the corporate university, the student is not a person to be cared for, but instead a risk to be managed and a body to be policed into compliance. In the very institution that claims to be space to learn, explore, take risks, and develop understanding, the exact opposite happens. Larger administrative units are built and disciplinary apparatuses balloon as the university seeks to protect itself from the “risk” students present to it.

How did we become “risks” to NYU? One well-known piece of legislation that opens up universities to liability for
failing its students is Title IX. Title IX is an amendment to the Higher Education Act (HEA) passed in 1972. It is an anti-discrimination law designed to eliminate sex/gender discrimination in education and hold schools accountable for failing to do so. It states that “Title IX states that “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” Title IX has forced schools to confront gender discrimination in its athletic programs and has come to govern sexual assault and rape cases at universities. Because sexual assault is a gendered form of violence, school’s have an obligation to work towards a rape and harassment-free community. Remaining compliant with Title IX becomes the task at hand for many administrators, and a major goal of campus security. While offering an important set of tools to feminists activists, Title IX has become detrimental because of how administrations manage and think about reports. For administrators tasked with ensuring a school’s compliance, sexual possibility is a site marked by risk. It must be managed and the campus must be secured from “outsiders” who, in administrative imaginations, increase the chance of Title IX violations and making it non-compliant. Title IX and imaginations of sexual danger are often cited as reasons for expanding universities’ private police forces and excluding certain people (see “Resisting Mass Incarceration and Criminalization” and “NYU, Gentrification, and the Cost of Prestige” in this guide). For administrators, Title IX becomes authorization to police, surveill, and exclude certain populations that appear “out of place” on the campus—to manage “risk”— rather than a tool to protect and promote the sexual well-being of its students. Perhaps this is why what victims need and what universities understand their obligations to be are not the same. The university is concerned with finding if the assault likely
happened, and, if so, if the university is liable for the assault happening. Victims often just want support while recovering and to be free from the threat of harm.

To remain in compliance, the university seeks to deter reporting. It makes reporting a nightmare. It does everything it can to find reports to be false. It retaliates against those who report and threaten the university’s compliance. In the eyes of the administration, there was not a problem until the report was filed. If the student was not already harmed enough by the event that prompted them to report, the corporate university will see that they’re severely violated. If you were not sufficiently harassed, the administration will be sure to harass you. When considering whether or not to report an assault and/or Title IX violation to the administration, know that you will be punished by NYU for threatening its status of compliance. You will be doubted and interrogated again and again. Your character will be questioned. After all, NYU gave you online trainings, a private security force, a safe ride service, orientations, definitions of consent, lectures, and excluded threatening “outsiders” from campus. You will be subjected to violence because it was your fault.

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Often, the campus administration works in hand with campus activists to advocate “better” policies around rape. Some argue for more severe punishments for rapists, others line the bathroom stalls with definitions of “rape” and “consent,” and collectively the students and administration create the dichotomy of civil, consensual sexual activity on one side and rape on the other. University campuses see rape as exceptional and attempt to “isolate its unacceptable features, and remove its cancer from the otherwise healthy body of sexuality.[1]
This dichotomy is flawed. It casts rape as wholly apart from the otherwise healthy campus sex life. But rape is not rare; it is a regular occurrence. On college campuses nationally, 1 in 5 cis women will be raped or face attempted rape within their four years on campus. The rapist is not the stranger in the alley, but more often than not, the rapist is someone the victim knows.

Knowing this, we must reconsider how we think about sex and rape. Michel Foucault describes sex as “an especially dense transfer point for relations of power.”[2] In understanding sex in this way, it’s easier to see rape not solely as forced penetration, but as one wielding immense power over another. The process of coercion and the structural position of silence are just as much a part of rape as the moment of assault. Our patriarchal structures see that there’s “nothing to ‘consent’ to that isn’t on the terms of male power.”[3] This reality makes sex difficult to navigate because rape, as a tool of the patriarchy, becomes implicated in all forms of sex.

We’re also forgetting that few of us, especially when we enter college, possess the sort of “sexual-wisdom” through which we can know what we want, don’t want, or even what we’re saying yes to. Jennifer Doyle describes this well in her book Campus Sex, Campus Security: “Students seek out this understanding of sexual practice, they seek it out in community, from each other. But they have no idea, really, what they are doing—they are, after all, learning.”[4]

We find ourselves driven by desire—straddling a thin line between fear and excitement. Sex puts us in vulnerable positions, it makes us feel exposed, and opens us up to risks. But it’s that same gray area which makes sex great and/or harmful, pleasurable and/or tragic. Do we want sex without risk? Without vulnerability? There does not seem to be
space for this gray area of sex in the current “no no no no
no” vs. “yes yes yes yes yes” framing of consent. Obviously,
the shift from needing to hear “no” to needing to hear “yes”
is an improvement, but what exactly is one saying “yes” to?
Within current framings of the discussion around campus
sex, consent, and rape, there is neither room nor vocabulary
for this gray area.

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We are part of communities where we constantly fail each
other. We know that sex is messy and that rape will happen.
Yet, the rapist—our fellow student—states that he asked
for consent. He did his online trainings and learned how to
stay out of trouble. He did everything he could to see that
the campus remain compliant. He is less concerned about
the well-being of the accuser than his image, his future. The
administration, engaged in the fantasy that it can legislate
rape away with the correct rulebook—that the “risk”
presented by the student body’s sexuality can be correctly
managed—agrees. The rapist disregards the community, and
luckily for him, the administration does too.

Vulnerability overcomes the campus. Instead of encouraging
men to “explore the contours of their own sexual happiness
and the workings of their bodies,” men are taught how to
not be rapists, or rather, how to stay out of trouble; how to
avoid potentially making the university non-compliant.[5]
Women are taught to live in fear, that each “risk” they take—
each attempt to be open, trusting, curious, vulnerable—is
their own mistake. With an “I told you so” rhetoric, the
administration deters reports, retaliates against those
who do report, encourages them to keep quiet. In the end,
the campus has quashed “whatever glimmer of possibility
one might have felt around desire, openness, and the
possibilities of sexual generosity.”[5]


STUDENT DEBT

$66,640.

Why?
Dimensions of the Debt Crisis

Finding solutions to the student debt crisis has to become the number one priority for American universities. The total national student loan debt now exceeds $1.3 trillion. [1] The average graduate of the class of 2015 was $35,000 in debt. [2]

The situation is especially grim at NYU. Last year’s graduating class was one of the most indebted in the country. [3] Every year tuition goes up faster than inflation and every year more and more students are faced with the decision of leaving NYU with the debt they currently owe, dealing with the consequences of graduating tens of thousands of dollars further in debt, or working in danger industries, like sex work, to finance their education. [4]

Though this is a national problem, NYU holds a unique position in relation to it. Because of its large size, location, and the powerful people associated with it, NYU stands as a model for schools across the country. The question is: what kind of trend will it set? Will we continue down the path of the corporate university, where education is treated like a commodity reserved for those who can afford it? Or will we make the hard changes necessary to put the needs
of students, our families, faculty, and other workers at the center of our education system?

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After taking office earlier this year, President Hamilton instituted a set of reforms aimed at mitigating the worsening crisis. His first move was to reduce a planned increase in the cost-of-attendance to 2.0%. And in March, after several years of on-campus organizing by the Student Labor Action Movement (SLAM), he agreed to grant student-workers a $15 living wage. Though such concessions are undoubtedly a step in the right direction—especially following the intransigence of John Sexton’s imperial presidency—we would be mistaken in placing too much faith in our new president as a beacon of progressivism.

Hamilton’s reforms do little to address the root cause of the crisis. Rising tuition is simply not the unmanageable beast that administrators paint it to be. In fact, a high tuition bill is one of the main strategies used by schools across the country to convince students and parents of the quality of the education that they offer. As consumers, we are roped into conflating cost with value.

The increased revenue generated by annual tuition increases (the University, a nominally non-profit institution, made $400 million in 2014)\(^{[5]}\) goes in two directions. On the one hand, the administration uses it to fund some of NYU’s signature moves: unrelenting expansion into the Village and the greater world, aggressive recruitment of celebrity professors, shiny new dorms and facilities. And then, of course, you have the millions of dollars spent on the salaries and expenses of high-level admins. The same Hamilton that “wished he could do more” about ballooning tuition lives in an apartment on Washington Square West that the
University spent at least $1.1 million on renovating prior to his arrival. [6][7][8]

Though some of these tactics may appear to have our interests at heart, the circular logic underlying the administration’s policies shows why this type of thinking is misguided. Within the corporate model that NYU employs, students are—at the end of the day—consumers, whose dollars and debt burdens are used to finance the university’s expansionist ambitions. But as enrollment increases, so too does demand for space, leading to even more expansion. From the 2031 expansion plan, to the construction of satellite campuses across the world, this is an unsustainable approach that incentivizes indebtedness and instrumentalizes students’ alleged needs and desires.

Administrators claim that student debt is shrinking at the same time that the financial aid budget has drastically increased. [9] Countering these claims is a 2015 ProPublica investigation revealing that, while NYU saw a 91 percent increase in revenue from student fees and tuition over the past decade, student debt is more or less at the same level as it was 10 years ago. [10]

We don’t need studies or investigations to tell us that NYU’s financial aid is woefully inadequate; the Princeton Review confirmed overwhelming campus consensus when it rated NYU’s financial aid program a 63, the lowest of any major university in the United States. [11]

One has to ask, as the Stern School of Business has recently done: is this the right way to spend such large sums of
money? The hundreds of millions of dollars that are at stake here should be going towards tuition freezes, financial aid reserves and student benefits—all measures that would alleviate the crisis at hand. That the University chooses instead to channel these funds into the expansionist cycle of displacement and debt production shows where its priorities lie.

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[10] Annie Waldman and Sisi Wei, “Colleges...”
Race and Student Debt

Let’s get you caught up

The student debt crisis affects most of us, but some communities are much harder hit than others. This is a result of deeply entrenched systems of white supremacy and anti-black racism, as well as a continuation of the income inequality that is so deeply felt in our society.

We must fight against student debt in a way that challenges these systems and prioritizes those who have been most affected. We also acknowledge that anti-black racism is not the only type of racism and that these statistics are woefully lacking when it comes to analyzing the effect of student debt on other people of color, but unfortunately there has been very little research done on this. However, the research that has been gathered suggests that student debt hits black students and graduates significantly harder than any other group.

Some facts:

1. In the last 14 years around 50% of black students graduated college with student debt over $25,000 as opposed to 35% of white students.\[1\]

2. Four out of five black students take out loans to go to College.\[2\]
Black students have an average debt burden of $28,692, as opposed to the average burden of $24,742 held by white students. [3]

69% of black students who don’t finish school cite the burden of high student loan debt as the reason, compared with 43% of their white peers. [4]

Just 17% of black college graduates described themselves as thriving financially, compared to 29% of all graduates. [5]

The poverty rate for Black Americans is 25%, more than double that of white Americans. [6]

NYU participates in and exacerbates these inequalities with its production of student debt.


How to Appeal for More Financial Aid

So you’re at NYU and you need more money. Where do you turn?

Though not actively advertised by the University, there does exist an appeal process. If you experience an emergency or change of circumstances that adversely affects your ability to remain at school, we strongly encourage you to apply.

The process is remarkably easy, essentially consisting of a comment box in which you write as little or as much as you want. You tell your story and list your needs. According to the University website: “appeal results are typically based on financial need and academic performance. The amount of appeal funds available varies each year, and individual NYU schools work closely with the Office of Financial Aid throughout the process to make the appeal determination.” [1]

The form is usually released towards the beginning of the fall and spring semesters, a few weeks before it’s due. You should check this page periodically: http://www.nyu.edu/admissions/financial-aid-and-
scholarships/applications-and-forms.html

And another thing they didn’t tell you. Though it may be too late if you’re already enrolled, incoming international students can now apply for financial aid. Current international students are also eligible to participate in the appeal process.

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Understanding Student Loans

For most loans, you will be expected to begin making monthly payments 6 months after graduation. The size of your payments will vary depending on the interest rates of your loans, the amount you borrowed, and other factors. For example, if you took out $35,104 (the average debt of NYU class of 2013) in Direct Unsubsidized Federal Loans at the interest rate of 4.66% your average monthly payments would be $366.53 per month. $366 per month seems like a lot, doesn’t it?

This is likely much more than you will spend on food, utilities, transportation or any other expenses besides housing. It would take you about 10 years to pay off this debt if you made every payment, and you would end up paying about $44,000. Why do you end up paying back $44,000 when you only borrowed $35,000? Because the other $9,000
is from accrued interest. There is a great tool for calculating your average monthly payments at http://www.finaid.org/calculators/loanpayments.phtml. Many loans have an option to make a smaller minimum monthly payment (which will increase the time it takes to pay off the loan, thus the total interest paid, and thus the total cost of the loan), as well as options to make larger payments (which will have the reverse effect).

If you are having trouble paying off your loans you can apply to your loan servicer for deferment or forbearance. During deferment, you do not have to make payments on your debt and interest will not continue to accrue on federal subsidized loans but will accrue under federal unsubsidized loans. Common reasons for deferment include continuing your education, and military, Peace Corps or Americorps service. During forbearance, you do not have to make payments on your debt but interest will continue to accrue regardless of the type of loan. The most common reason for forbearance is unemployment or economic hardship. If you put your loans into deferment or forbearance, more interest will accrue and it will take you even longer to pay off the loans. It is important to note that both deferment and forbearance require an application process, neither are guaranteed. Both deferment and forbearance are temporary statuses, you will eventually have to start making payments again.

If your loans are not in deferment or forbearance and you miss a payment, your loan becomes delinquent. Usually, if you do not make payments for 270 days your loan goes into default. In default it will be sent to a collection agency that will constantly harass you (via phone calls and other means) until you pay off your debt. Defaulting on your loan has serious consequences on your credit and can significantly affect your ability to get another loan (like a mortgage),
get an apartment, sign up for cable and internet and do anything else that requires a credit check.

It is generally recommended not to borrow more money in loans then you expect to make in your first year of employment. However, given the soaring costs of tuition and the lack of well paid jobs for graduates, following this rule can be tough. This system of education-if-you-can-afford leaves many of us in the horrible predicament of deciding which is worse for our futures: not having a college degree or not being able to pay back our debt?

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We have more power than we think.
Resisting Mass Incarceration and Criminalization at NYU

Abolish THE BOX

Mass incarceration is a situation created by the classist, racist, ableist, sexist punishment system of the United States of America, a country that locks up more people per capita than any other nation. Last year, The Incarceration to Education Coalition (IEC) sat down with NYU President Andrew Hamilton and explained to him and other NYU administrators how our school is complicit in this criminal injustice system. As members of IEC, we write to welcome you to NYU and invite you to join us in the movement for human rights and educational justice. Here, we will also share the highlights of our campaign and debunk some of the myths surrounding criminal records screening in college admissions.

IEC started the Abolish THE BOX campaign at NYU in 2013. THE BOX refers to a page on the Common Application that requires applicants to answer the following questions:
Have you ever been found responsible for a disciplinary violation at any educational institution you have attended from the 9th grade (or the international equivalent) forward, whether related to academic misconduct or behavioral misconduct, that resulted in a disciplinary action? These actions could include, but are not limited to: probation, suspension, removal, dismissal, or expulsion from the institution.

☐ YES  ☐ NO

Have you ever been adjudicated guilty or convicted of a misdemeanor, felony, or other crime? Note that you are not required to answer "yes" to this question, or provide an explanation, if the criminal adjudication or conviction that has been expunged, sealed, annulled, pardoned, destroyed, erased, impounded, or otherwise ordered by a court to be kept confidential.

☐ YES  ☐ NO

NYU added THE BOX to its undergraduate application in 2005, while the Common Application added it in 2006—the same year that NYU started purchasing its services. For the past ten years, every undergrad applicant to NYU has been confronted by THE BOX. Because people of color, poor people and other marginalized groups are targeted by mass incarceration and police brutality in the United States, screening applicants for criminal history perpetuates an abusive and unjust system. It continues to violently exclude people who are actively demonstrating their eagerness to re-enter society.
NYU has recently announced a reform, where they will ignore the Common Application’s questions on criminal history and instead ask applicants to answer specific questions on violent crime:

**Within the last seven years after the age of 14, have you ever been convicted at trial, or pled guilty to, a criminal offense involving violence, physical force or the threat of physical force, a sexual offense, possession of a weapon, kidnapping, arson or any offense which caused physical harm to another person? You should answer "no" if your conviction has been sealed, expunged, or overturned or if you were arrested but not convicted.**

☐ YES  ☐ NO

Have you ever been found guilty of a disciplinary violation at your previous high school, college or university for any act involving violence, physical force or the threat of physical force, a sexual offense, possession of a weapon, kidnapping, arson or any offense which caused physical harm to another person?

☐ YES  ☐ NO

What prompted this change? Student-led direct action! In December 2015, after nearly 2 years of inaction by the NYU administration, IEC members and allies staged a sit-in at the
NYU Welcome Center. We demanded that NYU Abolish THE BOX and make a public statement urging the Common App to do the same. In response, the NYU administration sent a letter to the Common App, asking them to simply conduct more research.

This request stalled action, disregarded evidence and failed to end discrimination at NYU. In March 2016, IEC and over 100 allies staged a 33-hour occupation of the Kimmel Student Center. This action won meetings with President Hamilton and the Common App leadership; plus, the Abolish THE BOX campaign gained national visibility through coverage by Fox News, VICE and many other media outlets. Later that spring, the US Department of Education warned institutions of higher learning that THE BOX may have a negative and discriminatory impact on people of color and, therefore, violate Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. This is the student organizing context in which NYU changed THE BOX in Summer 2016.

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Any attempts to reform THE BOX only re-entrench its violence. The “violent/non-violent” distinction NYU makes is a problematic binary. We need to take into account how situations of poverty, desperation, and unaddressed mental health issues produce real acts of violence that should not be blamed solely on an individual’s character. We must challenge the assumption that people who have committed violent crimes are biologically wired to be violent and criminal. IEC members have lived with these stereotypes and know them to be false. By calling out violent crimes specifically on the application, NYU is perpetuating the stigma we hold against people who have engaged in violence.
NYU’s new policy requires that applicants check THE BOX even if their convictions happened at the age of 15 or 16. Data has clearly shown that racial and socioeconomic discrimination is rampant in youth policing and sentencing. This policy therefore continues the school-to-prison pipeline by disproportionately barring young black and brown people from higher education.

Relying on the violent and racist criminal punishment system will not make us safer. By doing so, we continue to exclude and enact violence on poor communities and communities of color. We need to be putting our resources into healing and improving our communities, not in surveillance and exclusion.

Over the past three years, IEC has spoken with student government, high-level admins, and university presidents to find out why NYU continues to use THE BOX. No one has given any compelling evidence to support THE BOX’s presence. Is more research regarding THE BOX and its efficacy necessary?

NO. Usually, supporters of THE BOX claim that it helps determine “risk.” This response raises the question: What exactly is “risk”?
Does “risk” mean that formerly incarcerated individuals are likely to commit crimes on campus?

**NO.** Empirical evidence actually confirms that the majority of crimes committed on campuses are committed by people without documented criminal records.\[^{1}\] While 66% of colleges ask about criminal records and disciplinary infractions, the prevailing research indicates that they are no safer than colleges that do not ask for this information.\[^{2}\] Does “risk” mean that women are in more danger of sexual violence and campus rape if there are formerly incarcerated students on campus?

**NO.** The available data shows that campuses that discriminate against formerly incarcerated students are no safer (for anyone) than campuses that reject this discriminatory practice. Any commitment to ending violence in our society must reject it in all its forms. We stand in solidarity with activists fighting for Title IX protections on campuses across the country, and at the same time we recognize that co-opting anti-rape activism to maintain white supremacy and the criminalization of people of color does not protect, comfort, or heal those of us who have survived sexual assault.\[^{3}\] Simply put, there is no correlation between THE BOX and campus safety or academic performance. Here, “risk” is used to create fear and stigmatize applicants with criminal histories; it is not used as a realistic assessment of an applicant’s future actions.

In fact, education dramatically reduces recidivism (the rate at which people return to jail/prison), thereby increasing public safety. Of the 700,000 people released from prison each year, 43.3% return to prison within three years of release; this rate drops dramatically with access to higher education: 13.7% of individuals who earn an Associate’s
degree, 5.6% of individuals who earn a Baccalaureate and nearly 0% of those who earn a Master’s degree will recidivate. [4]

The lives of poor people of color have always been monitored and judged guilty in the United States. Today, we see this both with the militarized police forces that monitor Black residential neighborhoods and with NYU conducting institutionalized violence. Because the violence and surveillance embodied in THE BOX is administrative, NYU can more easily justify its racism. Abolishing THE BOX is, therefore, a targeted way to fight violence against poor people of color. The Movement for Black Lives has come to the same conclusion and includes Abolishing THE BOX on their official list of demands. [5]

Ultimately, THE BOX is only a small fragment of a much larger kyriarchy (it’s a great word, look it up!). Once it is removed, IEC will continue our work to dismantle the social, economic, and political barriers that dehumanize formerly and currently incarcerated people.

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Graduate Workers and Students

Making Connections

You will hear Welcome Week mantras repeated over and over as you enter the NYU community. We repeat these clichés partly out of habit but also because there is truth to them. As a teaching assistant and graduate instructor I would like to echo them one more time: If you are anything like your peers, you are bright, hard-working, inquisitive, and engaged. We are glad to share this campus—and our classrooms—with you.

As an incoming student an elite university, you are in a position to think carefully about the institution and community that you are entering. Who are they for? Who do they exclude? And how you might change them for the better? Other articles in this guide will help you think about how NYU is both a product of larger forces in global higher education as well as a special case leading some of these trends. Here, I will focus on how graduate workers fit into the NYU community and suggest that they share common experiences, interests, and concerns with undergraduate
students. This makes us allies in our struggle to make a better NYU, New York City, and world.

Who is your TA?

NYU graduate workers are a diverse bunch that come from all over the world to study and work at the university. In addition to doing research and preparing for careers in and outside of academia, one of our most important roles at NYU is undergraduate teaching—both as TAs and instructors. Teaching is labor-intensive work, requiring significant time preparing course materials, running recitation sections, grading, and serving as mentors for undergraduate students. Teaching at NYU could not take place in its current format without the work of graduate students.

Graduate student workers are part of a larger transformation in teaching, especially at elite universities like NYU. The American Association of University Professors has found that more than 50 percent of all university teaching appointments in the U.S. are part time positions, held by adjunct and graduate student employees. So while NYU has a brilliant tenured faculty, many of your courses be taught by (equally brilliant and committed) graduate workers and adjuncts who have none of the job security and are paid significantly less than tenured colleagues.

The money NYU saves on teaching costs is being reinvested in a $6 billion expansion plan and high-level executive pay, reproducing the vast inequality of the corporate sector (whose leaders are well-represented on NYU’s Board of Trustees) in the so-called non-profit university setting. All of this occurs against a background of indebtedness and financial insecurity for NYU’s poorest students. So while NYU has a brilliant tenured faculty, many of your courses will be taught by (equally brilliant and committed) graduate
workers and adjuncts who have none of the job security and are paid significantly less than our tenured colleagues.

Your recitation TA will be managing a full schedule of their own coursework or carrying out original research, all while trying to afford the cost of living in New York City. Their job placement from semester to semester will be precarious—subject to departmental needs and enrollment. This makes it difficult for them to make longer term financial decisions such as how to afford New York City rent or support a family as a graduate student. Graduate teachers and their undergraduate students have financial insecurity in common.

Shared Resources: GSOC-UAW Local 2110

But the news isn’t all bad! Graduate workers, along with faculty, adjunct, and undergraduate allies have been fighting back against the rampant inequalities perpetuated by the corporate university. After more than a decade of organizing and despite the long refusal of NYU recognition, the Union for Graduate Employees at New York University (GSOC) won a contract from NYU in 2015 that guaranteed access to some basic rights, such as subsidized health insurance, a decent minimum wage, and childcare. However, it wasn’t until GSOC members overwhelmingly voted to authorize a strike from teaching and research jobs that NYU came to the bargaining table willing to grant these basic rights. Despite the fact that the university was willing to risk undergraduate education in order to defeat graduate workers, we received amazing support from our undergraduate students, who showed up to demonstrate and organize on behalf of their TAs.

Better working conditions for graduate workers means better learning conditions for NYU students. And it doesn’t
stop there. Beyond its commitment to improving working conditions, GSOC is driven by broader principles of social justice. This means that we support a range of social and environmental causes, and we love to work with other campus groups who share these values.

As graduate students and as a unionized workforce, we have some unique advantages to offer to collective struggles across NYU. Many of us can offer a few extra minutes for announcements before our classes begin to groups that are raising awareness, collecting signatures, and mobilizing around common goals. GSOC also has a whole committee of graduate students who can turn up or speak at your events in solidarity with your struggles. We also lead protests of our own to which you are heartily invited. In the coming year it looks like much of our emphasis will be on improving student healthcare access and supporting the Movement for Black Lives. Finally, we also conduct research and compile resources that should be useful for all students. For example, we recently published a guide to parental leave and benefits (http://www.makingabetternyu.org/gsocuaw/resources-for-parents/).

**Student Power**

The combination of a corporate university and new student movements makes for an explosive mix. Graduate and undergraduate activists across the country are forcing universities to confront institutionalized racism, sexism, and homophobia, the ways that their endowments support fossil fuels and mass incarceration, and unconscionable student debt, among many other issues.

The administration and the media try to belittle activists, by trotting out tired clichés—calling us youthful idealists or pampered students. But we know better. Administrators
are finding that they can no longer justify unending tuition increases, outrageous executive pay, and exploitation of their most vulnerable students and workers. This puts the power squarely in your hands. As graduate student workers, we understand that our struggles are connected with yours and are looking forward to working with incoming students to remake the corporate university into a more just and equal place.
Fossil Fuel Divestment for Climate Justice

How university executives ignored campus consensus

NYU Divest is a coalition of students, faculty, staff, and alumni that has worked since 2012 to align the university’s investment practices with the demands of climate change mitigation and climate justice.

"If there are lessons to be drawn from this summer as we start a new academic year, I believe they would be the following: that we treat one another with mutual respect and dignity. That we should listen as carefully to others as we would like them to listen to us."

Thus spoke our new President Andrew Hamilton in the August 2016 installation of his now-routine, pastel-washed newsletters titled “Our NYU” (whose NYU?...the ambiguity is convenient). From our end, if there is a lesson to be drawn from the conduct of President Hamilton and other university executives with our campaign this year, the lesson,
Unfortunately, is the following: that university executives are hard pressed to treat campus activists with dignity and respect, and that they will ignore the voice of the university when it suits them.

As of 2015, NYU’s endowment invests $129 million dollars in the fossil fuel industry (coal, oil, and natural gas), including $700,000 of direct shares. To this date, in the face of worsening, often unlivable climate conditions across the planet, our university has taken no action to remove any of these investments. By maintaining these investments, “Our NYU” signals that it values, above other considerations, the (currently dwindling) profits derived from these investments. It signals that “Our NYU” is willing to disregard that the amount of carbon trapped in these firms’ reserves, if burned, would lock our planet into at least two degrees celsius of warming. It signals that “Our NYU,” as an investor, does not care that climate change amplifies every injustice that already afflicts our world, and drives conflict, civil war, state failure, famine, drought, flooding, wildfires, coral bleaching, ecosystem collapse, and mass extinction. It signals that “Our NYU” is comfortable financing the fossil fuel industry’s propaganda efforts, its attacks on climate science, its persecution of climate activists, the myriad front groups that the industry props up, and the political chokehold that fossil fuel interests still exert over our representatives in government. It signals that “Our NYU” is unwilling to admit that it is past time that we end this carbon-intensive status quo with every peaceful means available to us, including our investments, in order to keep our planet minimally habitable.

An absolute incongruence exists between this signal, transmitted by Hamilton’s version of “Our NYU,” and the popular voice of our university—its students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Among those who compose NYU, the consensus
in favor of divestment is great, the reasoning behind it is accepted, and the urgency to act is strongly felt. 97% of NYU students report feeling responsible for the condition of the environment. Over 200 Faculty have signed a letter which lays out a detailed and comprehensive argument urging for fossil fuel divestment. Over 2,000 students have signed our campaign’s petition to sell NYU’s investments in fossil fuels. In April of 2015, our University Senate, the highest representative body in our university, composed of student, administrative, and faculty representatives, passed a fossil fuel divestment resolution, with over 80% voting in favor and only 8% in opposition.

Per former President John Sexton’s promise made in 2013, the 2015 University Senate resolution was expected to take the question of fossil fuel divestment to a vote by NYU’s Board of Trustees, a 68-member body which meets a few times per year, appoints Presidents, makes financial decisions, and had somehow never met with students in its history.

A year passed and the vote never came. In an unprecedented moment of contact between students and Trustees, Divest members met two members of the Board’s 11-member Investment Committee, which had unexpectedly been appointed to deliberate on the issue. Two months of administrative inaction followed, leading Divest members to occupy the executive elevator of Bobst Library for 33 hours, demanding a full Board vote, transparency measures such as meeting minutes, and an opportunity for members to present to all Board members in person before the vote. These demands had been discussed as possible by President Sexton in 2013. Vice President Martin Dorph responded to our occupation by threatening 18 students with summary suspension. Before sending a warning email to these 18 students, administrators notified their parents by phone.
Still, a “decision” at the Board’s next meeting in June was agreed to. A rationale regarding the decision was promised, and a presentation by Divest members for the Investment Committee (to which only a few members showed up), was scheduled. We compiled a 40-page packet with research on the financial soundness of fossil fuel divestment, on the obstructionist efforts of the fossil fuel industry and on climate change’s costly effects on our University, most famously during Hurricane Sandy. We argued that NYU has no excuse, financial or procedural, to maintain its $700,000 in direct fossil fuel investments, which financial managers could sell immediately by phone.

On June 16 of this year, President Hamilton and Board Chair William Berkeley issued a memorandum on behalf of the Board, accompanied by a rationale in which they rejected, in not so much as two pages, any form of fossil fuel divestment or climate-responsible investment. Nearly nothing is known about how the decision was made, where it was made, or who was involved. To those at NYU who had tracked our campaign’s progress through university bureaucracy, the reasoning offered by Hamilton and Berkeley was clearly identical to the excuses we had been hearing from Sexton since 2012. The brevity and reductiveness of the rationale, and its failure to address the bulk of the arguments and research that we had presented over four years, betrayed not only a failure of executives to “do their homework” and “carefully listen” to the university community, but also their power to govern NYU and its capital without even the semblance of accountability.

We learned that this struggle could not be won through reasoning, empirical research, a democratic mandate, and demands for transparency—all liberal trappings that a university like ours would, in theory, support. We learned, the hard way, that this struggle was about power, and about
the interests of a few privileged administrators with an attachment to the status quo.

What remains beyond debate is that Andrew Hamilton and William Berkeley are not NYU. Without its students paying tuition; without its staff cleaning, serving and caring; and without its faculty teaching and producing research; this institution would be nothing but a collection of tone-deaf, out-of-touch executives. We are NYU, and we will teach our executives to listen carefully.
Radical Groups

On campus and beyond

**AT NYU**

**Incarceration to Education Coalition, NYU**
https://iecforchange.wordpress.com/
contact: incarceration2education@gmail.com

**International Socialist Organization, NYU**
http://nycsocialist.org/category/nyu/
contact: iso-nyu@nycsocialist.org

**NYU Academic Workers for a Democratic Union**
nyuawdu.com
contact: shellyronen@gmail.com

**NYU Divest**
http://nyu-divest.squarespace.com/
contact: @NYUDIVEST, via website

**Queer Union**
http://nyuqueerunion.tumblr.com/
contact: queer.union.club@nyu.edu

**Students for Justice in Palestine, NYU**
http://nyusjp.org/
contact: @NYUSJP, via website
Student Labor Action Movement, NYU
https://nyuslam.wordpress.com/
contact: nyuslam@gmail.com

IN NYC

Brooklyn Anti-Gentrification Network
bangentrification.org
contact: info@BANgentrification.org

Coalition to Protect LES and Chinatown
facebook.com/protectchinatownandlees
contact: peoplefirstnyc@gmail.com

Desis Rising Up and Moving
drumnyc.org
contact: via website

Millions March NYC
millionsmarch.org
contact: facebook.com/millionsmarchnyc

PLACES

Bluestockings Bookstore
bluestockings.com
address: 172 Allen Street, Manhattan
contact: 212-777-6028

The Base
thebasebk.org
address: 1302 Myrtle Avenue, Brooklyn
contact: thebasebk@gmail.com

Revolution Books
http://revolutionbooksnyc.org/
address: 146 W. 26th St., New York
contact: 212-691-3345