

Yonkers students denounce school cutbacks

Our reporters
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The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to students at Riverside High School in Yonkers, New York, about proposed school budget cuts for the city that call for the layoffs of over 400 teachers and the elimination of school transportation, extra-curricular activities, intramural sports and many other programs.

Arnesisha Hayes, who will graduate from the high school next year, told the WSW, “I think the budget cuts are unfair, first of all because all after school programs and remedial classes are being eliminated. These are classes that students need. They want to cut summer school out as well. What will people do who need extra help learning or a remedial program?”

“I think the layoff of 400 of our teachers is out of control. Our class sizes are too big already. We have 27 to 32 students in a class now. Many more people will need extra help if they cut teachers and increase the class sizes. A lot more people will not come to school if they cut bus transportation.

“It is not fair for the teachers to have their pay and benefits cut. What are they going to do to get income to take care of their kids?”

“I blame the Board of Education for these cuts, but beyond that I think the Democrats and Republicans go along with these cuts. This is something no one disagrees on. We tried to demonstrate against the state budget cuts and the budget cuts here. We held a rally outside the school here, but nothing has changed.

“My family can’t pay a 5 percent property tax increase. A lot of people are struggling as it is. I think it would be fair if the rich were taxed to pay for education. The rich are spending a lot of money on unnecessary things. They don’t get taxed, and if they did, it wouldn’t hurt.”

Her friend, Nigel Coleman, a freshman, added, “The government is not going out to the people to ask what the people really want. I think these budget cuts are unfair. The rich have the money, but I think they are

just greedy people who don’t want to share.”

Jose Arroyo, a junior at Riverside, said, “Everyone wants the American dream, but with the budget cuts, it is fading. Some parents cannot afford to lose the bus service and drive their kids to school. They just can’t drive their kids, and when the school is far, students won’t be able to make it to class.

“I know many teachers have just completed college, and they face losing their jobs and their careers. I am against this. I don’t think it is fair that the teachers are being asked to give up their pay and benefits in addition to the layoffs. If they are laid off, the class sizes are going to increase by a substantial amount, and we won’t have the hands-on attention of our teachers. We will be getting less of an education, and this will deprive students of an equal opportunity for a future.

“I am upset about their cutting out sports. I don’t play sports, but people are interested in them and stay in school because of them. And some can get college scholarships through sports.

“It is sad to me that the first thing the Democrats and Republicans think to cut is education. The first thing the city of Yonkers thinks is cutting education. The significance of education is that it is the future.

“This nation from the time of Alexander Hamilton was based on the rich. It was based on the rich, and most of the politicians came from the rich. Very few came from the working class. The two party system represents the rich. The working class competes with the rich. If a public program is for the people, why isn’t it for all the people? The working class is the majority, but it is so hard for us to be heard. If we were, then we would tax the rich to pay for education, and they don’t want that.”



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