

Growing support for IYSSE campaign against censorship at New York University

A WSWWS reporting team
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The International Youth and Students for Social Equality is winning widespread support among students and faculty at New York University for its campaign against political censorship and for the free association of student organizations.

Last month, the NYU Student Activities Board denied the IYSSE club status even though it completed all necessary requirements, including submitting the signatures of more than 200 students who wanted to form the club. The SAB falsely claimed that the IYSSE is too similar to other organizations on campus and cited other irrelevant justifications. It also argued that the SAB has the right and duty to reject the vast majority of new club applications, supposedly due to a lack of funds.

On Monday, the student newspaper, the *Washington Square News*, published an op-ed from an IYSSE supporter under the headline, “IYSSE Demands Free Speech at NYU.” It points to the massive financial resources held by the university and the connections of NYU administrators to Wall Street, the US military and monarchies in the Persian Gulf. “The attack on students’ right to form groups,” it states, “is even more significant when one considers its context—the election victory of Donald Trump, ushering in what will be the most right-wing government in U.S. history.”

In response, several professors wrote to the IYSSE expressing support for the campaign.

Supporters of the IYSSE are distributing copies of an open letter to the SAB. They have received more than 100 signatures to a petition insisting that “the club approval process must protect the democratic rights of all students, not be subject to the political biases of the administration or SAB.” It calls for the decision against the IYSSE to be reversed and for “a public forum of students, faculty and staff to reform the club approval

process.”

Daniel, an NYU student majoring in economics, said about the IYSSE being blocked, “Censorship happens at every level. We see it through the media, and government, and even our day-to-day actions.

“Based on what you are telling me, it sounds like they [the administration] are censoring you as a way to stop a movement that would go against the Democrats and Republicans.”

Asked what he thought about the Democrats and Republicans, he responded, “They are the establishment that is backed by the corporations. You can see laws written by corporations so that it benefits them. This includes issues like mass incarceration. People profit from those jails, and then they exploit the prisoners as free labor.”

The NYU administration has close ties to the political establishment and the financial and corporate elite in New York. The chairman of the Board of Trustees for NYU, William R. Berkley, is himself a billionaire. Laurence Fink, the vice chairperson, is the CEO of BlackRock Financial, a Wall Street firm that the Obama administration brought in to oversee the bank bailout in 2008-09. Fink had a net worth of \$340 million in 2012.

Zaikai, an undergraduate student who signed the petition Tuesday, said she was concerned with the attack on democratic rights in the US, especially with the election of Trump.

“I’m in agreement with you about the Democrats, but I wasn’t happy about the results of the election. To tell you the truth, I wasn’t happy with either of the candidates. I believe the real issue is the system, not just the Democrats and the Republicans. The Democrats are carrying out neoliberal policies or policies they benefit from, not the working people.”

Isnavys said she felt the election was about more than Democrats or Republicans, that it was about the impact on people. “The issue is the average person and the world you want to live in. I urge people to read Martin Luther King’s speech in the Birmingham jail,” stating that in her opinion King spoke out against oppression.

Olivia said she did not consider herself to be a socialist but agreed that the IYSSE should have the right to have a club on campus and felt that more views needed to be heard.

“I was a Bernie Sanders supporter. I thought the outcome of the election was worrisome. I wanted to see a change. A lot of people wanted that. I understand that a lot of people who voted for Sanders also voted for Trump.”

Zain, an NYU student, said about the election, “I didn’t like either candidate. I felt like I was pushed away from the Democrats, which is the party I grew up supporting. I didn’t realize all the concerns I have with the Democratic Party.

“Hillary Clinton raised a lot of concerns for me. She is not fighting for the interest of normal people, or what they should be fighting for. They [the Democrats] are just bourgeois. They felt they could shame people to not vote for Trump. They didn’t count on an opposition around Trump’s rhetoric helping him.

“Now I feel more supportive of socialism.”



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