

IYSSE holds meeting on political censorship at New York University

IYSSE reporting team
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As New York University's (NYU) fall semester wraps up, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) is continuing its campaign among students against political censorship on campus and attacks on the democratic rights of the working class and young people around the world.

Last Thursday, the IYSSE held a successful off-campus meeting to discuss the political issues raised by the anti-democratic policy of the NYU Student Activities Board (SAB), which works to reject roughly 90 percent of club applicants. The SAB denied the IYSSE's application for club status—along with those of 39 other groups—effectively blocking the IYSSE from booking rooms and holding events on campus. This was an act of political censorship by an NYU administration led by a cabal of Wall Street bankers and key figures from Democratic and Republican Party circles.

There has been an outpouring of support for the IYSSE's campaign, with nearly 200 students, faculty and administrators signing a petition demanding that the SAB reverse its decision and grant the IYSSE club status.

The Thursday event began with a brief report on the SAB's decision to reject the IYSSE's application, explaining that the SAB decision was based on the specious grounds that the IYSSE was too similar to existing groups on campus, including the International Socialist Organization (ISO). The SAB has since then come up with different excuses in every interaction with the IYSSE.

The IYSSE speaker pointed out that this act of censorship was taking place amid preparations for a broader attack on democratic rights by the incoming Trump administration. He noted that "Trump has already threatened to jail or revoke citizenship from individuals who burn the American flag. He is empowered by the precedent set by the Obama administration's extrajudicial killings and the police lockdowns of major American

cities."

The attack on democratic rights is directly related to the corporate and military establishment's hostility to socialism. Many of the individuals who serve on NYU's Board of Trustees, it was pointed out, belong to the wealthiest layers of American society and have every interest in preventing socialists from participating in the political and intellectual life of the university. "The SAB claims they don't have money for new clubs," the speaker explained, "but the school paid Hillary Clinton's aide, Cheryl Mills, hundreds of thousands of dollars for her work at NYU's campus in Abu Dhabi. The school has also relied on the Clinton Foundation for support in managing the bad publicity it has received as a result of the horrible conditions faced by workers who built the Abu Dhabi campus."

The report concluded with an appeal to students to familiarize themselves with the IYSSE's perspective and become engaged in the campaign for its right to club status as part of the defense of democratic rights at the university and more broadly.

Students who attended the meeting—and signed the IYSSE's petition—responded positively.

One meeting attendee asked about the possibility of the IYSSE organizing without club status. Another IYSSE member explained that part of the campaign is the fight for the rights of students to form clubs in order to engage in political and social activity on campus.

Other students, many of whom could not attend the meeting because of finals, have voiced support for the IYSSE's campaign.

Jaime Rivera, a business student, said, "I wouldn't say I know a lot about political rights, but this is a liberal institution. It seems like there is not a lot of tolerance for different views that differ from liberal politics. However, the university should allow different political opinions. I don't believe in censorship."

“Censorship is always done because someone benefits from it. It locks out someone. It tries to stop people from thinking for themselves. You can see it in the business school where money moves things. The politicians make decisions based on what caters to them.

“If they [the school] are saying there is no money for clubs it shows where their priorities are. It is a moral outlook.”

Nathaniel, who is getting his master’s in English and special education, said about the SAB only accepting 14 percent of club applicants, “I don’t think this is fair. New groups should have the space and opportunity to succeed. The university should be reevaluating its budget.

“NYU says it is inclusive, but it doesn’t show it. Something has to be done. They are saying they don’t have money, but what they mean is that there is not money for you.”

Asked about the presidential election, Nathaniel added, “It was like the peoples’ votes were counted, but not considered. They say we are a democracy, but we don’t operate like one.

“You can see that something like 50 percent of the population didn’t vote. Some people might even feel indifferent. As an educator, I need to know about how policies are going to affect my students. I think the whole population needs to know what is going on, and how to have politicians work for us.”

Angad, an international student from India, said about the IYSSE’s open letter, “I thought this was a good piece of writing, and makes a case for an increase in free speech on campus. The university wants to appear impartial. They don’t want to weigh in.”

When an IYSSE member pointed out that the university has ties to the Democratic Party and the Clinton Foundation, Angad added, “Democracy is never democracy. I come from India, the biggest democracy in the world, so I know. It is just a name to reassure everyone, but there is always a distribution of power that is never even.”



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