

“This situation is bad for democracy”

New York University students and workers support IYSSE campaign in defense of immigrants

Our reporters
1 February 2017

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality launched its campaign to win group status at New York University in recent days, receiving an enthusiastic response from students and workers alike.

In the wake of Trump’s executive orders barring travelers from seven-predominantly Muslim countries, the mood on campus was a tense mixture of nervousness and anger.

Campaigners distributed nearly two thousand leaflets announcing its public meeting, “The fight against the Trump administration: The way forward.” The meeting will take place on Thursday, February 2 at 7:00 pm at Judson Memorial Church Assembly Hall at 55 Washington Square Park South.

The IYSSE is also holding a sidewalk demonstration on Thursday at 2:00 pm to defend immigrants and mobilize the working class against Trump. The rally will be held on the corner of W. 4th St. and Washington Square East in front of the courtyard next to Bobst Library.

Many young people responded to the IYSSE meeting and rally leaflets with proclamations of “Yes!” When asked what they thought of the executive orders, several students angrily shouted their opposition. Most students with whom the IYSSE spoke expressed their hostility to the Democratic Party for laying the basis for Trump’s victory and for passing the anti-immigrant laws now used by Trump.

Last semester, the NYU administration and the Student Activities Board (SAB) barred the IYSSE from holding meetings on campus by rejecting its application for group status, despite the fact that the IYSSE met all

the requirements. The IYSSE wrote a letter to the SAB requesting further information about the reasons for the denial and asking a series of questions about the school’s connections to the military and real estate speculators. The SAB replied but neither responded to IYSSE questions nor gave any further information.

IYSSE campaign teams began this semester’s drive for club status by collecting dozens of signatures within several hours.

One passer-by said, “I’m interested in getting past the two-party system. If we had a viable socialist party, things would have been different. Right now, I feel very confused and emotional. It feels like the Democrats don’t do anything until they’re on the wire.”

The IYSSE met several regular readers of the *World Socialist Web Site*. Many students had already read the WSWS’s recent articles exposing the NYU administration’s ties to Manhattan real estate speculation and the military-intelligence apparatus.

Michael, a media, culture, and communications student at NYU, said, “I don’t know why NYU would be sponsored by the military. People pursuing education are not prone to joining the military, and I had no idea that this was going on.”

Speaking about the election, he added, “I didn’t think that he [Trump] would do what he said. I thought it was just for tactical reasons that he was saying these things. Now with the wall we have new tensions with Mexico. He kind of resembles a dictator. I don’t want a sleazy businessman as president. This situation is bad for democracy.”

An internal NYU source also gave the IYSSE previously unknown information that the NYU administration exerts influence on the decisions of the SAB and pressures them as to what groups should be accepted. Not only does this make a mockery of the supposed “independence” of this student group, it also confirms the IYSSE’s fears that the administration’s close ties to finance capital and the military-intelligence apparatus likely influenced the decision to deny the IYSSE club status.

The IYSSE learned that the SAB is under significant pressure from the university to cut down on the number of groups it accepts, and this has left some members of the SAB dissatisfied.

Margarett, an NYU student, said, “This university is the top in many fields, and I think every university should be turned into a center for debate. I even think that it is crucial to have conservative professors on campus, that way we don’t have a drastic shift like what happened this election. I was disappointed with the election. It is like we have regressed back into a kind of populism, and there is a disregard for the facts.”

Arthur, an NYU worker, said that NYU pays campus workers poorly and that many, including himself, must work second or third jobs to make ends meet. He was appalled to learn of NYU’s close ties to the military and intelligence agencies: “They’re digging into peoples’ private business, and students come to learn at this school—that doesn’t have anything to do with the FBI or the CIA.”

He said it was very difficult for workers at NYU to get by in New York City, one of the most expensive places on earth. He cannot afford to live in Manhattan and commutes an hour to and from work each day. “Transit fares keep rising, but wages don’t. For working class people, our checks are not going up, but food costs are rising, and so is the rent, the telephone bill and health care. Health care is one of the most basic benefits that we should all receive.”

When Arthur learned that NYU had barred the IYSSE from club status by claiming that there was not enough money to fund the club, he voiced his opposition: “They have more than enough money to help establish a club for students to fight for workers. I have a sharp feeling you all are going to be successful, you just have to keep pushing at it.”



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact