

Demands mount for racial quotas at elite US universities

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Calls have been made at several elite American universities to implement racial quotas in response to the mass, multi-racial protests over the police murder of George Floyd.

An open letter to Stanford University's president and provost, published June 19 in the *Stanford Daily*, demanded that by December 2021, 20 percent of all students, postdoctoral researchers, staff and faculty at the university be African American. The letter was signed by a group of professional and student organizations led by the Stanford Black Postdoc Association.

A similar open letter from current and former students at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs demanded that 25 percent of the school's professors be black by 2022. (The letter also called for the removal of Woodrow Wilson from the school's name, a demand to which Princeton has agreed and about which the *World Socialist Web Site* has previously written.)

Meanwhile, the University of California Regents, overseeing one of the top public university systems in the world, has voted to reinstate affirmative action. The decision, which will affect all public higher education in California, will ultimately be decided by a state referendum in November.

The open letter published in the *Stanford Daily* includes a series of action items in addition to the 20 percent campus-wide black racial quota.

One calls for a "100 percent job placement rate for Black postdocs." A postdoc is a paid year-long or multi-year position obtained by people who have received their PhD. It is designed to be a stepping stone toward a professorial faculty position.

The number of postdocs has increased sharply along with the difficulty of obtaining a full-time, secure academic position. Under conditions of the pandemic, it has become all but impossible for the vast majority of holders of PhDs to secure such a position in academia. In this context, the demand for positions for all black postdocs, based simply on their skin color, can only mean closing the door on others who would otherwise qualify.

Other demands include the creation of endowed professorships in each school (Stanford has seven schools, with multiple departments within them) reserved for faculty who identify as being the descendant of a slave, the collection of

more detailed racial and ethnic background information on the university population, an increase in black-owned businesses on campus, and a minimum of two black professors and two black trainees in each academic department. This would require that in a department like Slavic Literature, which has five professors, two of them be black.

To implement these demands, the signatories propose that a new center be created on campus of full-time, salaried "equity" professionals. The center would be responsible for ensuring the fulfillment of these demands as well as conducting reviews of racism within the campus population and mandatory campus-wide "anti-racism" training.

The letter states: "This training should be at least eight hours long and must go beyond traditional training (i.e., implicit bias and micro-aggression) already available and in use." It continues: "Any individual that is reported to have committed or have been involved with racial injustice must complete an additional unpaid 40 hours of anti-racist training as a first warning."

The last sentence deserves particular attention. The demand applies to anyone who is *alleged* ["reported to have"] "committed" or "been involved with" racial injustice. There will evidently be no due process for the accused, who will be punished on the basis of a mere allegation. Who, moreover, decides the definition of "racial injustice?"

The letter goes on to state that "Targeted training for those schools and departments that demonstrate inadequate racial inclusivity will be mandatory and include consequences as drastic as loss of space and/or funding support," and that "dismissal from their position should be a tangible and real consequence for faculty and staff that repeatedly engage in or demonstrate intractable discrimination."

This demand is sufficiently broad to establish a thought police operating with unchecked power to destroy the jobs and careers of those who oppose their brand of racial politics.

This has nothing to do with the interests and needs of the vast majority of people—working people as well as students, whether black or white. It articulates rather the selfish interests of aspiring upper-middle-class academics. As with all identity-based politics, the social interests expressed are those of layers seeking to obtain a greater share of the wealth of the top layers

of the population, not the radical redistribution of wealth for all.

The underlying premise of the letter is that white students, professors and staff bear the guilt for slavery, segregation and the ongoing discrimination of African Americans simply by virtue of their skin color. All white people must be reprimanded, "trained" and purged of their innate racism.

It is no accident that such demands are raised precisely when mass multi-racial and multi-ethnic demonstrations, not only in the US, but internationally, demonstrate opposition to racism and police repression among the broadest layers of the population, defying the idea that black, white, Hispanic and Asian workers are inherently separate and opposed to each other.

Nor is it an accident that the letter says nothing about the social issues that concern the working class of all races. There is no mention of the pandemic, the catastrophic toll in death and disease, the destruction of millions of jobs and looming tsunami of evictions and foreclosures, let alone the complicity of both parties in engineering a colossal bailout of Wall Street and the drive to compel millions to work in virus-infected factories, warehouses and schools. Of course, the word "capitalism" never appears, nor "class."

In fact, the program advanced is that of "black capitalism," pioneered by Nixon and the most right-wing elements in the civil rights movement in response to the urban rebellions that shook the United States in the late 1960s, including figures such as Roy Innis. This is underscored by the letter's demand for more black businesses on campus.

Racism is the product of capitalism and the attempt by the ruling class to divide workers and other oppressed masses from rising up together against their oppressors. Racial politics is promoted by the Democratic Party and allied media such as the *New York Times* for the same essential purpose. They seek to interpret every social issue—poverty, unemployment, the impact of the pandemic, health care, education—as a racial issue, thereby concealing the basic dividing line in society—class—and diverting attention from the capitalist system itself.

There is nothing democratic or progressive about the mandating of quotas of different races at schools or workplaces. Such policies advance an agenda of special privilege for one identity over others, rather than a fight for full equality and the right to free higher education for all.

For every black student who is admitted or professor who is hired on the basis of quotas, there is another student or professor who is deprived of the position, whether Latino, white, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American or multi-racial. This can only foment racial divisions, especially as the right to education is being shredded by the ruling elite.

Calls to stipulate the percentage of races at elite American universities come as most US colleges and universities brace for a historic round of budget cuts triggered by the pandemic, surpassing those imposed in the aftermath of 2008.

In California, the home of Stanford University, the hardest hit

will be the California Community College (CCC) system. The CCC has 2.1 million students across 115 colleges, making it the largest higher education system in the country. Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom's budget calls for a nearly \$1 billion cut in the CCC's funding next year alone.

The California State University system, the largest university system in the country, will lose \$400 million, and the University of California will be cut by \$363 million under Governor Newsom's plan.

A genuinely egalitarian and progressive demand for education is the call for *everyone* to receive job placement and free, high quality education through the diversion of the trillions of dollars that go for war and their redirection and redistribution to meet social needs. These benefits should not be distributed according to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, nationality or age, but be made available freely and equally *to all*. The wealth already amassed at the top of society makes this possible. Trillions of dollars should go to programs to expand scientific research, educate the broad mass of the population, not just the elite, and solve critical problems such as global warming, cancer and COVID.

Ending racism means ending the system of class oppression that spawns it, not promoting racial quotas within a staggeringly unequal society.

This basic social right will be won, and can only be won, through the unification of all workers and youth within the US and internationally in a revolutionary social and political struggle for workers' governments and socialism—the radical restructuring of the global economy to meet the social needs of all, as opposed to the parasitic, private interests of the ruling class.



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