

Fraudulent Associated Press “fact-check” targets WSWs article on student housing segregation project at NYU

The WSWs Editorial Board
26 August 2020

The Associated Press (AP) has posted a fraudulent “fact-check” of an article published Monday by the *World Socialist Web Site* on plans for implementing racially segregated student housing at New York University. Based solely on an unsubstantiated and evasive denial by a university spokesman, the AP states that the WSWs article is “false.”

The AP “fact-check,” written by journalist Ali Swenson, cynically claims that its response to the WSWs is part of its “ongoing effort to fact-check misinformation that is shared widely online, including work with Facebook to identify and reduce the circulation of false stories on the platform.”

The WSWs article in question, “New York University moves to implement racial segregation in student dorms,” went viral shortly after being posted, acquiring over 180,000 page views internationally and has been shared widely on social media. Students, youth and workers, of all races and backgrounds, responded to the article by expressing their strong opposition to all forms of racial segregation.

The AP condemned the WSWs article without conducting any independent investigation of the facts. It did not contact the WSWs to request clarification on the factual basis of the article. Notably, the AP never specifically identifies the WSWs in its specious “fact-check.” This is in keeping with the policy of the big business media to avoid acknowledging the existence of the WSWs, for fear of unintentionally contributing to the growth of its readership.

The attempt to discredit the WSWs report as “fake news” is groundless. We stand by the facts reported in our article.

The AP’s conclusion is based solely on an evasive “non-denial denial” posted on August 25 by New York University spokesperson John Beckman on the university’s website. It reads:

A story claiming that NYU is implementing “racial segregation in its dorms” is false and misleading.

Earlier in the summer, a group of Black students reached out to NYU’s Office of Housing and Residential Life and applied to establish an Exploration Floor around the themes of Black history and culture; NYU has about 30 themed Exploration Floors. During the course of the discussion about the application process—which is ongoing—the Housing Office staff made clear that all Exploration Floors must be open to applicants of all races and backgrounds. [Emphasis added]

The University strongly supports the goals of diversity, and of creating an environment that is welcoming, supportive, and inclusive for students of color and students from marginalized communities. However, NYU does not have and will not create student housing that excludes any student based on race.

This is what the university is saying now, following the publication of the WSWs article. But no such public declaration of NYU’s unequivocal opposition to segregated housing was issued when the Black Violets student group was circulating its petition for racially segregated housing for black students. In his response to the WSWs, the NYU spokesperson asserts that “the Housing Office staff made clear that all Exploration Floors must be open to applicants of all races and backgrounds.”

Beckman provides no contemporaneous documents to support this claim. Where are the minutes or notes of the meetings held between university staff and Black Violets laying out the discussions which were had on the proposal? Who were the officials involved in the meetings? How was it made clear to Black Violets that NYU found their proposal for racial segregation unacceptable? Where is the record of the decision made by the university to reject the proposal? Why is it only after the WSWs had raised this issue before

an international audience that NYU issued its clarification?

There is no evidence that the university ever informed Black Violets of its rejection of their demand. The written record indicates that the student group believed that its demands enjoyed the support of NYU.

As Beckman's statement makes clear, discussion with administrators was and is still ongoing with the Black Violets. And the students themselves declared in a public social media post that they had "received NYU Residential Life's approval to start planning the Black Violets floor at NYU," which they said was the outcome of their petition. That petition called for "floors completely comprised of Black-identifying students."

While the AP rushed to publish its "fact-check" within less than two days of the WSWS's reporting, none of what NYU now claims has been substantiated by what the Black Violets or the university claimed in statements prior to the publication of our article.

The Black Violets did not, as Beckman claims, merely approach NYU to set up an "Exploration Floor around the themes of Black history and culture." Instead, its official petition demanded "Floors completely comprised of Black-identifying students with Black Resident Assistants."

In response to questioning by the *Washington Square News* about the Black Violets' demands, Beckman replied in an email published on July 20:

We appreciate the petition authors' position. Res Life staff have reached out to the authors of the petition to discuss how we might move forward with their goals. Given the COVID-related challenges to the student housing system for 2020–2021, these conversations would be aiming towards 2021–2022.

This is not a rejection of the demand for racial segregation in student housing. There is nothing in this statement that indicates NYU opposition to the demand for segregated housing. There is no reference at all to the issue. The only obstacle to the implementation of the student group's demand referenced by Beckman was the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, Beckman noted that the university staff had "reached out to the authors of the petition to discuss how we might move forward with their goals."

Nor did the university make a statement when the Black Violets group posted on Instagram that plans were moving forward for implementing their demands in the next school year, writing:

Earlier this summer, we presented a petition to get Black student housing at NYU. Since then, our petition has garnered the support of over 1,000 signatures and we have received NYU Residential Life's approval to start planning the Black Violets Floor at NYU. While we do not yet have the complete details of the floor's logistics, we are aiming to have it as an option on the housing form for the 2021–2022 school year, which will be made available in Spring 2021. We are currently seeking a Faculty Affiliate to help run the floor.

If NYU had "made clear" to Black Violets that the university would not tolerate housing based on racial identity, it would have been obligated to issue its own statement disassociating itself from the student group's claim to "have received NYU Residential Life's approval to start the Black Violets Floor at NYU."

The WSWS has reached out to the Black Violets for clarification after NYU posted its denial on August 25, but we have received no reply. We must presume, given their close coordination with the university in discussing their demands, that the students involved have been counseled not to speak to us. NYU responded to our questions for clarification by sending us Beckman's statement previously published on its website.

The AP's "fact-check" of the WSWS is a shoddy and dishonest piece of hack journalism. Its lazy author, Ali Swenson, made absolutely no effort to "fact-check" her own story.



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