

New York University moves forward with plans to establish segregated residential communities

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New York University (NYU) is moving forward with the establishment of race-based residential communities in undergraduate student dorms, aiming to have two “Themed Engagement Communities” that are “primarily intended for Black Students” ready for the 2021-2022 academic year. This was announced over social media by the student group Black Violets at NYU, which has spearheaded the drive for segregated housing at NYU since the beginning of June.

About five months ago, Black Violets created an online petition demanding the establishment of residential communities “completely comprised of Black-identifying students with Black Resident Assistants.” The petition states, “Too often in the classroom and in residential life, black students bear the brunt of educating their uninformed peers about racism.” It continues: “Black-identifying students” at NYU require “safe spaces” apart from other students, faculty and staff.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) reported in late August, this wholly reactionary petition, lacking any substantial support from NYU’s undergraduate community, was quickly backed by the university administration. In mid-July, NYU spokesperson John Beckman emphasized the university’s appreciation for “the petition authors’ position.” He wrote that NYU’s Office of Residential Life and Housing Services had “reached out to the authors of the petition to discuss how we might move forward with their goals.”

By late July, Black Violets was announcing over social media that they were making “Black residential floor(s) in NYU residence halls ... a reality for Fall 2021-2022.” On August 10, the group announced via Instagram that it 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.

About two weeks ago, the group announced via Instagram, “Residential Life has notified us that they will be moving forward with establishing the Black Violets Themed Engagement Communities for the 2021-22 Academic Year.”

There will be two “Black Violets Themed Engagement Communities,” one in the Brittany Residence Hall for freshmen and the other in the Carlyle Court Residence Hall for upperclassmen.

At NYU, Themed Engagement Communities allow students living on a specific floor in a residence hall to participate in various programs that explore a specific theme. There are about 30 such themed floors spread across NYU’s 23 residence halls, focusing on subjects ranging from social justice to stand-up comedy to science and technology. All floors are open to all students, who must fill out a simple residency application prior to the start of the academic year.

In their announcement, Black Violets writes that both floors will be, as is legally required, open “for all to apply.” However, they stress that both communities are “primarily intended for Black Students.” A system of de facto racial segregation will be directly enforced by Black Violets, which will be an “active participant in the selection process for the floor.” Applicants will be required to answer an essay question asking “what they wish to contribute to the floor.” There can be little doubt that, ultimately, a student’s race will play a leading role in determining their residency.

The fact that racially segregated housing will be voluntary and not legally enforced does not detract

from the reactionary nature of this initiative. Racial segregation, in all of its forms, is an obstacle to the progressive development of human society, which depends on unity not division.

These developments verify the WSWS's reporting at the end of the summer and further expose the fraudulent "fact checking" carried out by the Associated Press and the "non denial-denial" issued by the university in response to our coverage of this retrograde initiative.

The floors' programming, which one must presume will be largely directed by Black Violets in coordination with a sympathetic faculty affiliate, will "provide educational opportunities to learn about the Black Diaspora and NYU's Black History" and be "geared towards embracing the diversity of Blackness and Global Black Identities." In other words, the floor will teach students to place "race" and racial conflict at the center of all past and present social, political and economic developments in the United States and internationally.

Similar proposals have been made at academic institutions across the US over the last several years, including Syracuse University's moves towards establishing racially segregated housing and calls for the implementation of racial quotas at several elite universities, including Stanford and Princeton.

These demands are completely divorced from the issues that confront the vast majority of students and youth of all races, namely crushing debt, poverty, homelessness, unemployment, hunger and the threat of infection with the deadly coronavirus. Instead, the politics of racial division advances the interests of a small, privileged section of the population.

Facing growing anger in the working class, the ruling class is intensifying its promotion of racial divisions. While the Trump administration has sought to incite fascistic violence, the Democrats and their cronies in the media and academia, representing the interests of Wall Street and the military, have escalated their racist campaign, including through the discredited *Times* 1619 Project.

NYU, the embodiment of higher education's subordination to profit interests and domination by the upper middle class, has been a leading proponent of anti-Marxism for many decades. Decisions at the university are driven by its subservience to the interests

of the ruling class. This is most blatantly exposed by the university's compliance with the ruling class's homicidal policy of "herd immunity." NYU's decision, against the advice of medical experts internationally, to hold in-person instruction and work as the coronavirus pandemic spreads risks the lives of thousands of students, faculty and staff.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality at NYU opposes the implementation of racially segregated housing. It fights for the development of a movement of students and youth to turn to the working class on the basis of a political program to secure the right to high-quality education for all and the abolition of student debt as part of the socialist transformation of society.



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