

Expand and unite the university strikes in New Jersey, Michigan and Illinois!

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (US)
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Powerful strikes were initiated this week by 9,000 faculty and graduate students at Rutgers University in New Jersey and 260 faculty and staff at Governor's State University in Illinois. They join ongoing strikes by 1,300 grad students at the University of Michigan, 450 faculty and staff at Eastern Illinois University and 100 faculty and staff at Chicago State University. In total, over 11,000 academic workers are engaged in five strikes spanning three states. In each struggle, workers are fighting for wage increases, job security, better working conditions, and more.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) fully supports this growing strike wave of academic workers across the United States. We call for the broadening of each of these struggles to encompass the entire student body and staff, and for a turnout to workers in every industry, to fight for fully funded public education and all the social needs of the international working class.

The strike wave in academia is part of an international upsurge of working-class struggles. The US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic have triggered an inflationary spiral, drastically undermining real wages and propelling workers everywhere into struggle.

The current epicenter of this global class struggle is in France, where millions of workers have mounted strikes to block the "president of the rich" Emmanuel Macron's pension cuts. Macron's dictatorial attempts to raise the retirement age by fiat are meant to fund massive increases in France's military budget.

Recent weeks have also seen mass strikes and demonstrations in Germany, Greece, Israel, India, South Africa and numerous other countries. Education workers have taken center stage in many of these international struggles, including in Portugal, Bolivia,

New Zealand, Britain, and most recently Sudan, where a country-wide strike of all schoolteachers began Monday, shutting down the country's 16,000 schools.

The five strikes on US campuses follow last fall's strike by 48,000 University of California graduate students, the six-week strike by 750 Temple University graduate students which ended on March 13, and last month's strike by 65,000 Los Angeles Unified School District public school workers and teachers.

Striking academic workers in the US must view their struggles as part of this expanding global movement. Everywhere, capitalism offers workers and youth nothing but war, poverty, disease, climate change and the threat of fascism. In the US, both the Democrats and Republicans demand that all funding be diverted away from education and towards the military, in preparations for direct conflict with Russia and China. In Ukraine, the US and NATO powers are *de facto* engaged in an undeclared war against Russia that threatens to escalate to a nuclear conflagration which would bring an end to human civilization.

In this context, it is critical for striking academic workers in the US to break decisively with the Democratic Party, which no less than the Republicans represents Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus. The Biden administration sits in the cockpit of world imperialism, now demanding an unprecedented \$1 trillion military budget.

Significantly, the five ongoing strikes are taking place across three states whose legislative and executive branches are controlled by the Democrats. All five campuses are dominated by regents or other officials associated with the Democratic Party.

Intimately connected to the fight against the Democrats and war is the need to build rank-and-file committees to initiate a rebellion against the trade

union bureaucracies, which fully support the Democratic Party and American imperialism. Six of the seven unions presently on strike are affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), whose multimillionaire President Randi Weingarten sits on the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and is a leading spokeswoman for the Democrats.

On behalf of the American corporate and financial oligarchy, the AFT, and Weingarten in particular, played the central role in prematurely reopening K-12 schools and universities at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to the deaths of thousands of educators and students and the debilitation of tens of thousands more with Long COVID. Weingarten is a rabid war hawk, embarking on a US-NATO propaganda tour of Ukraine last fall in which she covered up the role of Ukrainian fascism during the Holocaust.

What is involved in each academic workers' strike is a political struggle against the Democratic Party, which controls both official parties sitting at each campus' bargaining table. Rank-and-file academic workers must assert their own, independent interests, connecting their struggles to a broader movement against imperialist war and the capitalist system as a whole.

Bound up with the fight against the Democrats is a fight against all organizations which posture as left-wing and even "socialist," but in fact function to channel the class struggle back into the Democratic Party. The most prevalent and pernicious of such groups is the Democratic Socialist of America (DSA), which is an adjunct of the Democratic Party and is active on many campuses. At the University of Michigan, the leadership of the Graduate Employees' Organization (GEO) is largely affiliated with the DSA and is preparing to sell out the strike in the coming days.

To understand the historical roots of the present struggles and chart a revolutionary strategy, academic workers and students must undertake a serious study of the history of the class struggle, the Democratic Party, the development of globalization, and the past four decades of continuous betrayals by the union bureaucracies.

Above all, it is necessary to assimilate the historical materialist method of political analysis established by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, and its development in

the 20th century by Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, the great leaders of the Russian Revolution.

For decades, the universities have been built up by the capitalist state as centers of anti-Marxist ideology. Various strains of postmodernism have developed to undermine historical consciousness and deny the centrality of the class struggle in history and the revolutionary role of the working class. Instead, identity politics have been promoted to divide the working class and provide a lever for the upward social movement of privileged layers of the middle class. But now, the resurgence of the international class struggle is exploding these reactionary ideologies.

The IYSSE, the Trotskyist youth and student movement, is fighting to develop Marxist consciousness among students and young workers and orient them toward the international working class. This spring, we are hosting an ongoing international series of anti-war meetings, to explain the historical origins of the war in Ukraine and what must be done to bring it to an end and prevent World War III. Striking academic workers and students at Rutgers should attend Thursday's meeting at New York University (NYU), which starts at 7pm.

On April 30, the IYSSE is co-sponsoring the 2023 International May Day Online Rally, alongside the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) and the *World Socialist Web Site*. We urge striking academic workers, students and youth to make plans today to attend this rally and build for it as widely as possible.

Build the IWA-RFC to carry forward your struggles! Join the IYSSE and take up the fight for socialism!



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