

For rank-and-file action by the working class to demand the reinstatement of Columbia grad students!

International Youth and Students for Social Equality in New York and New Jersey
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Last month, Columbia began targeting dozens of students for expulsion, suspension and degree revocation for participating in the campus occupations last year. Students opposed to the genocide in Gaza occupied Hamilton Hall, which they renamed Hind's Hall.

The total brazenness of this move was such that the university even expelled the president of the graduate student union, Grant Miner of the Student Workers of Columbia-United Auto Workers (SWC-UAW). Miner was expelled the day before the union, whose contract expires June 30, was set to begin bargaining with the university. It demonstrates the close connection between the attack on antiwar students and plans for massive attacks against poverty-stricken graduate students, and the working class as a whole.

The fact that Miner is one of many Jewish students targeted by government and university administration officials around the country totally exposes the attempt to smear opposition to the genocide as motivated by antisemitism.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality in New York and New Jersey demands the immediate reinstatement of Miner and the dropping of all procedures against students for exercising their free speech rights to oppose war, including Mahmoud Khalil, who was abducted and disappeared by ICE agents on March 8 in front of his pregnant wife at their home.

Everyone's democratic rights are at stake. We urge mass action by the working class, including protests and strike action, across the country to force an end to Trump's plan for dictatorship. In particular, we urge autoworkers across the country to take up the defense of their brothers and sisters on the campuses.

Columbia University is acting in concert with the fascistic Trump administration. The moves came less than a week

after the arrest of Khalil, a former SWC-UAW member.

Trump is unleashing a reign of terror on college campuses, with the complete compliance of university administrators at Columbia and other universities. Last week, the WSWS explained that "Trump is implementing an American version of *Gleichschaltung*—the Nazis' 'synchronization' of all elements of intellectual and cultural life, including the revision of university programs and the purging of scholars, to correspond with state ideology. Without even the threat of SS troops, university administrations are facilitating Trump's demands and functioning as junior partners."

The mass opposition to Trump, expressed in the hundreds of thousands who took to the streets nationwide last Saturday, must be developed as a class movement of the working class against oligarchy and dictatorship. Already, there is growing realization that opposing Trump cannot take place through toothless appeals to the Democrats or courts which the White House ignores at will, but only through class struggle methods. Columbia students have issued a call and petition for all university employees to go on strike.

Such a movement can only be built, however, through a rebellion against the corrupt trade union bureaucracy. Having spent decades working with management to impose sellouts and mass layoffs, their response to Trump varies from surrender to outright collaboration. Workers must organize themselves through rank-and-file committees and not wait for official approval from above that will never come.

Outside of a handful of campus protests and a statement posted to Twitter/X, the UAW has done nothing to mobilize its more than 300,000 members to defend its own members, and even officials, being targeted on Columbia and other campuses. Meanwhile, the UAW administration of President Shawn Fain loudly and openly embraces Trump's right-wing "America First" nationalism.

Fain claims that trade war, which will lead to economic collapse whose costs will be borne by workers, as "a major

step in the right direction for autoworkers and blue-collar communities across the country.” Instead of the international unity of the working class, expressed in the age-old slogan, “Workers of the World, Unite!” the bureaucracy embraces Trump’s “America First” policies and pits workers of different countries against each other.

These measures, if not stopped by the working class, will lead not only to trade war, but a Third World War. But Fain would have workers believe that this would be good for jobs! In a recent interview with CBS, he said, “People forgot this lesson in World War II … they took the excess capacity of all the automotive manufacturing plants in the country, and produced tanks and planes and bombs and engines and all those things. And it’s no different right now. We have excess capacity. They could bring work back in very short order.”

Fain claims that it is possible to combine support for Trump’s fascist economic policies and for war with opposition to fascist attacks on students and immigrants as a whole. This is nonsense. In reality, Fain’s support for tariffs expresses in the most concentrated form the hostility of the bureaucracy to the workers they claim to represent.

Fain and the UAW are helping to impose thousands of layoffs in the auto industry after passing a contract in 2023 under false pretenses. At Columbia, the bargaining committee defied rank-and-file opposition to push a contract with cuts in real wages and a no-strike clause following two historic strikes by student workers.

When the UAW was compelled last year by rank-and-file anger to call a strike of University of California graduate students against the attacks on student protesters, the bureaucracy did everything to limit and undermine the strike by subordinating it to the Democratic Party, which was jointly carrying out these attacks with the Republicans.

Today, the UAW is opposed to mass action even in defense of its own members, and is promoting fatal illusions in appealing to the coterie of Wall Street figures who run Columbia. In late March, the UAW sent a letter to university president Katrina Armstrong—who has since stepped down—and Board of Trustee co-chairs Claire Shipman, who took over for Armstrong as Interim President, and David Greenwald, urging “the University to stand with us against the Trump administration.” As though the university, a multi-billion-dollar business in its own right, has not already made clear where its loyalties lie!

A real fight against fascism requires above all that the working class assert its independence from the entire corporate political establishment and their enablers in the union bureaucracy. The bureaucracy cannot be “reformed” from within or pressured to fight. It must be overthrown and replaced with new organs of workers’ power, rank-and-file

committees, which are composed of workers themselves and are based on a strategy of an international fight against the profit system which is producing dictatorship.

This essential struggle will remove the straitjacket being imposed on workers and enable them to forge a powerful international movement, uniting with workers across the world facing similar attacks.

Two years ago, Fain was brought in as a “reform” president, in an operation to restore the credibility of the bureaucracy after a massive corruption scandal. But yesterday’s “reformer” has turned out to be today’s fascist collaborator. This proves the bureaucracy’s policies are determined by its well-heeled social interests and six-figure salaries which depend on their ties to management and the state.

These attacks cannot be fought on isolated campuses alone. Academic workers and students must establish links with workers throughout New York City and across the country, including factory workers in Detroit.

In 2022, socialist autoworker Will Lehman ran against Fain on a platform of building rank-and-file committees and abolishing the UAW bureaucracy. In response to the attacks on Columbia students, he declared: “The attacks the Trump administration are carrying out against immigrants, students and workers are unbound from legality and constitutionally protected democratic rights. The trade union bureaucracies, including that of the UAW, are not simply failing to recognize the threat of these attacks, they have different class interests from our own and their political perspective corresponds with those separate class interests.

“That is why Shawn Fain is aligned with Trump’s nationalist policies against the international working class. That is why if there will be any fight back it needs to be led by those who are oriented to the international working class, against nationalist, capitalist forces. We are stronger as an international class, but we must recognize that strength and to act on it. That is how we can fight back and win.”



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