

# Fight for a socialist movement of the working class to defend students, academic freedom and democratic rights!

**International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) at Wayne State University**  
**24 April 2025**

The Trump administration is pressing forward with the illegal and unconstitutional apprehension, detention and deportation of foreign students, as well as the detention and arrests of students and workers opposing the ongoing US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza. More than 1,500 student visas have been summarily revoked, including at least four at Wayne State University, and campus workers who have spoken out against genocide are having their jobs terminated at the University of Michigan.

On Wednesday, April 23, the FBI, under the direction of Democratic Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel, carried out coordinated raids with Michigan State Police and local police on the homes of pro-Palestinian activists across Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and Canton. At least six activists were questioned and electronic devices were seized. In Ypsilanti, three people were detained and brought out of their home in handcuffs before finally being released. The IYSSE at WSU unequivocally condemns this major escalation of state repression.

A reign of terror at US universities is being unleashed. The ruling class's drive for censorship goes way beyond that of the dark period of McCarthyism in the 1950s.

On April 17, the Wayne Academic Union (WAU), affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), participated in a National Day of Action to oppose Trump's unprecedented assault on higher education and freedom of speech, circulating a petition entitled "Federal Attack Response."

The petition alerts students and academics to the multi-pronged attacks by the Trump administration, including the "drastic reduction" by the National Institutes of Health to research grants and threats by the federal government to remove grant funding as a means to coerce the suppression of freedom of speech. The document points out, "Trump himself has promised to cut funding for any college that 'allows illegal protests,' and to punish students with expulsion and deportation."

The WAU calls for the university to take a clear, unequivocal stand in defense of the constitutional right of students and staff to assemble and participate in public protests on campus, as they should.

But is the WAU's parent union, the AFT, mobilizing its 1.7 million members to fight—organizing mass action up to and including strikes? Certainly not.

The AFT is led by bureaucrats like President Randi Weingarten, who earns nearly \$500,000 annually and is a fervent supporter of imperialist wars. Aligned with the Democratic Party, these union leaders wring their hands and claim nothing can be done. The truth is that they do not want to defeat Trump. They are primarily frightened by the prospect of a mass movement against Trump from below, in which millions of working people become politically mobilized and take action to defend their jobs, living standards and democratic rights.

Trump is not invincible, as demonstrated by the mass turnout of over 1 million people on April 5 and April 19 and record attendance at the rallies called by Senator Bernie Sanders under the banner of "Fighting Oligarchy." Workers and young people are seething at the destruction of jobs, education, environmental protections, and ever-growing and unspeakably brutal imperialist wars.

In the political vein of the AFT, the WAU petition does not call for mass actions, strikes, or protests but for "working together with President Espy." In other words, they just want to be included in discussions. Meanwhile, Espy has a very long record of collusion in the ongoing assault on the democratic rights of student protesters since the genocide began.

Campus police have arrested and harassed students to shut down a pro-Palestinian encampment and to prevent peaceful protests, most recently on April 2 at the Student Center. The instances of police harassment have steadily mounted to the point that the Michigan Department of Civil Rights has launched a formal investigation into WSU Police. They cite

numerous reports of students being subjected to arbitrary ID checks, invasive questioning and confrontational interactions during protests. Last week, ICE was reported to be active on campus.

The WSU Board of Governors (BOG), with Espy's support, has refused to divest from its corporate investments in the military contractors directly contributing to and profiting from the Gaza genocide. Indeed, the BOG is comprised of individuals known for ensuring the interests of the corporate elite, with résumés including Chase Bank, Fifth Third Bank, Legacy Trust Bank, and Ford Motor Co. It includes the politicians of both big business parties responsible for the ongoing genocide and the assault on fundamental freedoms.

### **A dangerous underestimation of the Trump administration's drive to dictatorship**

We must state what is. Trump is a fascist who speaks for a financial oligarchy and seeking to use the full power of the state to destroy the democratic rights of the population. Trump's "pausing" or terminating of billions in grants and contracts to WSU and universities across the US is an attempt to eradicate freedom of speech and place universities under the iron heel of the government. The Trump administration is aiming a wrecking ball at education at every level. This is an attack on culture, science and the future of the working class.

Trump is seeking to establish a precedent at Harvard, where the Treasury Department has now asked the IRS to rescind its tax-exempt status. Trump is leveraging federal funding and his control of the federal bureaucracy to demand an audit of "viewpoint diversity," insisting that Nazi-style Gauleiters impose right-wing and crackpot viewpoints. The aim is to transform institutions of higher learning into propaganda centers—where the biology or astronomy departments would be compelled to teach "intelligent design" and creationism, and the development and use of vaccines would be questioned at the institutional level and more.

Further, on April 2, Trump demanded Harvard "prevent admitting students hostile to the American values ... including students supportive of terrorism or anti-Semitism." He has demanded that various departments at Harvard spy on staff and students to ensure that opposition to Zionism and US imperialism is eliminated.

The nationally coordinated campaign against academic freedom is part of the broader authoritarian drive to subordinate society to a financial oligarchy and expanding predatory wars for US hegemony.

### **What must be done? The fight for socialism. Build the IYSSE and the IWA-RFC**

A new perspective is required. There can be no defense of

democratic rights under the oligarchic rule of capitalism.

The IYSSE calls for students and academics to join us in fighting throughout the working class for the broadest popular mobilization against these attacks. The working class has a vital interest in defending universities as sites of critical inquiry and knowledge production. Workers cannot permit "cultural vandals" to destroy educational institutions or the knowledge they contain, which rightfully belong to the entire population.

The attacks on students and faculty coincide with the fight of the working class against inflation, the destruction of hundreds of thousands of federal workers' jobs, and the assault on Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare. The fight against poverty, social inequality, fascism, and war requires a conscious fight for socialism.

The emergence of mass resistance demands political clarification. The working class must be equipped with an understanding of the true nature of fascism—not as an individual aberration but as the product of the historic breakdown of the capitalist system. The enemy is not only Trump and the Republicans but all those who defend the capitalist set-up, including the Democratic Party, the union bureaucracy and the financial oligarchy that rules America.

We urge all young people and academics to attend the International May Day 2025 online rally on Saturday, May 3. This event will unite workers and young people from across the globe in the fight against fascism and war.

We call on youth to join us in building the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), a revolutionary movement among young people based on a socialist program. We urge academics and workers to reject the policy of the AFT, which betrays every struggle and subordinates educators to the Democrats to maintain their lucrative "seat at the table." We urge you to join the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees and build a new, internationalist and socialist leadership among workers everywhere.



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