

May Day Student Organization
Program for Revolution in the Sphere of Education
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We are current university students, graduates of the student movement, and political activists who want a university that serves the people. The **May Day Student Organization (MDSO)** will be forged as a weapon of the people, a leading force on the student front and an integral part of the larger struggle against the bourgeoisie. Through practice informed by revolutionary theory, we will build the MDSO for advancing the socialist revolution and organizing the people.

OUR DEMANDS

1. For the right of the people to access free and public higher education, including:

- A. Guaranteed admission for all people regardless of educational background and national origin.
- B. Abolition of the inequalities between institutions and degree programs which perpetuate the division between mental and manual labor and limit access to the full academic, cultural, and political life of the university.
- C. Real remedial education and other measures to remove any cultural and social barriers to the education of the people.
- D. Complete removal of economic barriers by providing access to services such as childcare, transportation, housing, healthcare, food, school supplies, etc.
- E. Necessary accommodations and upgrades to facilities and teaching practices to ensure access to education for all students regardless of disability.

2. For a university that is democratically controlled by the people and that serves the interests of the people, through:

- A. Curricula which (1) deliver a general and polytechnical education, combining education with productive labor, and (2) impart a progressive and scientific worldview while raising the educational level of the working people and the ideological level of intellectuals.
- B. Complete removal of the repressive state apparatus (e.g. military and police) from participation in the university including the presence of agents on campus, in faculty positions, inclusion in curriculum, grants and funding, partnerships, and recruitment.

3. For the cancellation of student debt.

4. For the realization of full democratic rights for students, including:

- A. Freedom to organize.
- B. Freedom of speech.
- C. Resources for student organizations, including funding and complete access to school facilities.
- D. An end to all forms of inequality including inequalities based on race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and immigration status.

5. For bringing the politics of the socialist revolution to the student body, in solidarity with people everywhere fighting for democracy and progress, via the following:

- A. Coordinated political action with popular struggles of the domestic working class and oppressed peoples.

B. International support for all peoples, not states. Support for all peoples fighting against imperialisms (US, EU, Russian, Chinese, etc.), national oppression, and reaction.

We unite around the need to fight for these demands through militant mass action. The May Day Student Organization invites all who agree with our program to join us.

The Task of Students

In the United States today, education is unequal, employment is insecure, and democracy is restricted. These are inevitable consequences of capitalism. Our basic thesis on education is simple: where the capitalist mode of production prevails, the university is a tool of domination by the capitalist class. Students must fight for the rights of working people to education and link themselves to all other struggles of working people, with the ultimate goal of socialist revolution. After seizing political power, the working class must turn education into a tool for demolishing capitalist domination and for completely eliminating exploitation and oppression.

The university plays an important role in the bourgeoisie's mastery and application of science, and only distributes knowledge according to what is needed for the reproduction of the bourgeois social order. Under capitalism, science is used as a weapon against the working class, to rationalize production and intensify exploitation, rather than as a tool to meet the needs of the whole of society. Therefore, the bourgeoisie does not educate all people equally, but restricts the distribution of knowledge to a relatively small number of trained scientists and intellectual spokesmen. Meanwhile, the vast masses of working people are educated only up to the minimum level required for unskilled or semi-skilled labor. This unequal education begins in the K-12 school system, which fails to universally impart even the basic instruments of reading, writing, math, etc. This tradition of different education for different classes is continued in the division between various forms and levels of higher education, e.g., the trade school versus the big research university.

The university also performs an *ideological* function, transmitting an idealist and metaphysical worldview that reflects the interests of the bourgeoisie. This process also starts in the K-12 school system, where children of all classes are drilled in a nationalist history and 'civics' curriculum which aims to convince the masses that bourgeois rule and class divisions are inevitable and natural.

The university has a role in the *division of labor*: the arrangement of the members of society among different activities in the production process. The division between manual labor and intellectual labor gives rise to relations of domination and subordination, which are necessary for capitalism to function. The manual/intellectual labor divide forms the basis for continuous reproduction of capitalism's **fundamental production relation: the separation of workers from the means of production.** To turn education into a tool for completely eliminating exploitation and oppression must therefore mean eliminating the university's role in reproducing the division between manual and intellectual labor. Abolition of the mental/manual division of labor will never happen under capitalism. It is only after the social revolution, when working people become masters of society, that the mental/manual division of labor will be definitively suppressed.

Class struggle is the key link. The transformation of our education system is one aspect of the social and political revolution that will put an end to class society. Students must integrate their demands with existing working-class struggles. By organizing to advance the socialist revolution, the progressive student demand for a university that serves the people becomes part of the larger struggle to put political power in the hands of the working class.

Our enemies want to preserve the university as a tool of domination by the bourgeoisie. This includes those education reformers who seek to compromise with the capitalist class. By fighting within bourgeois institutions,

without striving to seize power, these activists and NGOs accept the class rule of the bourgeoisie. This strategy has long proven to be futile.

Our friends are all who truly want to fight against the bourgeois university, for a university that serves the people. This fight can only be carried out to completion by relying on the combativeness of the people.

To fight means to struggle through mass action for the right of the people to *knowledge*, to *instruction* at all levels, and to a *free and universal* higher education. The wealth of knowledge amassed by humanity belongs to the proletariat and the people, not to the bourgeoisie. The historical tendency of the capitalist class is to retard scientific progress and destroy the world and its peoples in its relentless search of profit. Only when their rule has ended, and class society has been abolished, can education truly serve the needs of humanity.

To fight means to combat the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois *falsifications* circulated in the university, which propagate the inevitability of class divisions and prevent the formation of a unified and revolutionary camp of the people. To combat these effectively, we have to study and arm ourselves with a scientific understanding of society that comes from the revolutionary practice of the proletariat and the people.

To fight means to integrate with the class struggle in workplaces and neighborhoods: on picket lines, in demonstrations, and everywhere working people are fighting unemployment, police terror, and deprivation. Students must promote and teach other students about these struggles, organize solidarity with deeds, and learn from working people in the class struggle.

On the University in Imperialist Society Today

The history of the university in US society **during the imperialist stage of capitalism** can be divided into three periods: from 1890 through the Second World War, from the end of the Second World War until 1980, and from 1980 until the present.

1. The first period from 1890 through the Second World War: The development of US imperialism in this period determined the rise of the big research university and the tremendous growth of public sector higher education supported by state governments. The development of productive forces, as well as the political necessities of global hegemony, required a new class of intellectuals, bureaucrats, and skilled workers. The modern student movement was also born at this time with groups like the National Student League, which initially formed around demands for freedom of speech and eventually joined in solidarity with labor struggles.

2. The second period from the end of the Second World War until 1980: This so-called ‘golden age’ of higher education saw the rise of the university as an integral component of the post-WWII welfare state in the service of US imperialism. For the bourgeoisie, the model student of this period was the patriotic (i.e. anti-communist) American citizen, who served to concretize the bonds between the bourgeois state, specifically the military, and the university. However, this period had a progressive aspect as well. Access to higher education expanded on an unprecedented scale to the children of the petty bourgeoisie and the working class, with university enrollment increasing by more than 400% nationwide. This period also saw concrete gains on the basis of militant student struggle. For example, in New York, mass struggles led by Black and Puerto Rican students for the integration of the tuition-free city university system won the implementation of open admissions at CUNY.

3. The third period from 1980 until the present: This period has seen a four-decade long process of privatization of public universities, corresponding to a prolonged crisis of profitability for the ruling class. Privatization has decimated the country’s system of public education, and restricted college degrees to those who can afford them. State funding for public higher education began to decline around 1980. Student debt exploded as tuition became the main source of revenue for most universities by 2017. The process of

privatization was accelerated and intensified by the economic crisis of 2007-09. At CUNY, the victories won by students in the areas of open admission and remedial education have been systematically wiped out. Higher education has increasingly become a commodity, and the bourgeoisie's ideal student is the individualist consumer, driven exclusively by careerism and self-interest.

We construct our student program on the basis of this history. Through organization and mass work, we aim to rebuild and give direction to the collectivist aspirations of youth. The main tasks facing students today are the defense of the public university against privatization and the continuation of the fight for free and public higher education for the whole people.

The May Day Student Organization is a product of the occupation of The New School cafeteria on May 1st, 2018. We saw the need for a permanent, disciplined, and organized body of students with a fighting capacity to wage future struggles. The MDSO is a mass organization that aims to link the popular demands of students, city- and nation-wide, with working class struggles against capitalist exploitation and oppression. Our basis of unity is around the revolutionary politics contained in our program, not a particular ideology.