



GSOc-UAW LOCAL 2110

MAKING A BETTER NYU SINCE 1998

The Union for Graduate Employees at New York University

STATEMENT ON THE ABOLITION OF THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

As members of the Graduate Student Organizing Committee (GSOc-UAW Local 2110) at New York University (NYU), we take an unambiguous stance supporting the abolition of the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC). Following the lead of the Black, queer, and feminist abolitionist movement, our vision of liberation requires the abolition of all prisons, detention centers, policing, and surveillance and a reimagining of safety in our community. We are inspired by [transformative justice](#), [restorative justice](#), [community accountability](#), and other frameworks for building safety without police. We recognize that the PIC is a system deeply invested in anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity and that it is designed to violently oppress and exploit racialized populations for profit. Police and prisons enforce racial hierarchies of labor and extraction - as a labor organization we reject this and envision a world without prisons. The PIC restricts our sense of what is possible, what is safe, and what is just so that the carceral state and racial capitalism appear natural and inevitable.

With this statement, we join the [NYU Black Student Union](#) (BSU), the [NYU Incarceration to Education Coalition](#), and the [NYU Student Labor Action Movement](#) (SLAM) in identifying how NYU is enmeshed with policing and prisons, and laying out our commitments to dismantling those connections and abolishing them.

We are NYU workers committing to use our labor organizing to support abolition.

We believe that we must use our platform as a labor union to work towards dismantling these systems, starting from within NYU itself. As the union representing graduate workers on campus, it is our responsibility to organize our collective power against the carceral forces embedded within our workplace and community, the effects of which directly threaten Black members' and neighbors' lives and livelihoods. This abolitionist framework grounds our organizing against anti-Blackness and policing at NYU, including our [demand](#) for NYU to cut all ties with the New York Police Department (NYPD). The NYPD does not keep us safe, but rather carries out an extensive system of surveillance and violence targeted primarily at Black and Indigenous people, while also endangering the lives of immigrants through collaboration with ICE and CBP, as exemplified by their [surveillance](#) of Muslim students at NYU. We emphasize that NYU's connection with the NYPD is just one manifestation of NYU's complicity in this project, and we must work towards abolition of the PIC in all forms.

Beyond the university, organized labor unions have also been complicit in the PIC through their support and legitimization of police unions. Police cannot be and have never been our allies in the labor struggle; police labor is white supremacist, carceral labor. **We join the call for UAW and AFL-CIO to disaffiliate with all police unions and to stand for the abolition of the PIC.**

NYU plays a specific and major role in the anti-Blackness and carceralism that abolitionism works to end. NYU's entanglement with the PIC runs far deeper than its relationships with local police. The university holds many roles that demand abolitionist attention, including the following:

1. The university upholds & profits from systems of racist exclusion and carceral power.

Universities, especially large, for-profit private universities like NYU, play a crucial role in preserving racist, classist power structures. These structures keep people in crisis so that police, prisons, and state violence seem "necessary" to discipline them. The university confers prestige on a privileged set of "thinkers" and "experts" while marginalizing the ideas and voices of communities analyzing their own experiences of carceral violence. The power to grant this prestige, and the economic and political advantages included with it, are the expensive product that the university sells to students. The high costs of enrollment, entry requirements, inflexible degree programs, and a pervasive racist/sexist/ableist culture ensure that the university elevates the power and voices of the already-privileged, and excludes the vast majority of people who are vulnerable to the everyday violence of racial capitalism. We have seen the effects of this hierarchy of credibility in this summer's uprisings, as protestors highlighted how hard it is for Black communities to be heard in public discourse and as grassroots calls for abolition have struggled against being co-opted by "experts" and policymakers. Specifically, NYU manufactures the expertise necessary to uphold carceral violence and suppress radical alternatives by hosting a number of policing research initiatives including the Policing Project and the Public Safety Lab.

2. The university is built on dispossession, from gentrification to "global campus" colonialism.

Gentrification and real estate development are intimately connected to settler colonialism maintained by the PIC. All land in the U.S. is stolen land. Property regimes commodified into real estate schemes reproduce the original acts of dispossession. In New York City, profit-driven urban redevelopment targets working-class neighborhoods to clear space for affluent, primarily white residents, while long-time Black and Latinx residents are displaced and hyper-policed within their communities. NYU has played the key role of landlord in this process of racialized dispossession through its student debt-financed purchase of large swathes of property in Lower Manhattan and downtown Brooklyn over the last two decades. Beyond New York City, NYU is a primary contributor to the worldwide spread of privatized education and the development of campuses as gated communities where locals are policed as insurgents and trespassers. These projects support policing and militarization far beyond academic campuses. NYU's Tel Aviv campus invests NYU's academic prestige and corporate power in an apartheid state, profiting from Israel's domination of Palestinians while literally fencing them out of NYU. In Abu Dhabi, NYU profits from and extends the abusive labor practices of the UAE, exploiting immigrant labor to construct its campus. We join with abolitionists in opposing NYU's role in profiting from and driving the international expansion of racist policing and repressive state violence.

3. The university employs carceral feminism to respond to campus sexual violence.

The university relies on policing, prosecution, and punishment as the primary solution to the problem of sexual violence and assault on campus, despite the fact that [many survivors](#) want

[restorative](#) rather than retributive justice. This framework of carceral feminism fails to acknowledge that police and prisons are themselves major drivers of violence against women, queer folks, and trans people in particular. Reliance on these systems further ignores the extent to which race, class, gender, immigration status, and other intersecting identities leave some survivors more vulnerable to state violence—especially when the focus is on punishment rather than meeting the needs of the victims and changing power dynamics. Instead, we support models of transformative justice and accountability that have been developed primarily by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) survivors of sexual violence.

These are just a few of the ways in which the university enforces regimes of law and values that protect property over people, upholds a vicious system of white supremacy, undermines other forms of communal organization, and explicitly targets BIPOC with violence. We further reject NYU's complicity in the PIC through collaborating with police for "security" measures that criminalize the most vulnerable, platforming and normalizing law enforcement "experts" who advance racist practices, developing technologies for security and surveillance, and propagating economic theory that fetishizes growth while driving racial capitalism and expanding colonial markets.

We must divest our resources and imagination from the PIC and invest in our communities. We recognize that abolition requires building real safety by transforming unjust structures and reimagining just, caring, problem-solving communities. We continue to support and organize for justice in housing, food, transportation, education, and healthcare. In divesting from the PIC, we demand that all available funds are reinvested immediately in our communities, providing life-saving resources for harm reduction as we work collectively to address root causes of violence. We are committed to grappling with the dynamics of our own community and organizing, including the racist/carceral barriers that keep people out of the university altogether.

This statement follows the lead of many organizations on campus who have long been doing PIC abolition work. We call for PIC abolition along with our NYU comrades in the Black Student Union, the Incarceration to Education Coalition, and the Student Labor Action Movement. We also follow organizations in New York City committed to abolitionist work including Critical Resistance, Survived and Punished, and No New Jails. We seek to use our platform to amplify the existing voices and support ongoing efforts, particularly by Black organizers on our campus and throughout New York City.

Further reading:

<http://criticalresistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/CR-Abolitionist-Toolkit-online.pdf>

<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/what-is-prison-abolition-movement>

<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/angela-y-davis-are-prisons-obsolete>

<https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/what-is-prison-abolition/>

<https://www.blackandpink.org/>

<https://transformharm.org/>

<https://truthout.org/articles/10-lessons-for-creating-safety-without-the-police-a-reflection-on-the-10-year-anniversary-of-the-sos-collective/>