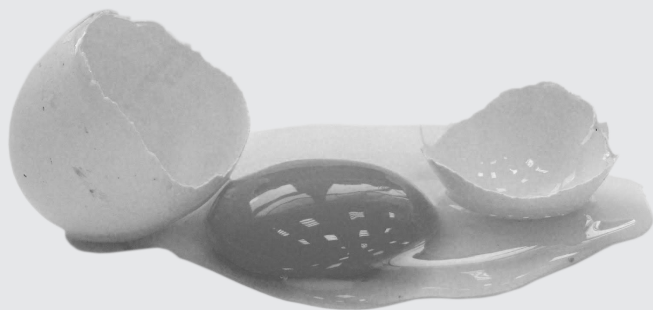


Issue Five

of the NYU graduate
union newsletter





“When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.”

rules of our contract.

The arbitrator sided with GSOC on the bogus nature of one-credit fees for doctoral students who are grad workers in semesters beyond their course work. Essentially, Steinhardt and Silver were requiring these workers to pay tuition, even though they weren’t taking classes.

Several grad workers testified at arbitration hearings in May and June about how the fee was required, even though the “courses” they were attached to were little more than maintenance-of-matriculation fees in disguise. According to our contract (Article IV):

“Graduate Employees, whose appointments so specify, shall have fees waived for tuition, maintenance of matriculation, basic membership in the sports center, student activities and registration. Doctoral students who are graduate employees shall have mainte-

VICTORY!

Ever think NYU’s strange bureaucratic logic is something out of Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass*? You know, like when the Queen of Hearts requires Alice to play a chaotic game of croquet with flamingos and hedgehogs and hoops that get up and run around?

An arbitrator thinks so, too, and he has handed GSOC a major win in the ongoing fight to get NYU to play by the

nance of matriculation and related fees waived.”

In a binding decision handed down September 12, the arbitrator said that while NYU had the prerogative to require courses and tuition, the university could not simply call a non-course a course. Making a point about how bizarre this is, the arbitrator cited Humpty Dumpty in *Through the Looking Glass*: “When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.”

The bottom line: Our contract, defended by solidarity and organization efforts, brought GSOC workers a huge victory. Workers charged these fees since contract implementation are due a refund, and future workers in the same situation won’t have to pay them.

Special bonus update: It’s not quite nailed down yet, but it looks like the ~\$470 registration and service fees we also have to pay every fall and spring will also be refunded retroactively to folks affected by this grievance AND waived going forward. When we fight, we win. When we win, we keep on winning!

ANOTHER VICTORY!

Any university can be a tough place to start a family, but NYU sure doesn’t make it easy. Our administrators have neglected to write any policies about maternity leave, such that, if you need to take some time to, you know, give birth to and nurture a child, you stand to lose your stipend and health insurance (arguably right when you need them the most!).

With the union there is a better way. Our contract guarantees paid sick leave when workers or their family members experience medical challenges. Birth certainly qualifies!

When one of our members gave birth, NYU was only willing to give her unpaid leave. However, working with the union, she won 8 weeks paid leave and got to keep her health insurance. Several other similar cases are in the works!

But the fight goes on...

NYU Screwed Up

Last year, GSOC and NYU bargained over a five-year contract with language that protects and enhances worker rights. Properly implemented, the contract is a win-win: happy workers and a better university. Improperly implemented, or not implemented at all in some areas, and you get the following list of transgressions. GSOC is hard at work to address and redress these transgressions, either by turning up the public pressure or going the formal grievance route.

Transgression 1: Missing health insurance refunds for mid-semester hires

NYU just decided one day that it didn’t have to reimburse workers for health or dental benefits if they started working more than halfway through the semester. The contract, however, is very clear. All workers, regardless of when they start or how many hours they work, are equally entitled to their share.



Transgression 2: Health insurance billing is a total nightmare.

Our contract guarantees a subsidy to the cost of health insurance for working members. NYU currently offers a very belated refund several weeks after our bills seem to be due. This year NYU (all too quietly) pushed back the due date for the health insurance part of your bursar bill until Oct. 19th, but that still leaves hundreds of people confused and paying more than they have to. NYU administrators are supposed to administer the contract, but they're doing a terrible job.

Transgression 3: Sometimes getting access to Stu-Dent requires a Cold War-style standoff.

All union workers are entitled to access Stu-Dent dental services. In essence, we're supposed to get the \$240

annual plan for free. However, if you aren't yet on NYU's error-ridden and much-delayed BUE dataset, the receptionists will try to scare you away. Now, because as workers this is our legal right, the Stu-Dent office can't refuse to see you. However, they will tell you scary stories about how you might be billed in the future if they find out that you aren't a union worker. If you stand your ground you'll eventually get a free appointment, but the whole process is more unpleasant and unprofessional that it needs to be. What's more, if you've accidentally bought the annual plan, refunds can be very slow coming. Furthermore, NYU still doesn't have a plan for how to equally compensate Fall and Spring workers.

Fightin' FAQ's

What can I do about these healthcare problems?

Pushing NYU's position on these fronts and winning more accountability from executive administrators will require collective action on the part of hundreds of students and student workers. That means that we need to get organized! Your involvement is absolutely key.

Here's how to plug in:

- Help us set up a meeting in your department if you haven't already had one this year
- Come out to our organizer training sessions
- Attend our monthly healthcare campaign meetings (first Thursday of every month, 5pm in Bobst 411)
- Stay tuned to our mailing list for public actions and news as the campaign progresses

For more on any of the above, contact **gsoc@2110uaw.org**

How do I join the union?

It's a snap! All you have to do is sign an enrollment card, even if you don't expect to work in a union position for a while. When you work in a union position, 2% of your wages (plus your stipend if you're a fully funded PhD) and a one-time \$50 enrollment fee will go toward staffing our union, funding organizing campaigns and arbitrations, and supporting efforts for greater workers' rights across the U.S. Whenever you work you'll also get a bonus on the same sources of money that dues are deducted from, so you won't lose anything from joining.

You can find a pdf of the card to print

and fill out at: **2110uaw.org/NYU.htm**

Signed cards can be scanned and e-mailed to **local2110@2110uaw.org**, or returned to your hiring administrator or a GSOC steward. Call Local 2110 at **212-387-0220** with any questions.

How can I find out more?

Contact us at **gsoc@2110uaw.org** or visit us online at **makingabetternyu.org** where you will find a Health Insurance Primer and even more Fightin' FAQ's.

On the Radar

November 3

Healthcare Campaign Meeting
Bobst 411, 5pm

Mid-November

Health insurance refunds issued to union workers hired by November 1 who paid the original health care charge in full. Email us on November 15th if you're still missing your \$\$\$.

Join us at our next Assembly of Stewards / Member Meeting!

3rd Tuesday of each month,
4:30 – 6:30pm
Basement Assembly Hall Judson Memorial Church
(enter at 239 Thompson St)

In Solidarity

Stand with Standing Rock, #NoDAPL

The proposed Dakota Access Pipeline would cross the Missouri River less than a mile away from Standing Rock Reservation and transport 570,000 barrels of crude oil. When it leaks, it will poison water access for the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. A federal appeals court has denied a request to stop the construction, so the construction can resume on a section of the pipeline that runs within 20 miles of Lake Oahe, a sacred area for the tribe. GSOC recently ratified a statement condemning the pipeline and calling on the labor movement to advocate for a just transition away from fossil fuels rather than more extractivist megaprojects.

Take 5 minutes to:

- Keep up with what's happening: nodapl.life
- Sign onto Labor for Palestine's Urgent Call on the AFL-CIO to reverse support for the pipeline: <http://chn.ge/2cZvAcP>
- Send a letter to President Obama to revoke permits for the pipeline: bit.ly/2ehruBQ
- Send a few bucks (if you have them) to Sacred Stone Spirit Camp legal defense fund

https://fundrazr.com/d19fAf?ref=sh_25rPQ

or general fund:

<https://www.gofundme.com/sacredstonecamp>

#PrisonStrike

Forced labor is a violation of basic rights, yet it's made possible by the Constitution itself, which allows involun-

tary servitude as a punishment. Since September 9, prisoners from across the US have coordinated a work stoppage against prison slavery. The latest set of labor actions began on October 15, including an open forum in NYC (itsgoingdown.org)

- Donate to build the outside mass movement to help prisoners on the inside: iwoc.noblogs.org/donate
- Get educated and watch Ava DuVernay's documentary on prison labor, *The 13th*

#BlackLivesMatter in Labor

Labor for Black Lives (L4BL) is a network of union activists and other rank-and-file workers in solidarity with the Movement for Black Lives. Several AWDU members issued the original call to action in July, and the call was answered by dozens of workers citywide, including education, health, communications, media, transport and transit workers.

Some 863 people have been murdered by police this year. The vast majority of them have been poor and working-class people of color, including Philando Castile, a 32-year-old cafeteria worker, and Alton Sterling, a 37-year-old culture worker. L4BL believes that an injury to one is an injury to all, and that these are crimes against the entire working class.

L4BL's first public action was in commemoration of the second anniversary of the murder of Eric Garner in Staten Island. Our first public meetings were held at Abolition Square (a.k.a. City Hall Park), where L4BL supported a weeks-long occupation to demand an end to bro-



ken windows policing, reparations for victims and survivors, and reinvestment of the NYPD's \$5.5 billion budget in NYC's working-class, Black and Brown communities.

In September, L4BL played an active role in mobilizing labor support for the national prison strike. Members took part in a "noise demo" outside the Metropolitan Detention Center, together with those on the inside. Some members are also involved in advocacy for the Right to Know Act (<http://changethenypd.org/resources/fact-sheet-right-know-act>), as well as campaigns in support of immigrants and the indigenous resistance at Standing Rock.

At the same time, L4BL is preparing for the long haul, gearing up for a city-wide campaign to defund the NYPD and refund NYC, calling on City Hall to invest instead in the safety of our communities through jobs with a living wage, education, healthcare, and alternatives to the police, such as mental health first responders.

To get involved:

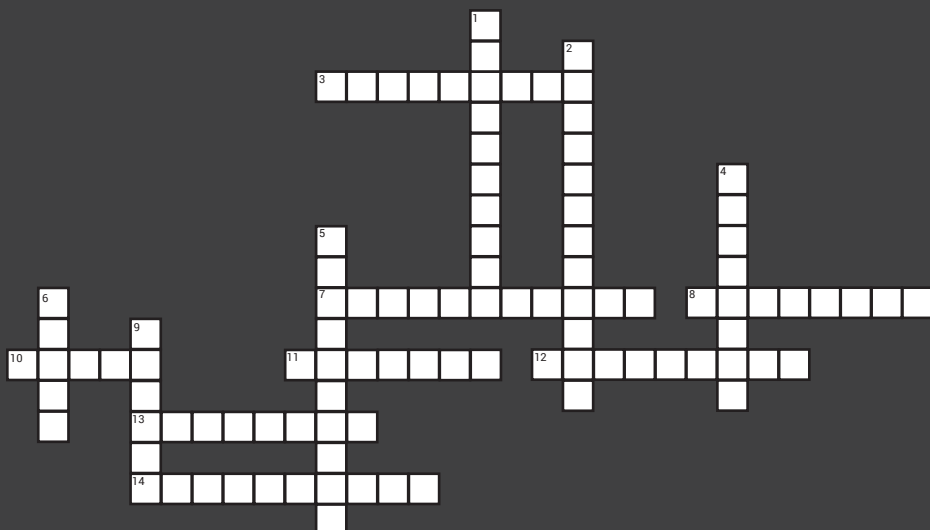
LaborForBlackLives@gmail.com

[http://www.facebook.com/](http://www.facebook.com/LaborforBlackLives)

LaborforBlackLives

[https://twitter.com/](https://twitter.com/Labor4BlkLives)

Labor4BlkLives



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