



GSOC-UAW LOCAL 2110

MAKING A BETTER NYU SINCE 1998

The Union for Graduate Employees at New York University

Graduate Student Organizing Committee Statement on Racism at the NYU Silver School of Social Work

We, the stewards and members of Graduate Student Organizing Committee (GSOC-UAW Local 2110), stand in solidarity with graduate workers of color in the fight against a racialized workplace. The dire necessity of this struggle was most recently demonstrated by an appalling [act of anti-Black racism](#) in NYU's Silver School of Social Work, where last month a Black graduate student was told by a white classmate that a discussion would be easier to conduct without a "black presence" in the room.

This incident is one among many in a school where [organizers have been continually drawing attention to pervasive institutional racism](#), with little action by the administration. It demonstrates one of many ways in which racism structures the conditions of our labor across the university. Upon entry to universities, students and workers of color face racist actions and systems that make it more difficult to fulfill their responsibilities in the classroom and workplace. This occurs in a context within which the pathways to higher education are already more limited for people of color. In the everyday, this means that people of color have to work harder to achieve the same results, while dealing with the emotional tortures of implicit and explicit racism. It must be stressed that being racially oppressed is not just a feeling, but an attack on one's material well-being, on one's chances for a livelihood.

We accordingly call on NYU to take concrete steps to improve working and learning conditions for workers and students, with a specific commitment to anti-racism. As teachers and students, we are mindful of the importance of facilitating classroom interactions in a way that recognizes and prioritizes the experiences of students of color, and Black students in particular. NYU needs to ensure that teachers have the understanding and resources to do so. As one step towards this, NYU must commit to devoting sufficient resources to equity trainings for both faculty and students. Faculty in particular have a responsibility to be well-versed in issues of racism and other forms of oppression in order to foster a learning environment in which all students can fully participate.

In making this demand, we echo one of the key demands made by many organizations—including the Graduate Student Association, Asian Pacific Islander / American Social Work Students for Change, Black Women's Social Work Coalition, Latinx Social Work Student Organization, and Students of Color Collective—who have called on Silver to address racial injustice by taking the steps outlined in the [May 2018 Student Recommendations](#). Their demands include mandating equity and diversity training for all faculty, prioritizing the hiring and retention of faculty of color and other marginalized identities, and developing a more socially just curriculum. We fully support Silver students and workers in their fight for these and other demands.



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Yet, as our experience with NYU and that of workers across the world has shown, those in power must be forced to make improvements. NYU will not do it out of the goodness of their hearts. As the union of graduate-student workers, we are committed to fighting for better and equitable conditions of work for all. To this end, GSOC's anti-oppression working group has been organizing to address issues of sexual harassment, racial discrimination and other forms of oppression in the workplace. We welcome all to join us in pushing NYU to change the institutionalized systems that cause further harm to already marginalized workers, especially workers of color.

Finally, we are also aware that one of the biggest obstacles in fighting for an equitable system the bosses is the divisions among workers. There is no place for racism, sexism, homophobia in our struggle. We must hold fellow workers and students accountable for their conduct. Our solidarity is all that we have.

In this spirit, GSOC stands with the NYU Silver Affinity Group Collective in calling for Silver and NYU more broadly to work towards building a just institution.