

To the Presidents, Trustees, and administrators of Columbia University, Barnard College, and Teachers College:

We are a group of students attending Columbia across a wide range of schools and programs. We are writing to address several key fronts on which the University is acutely failing its students and the local community, which have only been exacerbated by the inaction with which your administration has met popular demands and referendums in the past eight months.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, students immediately began [demonstrating against the injustice of exorbitant tuition rates](#), which constitute a significant source of financial hardship during this economic depression. As national protests of an unprecedented scale expressed outrage over structural racism, Mobilized African Diaspora and the nearly [1500 supporters](#) of [its demands](#) called for the University to address its own role in upholding racist policing practices, damaging local communities, and inadequately supporting Black students. Last semester, almost a thousand students, faculty, and alumni signed on in support of [full divestment from fossil fuels](#), along with referendums at [Barnard](#) and [Columbia College](#) in which students voted overwhelmingly to divest from companies involved in human rights violations in Palestine. Finally, the University continues to refuse to meet the demands of [thousands of academic student-workers](#) when it comes to fair wages, healthcare, international student protections, access to grievance and arbitration for discrimination, harassment, and other complaints, union shop, and union recognition for MA and undergrad student-workers.

These issues are united by a shared root cause: a flagrant disregard for initiatives democratically supported within the community. Your administration's unilateral decision-making process has perpetuated the existence of these injustices in our community despite possessing ample resources to confront them with structural solutions. **Should the University continue to remain silent in the face of the pressing demands detailed below, we and over two thousand fellow students are prepared to withhold tuition payments for the Spring semester and not to donate to the University at any point in the future. As a first step toward satisfying our demands, we request a meeting with the Presidents and key administrators across Columbia, Barnard, and Teachers College.**

Our demands are as follows:

- 1) Columbia must **alleviate the economic burden on students by reducing the cost of attendance and increasing financial aid.**
  - a) Reduce the cost of attendance (including tuition, fees, and room & board) by at least 10%.
  - b) Increase financial aid by at least 10%.
  - c) Replace the ["student responsibility"](#) with grants.

- d) Offer financial aid for summer classes for *all* schools at Columbia.
  - e) Forgive all late fees and other forms of retaliation for unpaid bills for the duration of the pandemic.
  - f) This reduction and increased aid should not come at the expense of instructor or worker pay, but rather at the expense of bloated administrative salaries, expansion projects, and other expenses that don't benefit students and workers.
  - g) See the [Teachers College Student Senate resolution](#) for more details.
- 2) Columbia must **[fulfill its responsibilities to the people of West Harlem](#)** by committing to provide employment, education & affordable housing, and to end expansion.
    - a) Full list of demands are [detailed here](#).
  - 3) Columbia must **[defund Public Safety and invest in community safety solutions](#)** that prioritize the safety of Black students and West Harlem residents, and repair harm caused by prior racist practices of Public Safety.
    - a) Full list of demands are [detailed here](#).
  - 4) Columbia must **commit to complete transparency about the University's investments and respect the democratic votes of the student body regarding investment and divestment decisions**. This includes respecting the referendums at [Barnard](#) and [Columbia College](#) to divest from companies involved in human rights violations in Palestine, [divesting fully from fossil fuels](#), and respecting the results of future referendums relating to investment decisions.
    - a) Full demands regarding fossil fuel divestment, including the Advisory Committee for Socially Responsible Investing's recommendations in support, can be found [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).
    - b) Full demands regarding divestment from companies involved in human rights violations in Palestine are [detailed here](#).
  - 5) Columbia **must bargain in good faith with unions on campus around their key demands for improved compensation, benefits, and protections**. This includes guaranteeing protections to international students and granting union recognition for MA and undergrad student-workers.
    - a) Initial bargaining goals put forward by the Graduate Workers of Columbia are [detailed here](#).

These demands and our tuition strike have the support of **4,500+ Columbia students across all schools**, as well as the support and solidarity of the following organizations, unions, and politicians:

### **Labor Unions**

[Columbia Postdoctoral Workers-UAW Local 4100 \(CPW-UAW\)](#)

[Graduate Workers of Columbia-UAW Local 2110 \(GWC-UAW\)](#)

[Support Staff Association \(SSA\) –1199SEIU](#)

### **Elected Officials**

Jabari Brisport, State Senator, New York State District 25  
Julia Salazar, State Senator, New York State District 25  
Phara Souffrant Forrest, Assemblymember, New York State District 57  
Marcela Mitaynes, Assemblymember, New York State District 51  
Robert Jackson, State Senator, New York State District 31  
Ron Kim, Assembly Member, New York City District 40  
Zohran Mamdani, Assemblymember, New York State District 36  
Ben Kallos, Council Member, New York City District 5  
Mark Levine, Council Member, New York City District 7

### **Local Candidates**

Alexa Aviles, Candidate for City Council in Districts 28  
Angela Fernández, Candidate for New York City Council District 10  
Arthur Schwartz, Candidate for New York City Council District 3  
Althea Stevens, Candidate for New York City Council District 16  
Dianne Morales, Candidate for Mayor of New York City  
Jaslin Kaur, Candidate for City Council in Districts 23  
Joshua Clennon, Candidate for City Council District 9  
Maria Ordoñez, Candidate for New York City Council District 7  
Marni Halasa, Candidate for New York City Council District 3  
Marti Allen-Cummings, Candidate for New York City Council District 7  
Michael Hollingsworth, Candidate for New York City Council District 35  
Tahanie Aboushi, Candidate for Manhattan District Attorney

### **Student Government**

Columbia School of Social Work Student Union  
Arts & Sciences Graduate Council  
Teachers College Student Senate (partial endorsement)

### **Columbia Student Elected Representatives**

Cameron Clarke, Columbia University Senate  
Elizabeth Gilette, Columbia University Senate

### **Columbia Organizations**

Columbia Criminal Justice Coalition  
Columbia Engineering Energy Club  
Columbia Indonesian Society  
Columbia Journal of History  
Columbia University Apartheid Divest

Columbia University Historical Justice Initiative  
Columbia University Students for Human Rights  
Columbia-Barnard Young Democratic Socialists of America  
Columbia Hindu YUVA  
Columbia School of Social Work Student Union  
Columbia White Coats for Black Lives  
Engineers Without Borders  
Extinction Rebellion Columbia  
French Society  
GreenSAPP  
GSAPP Student Action Group  
GSAS Students of Color Alliance  
Housing Equity Project  
Indian Student Association at Columbia) Contact  
Mobilized African Diaspora  
NYPD Off Columbia Campus  
Peace Education Network  
Take Back The Night  
Teachers College Summer Principals Academy  
School of Social Work Action for Black Lives  
South Asian Feminism(s) Alliance  
Students for Justice in Palestine  
Superposition Columbia  
Sunrise Columbia  
Morningside Heights Community Coalition  
CSSW Student Union

**Organizations at Other Universities:**

African Student Association, Mercer University, Georgia  
Alumni, County College of Morris, New Jersey  
Anakbayan Rutgers, Rutgers University, New Jersey  
APIDA Uprising, DePaul University, Illinois  
Asian Cultural Exchange, DePaul University, Illinois  
Beta Iota, Corazones Unidos Siempre Chi Upsilon Sigma  
Black Student Union, Fordham University, New York  
Black Student Union, Oswego University, New York  
Building Ladies Up, State University of New York Albany, New York  
Caribbean Students Association, Mercer University, Georgia  
Coalition of Black Organizers and Clubs, Emory University, Georgia  
Cornell Progressives, Cornell University, New York

CUNY for Abolition and Safety, City University of New York, New York  
Debt Collective  
D.A.L.E., DePaul University, Illinois  
Graduate Employee Union, Portland State University, Oregon  
Japanese Table, DePaul University, Illinois  
Kalahi, DePaul University, Illinois  
Lambda Pi Chi, Inc, Omicron Chapter  
Lambda Theta Alpha Sorority, Inc, Delta Zeta Chapter  
Latin American Student Organization, St. John's University, New York  
MALIK Fraternity, Inc, Jeem Chapter  
Members, St. John's Law National Lawyers Guild  
NYU Mutual Aid, New York University, New York  
Resident Assistant & Peer Mentor Union, UMass Amherst, Massachusetts  
Santa Ana Youth Ballot, California  
Shaeleigh Severino, Gen Z NYC Council District 32 Candidate, New York  
Students for Justice in Palestine, DePaul University, Illinois  
Strategy for Black Lives, New York  
Student Government, St. John's University, New York  
University Student Senate, City University of New York, New York  
Young Democratic Socialists of America  
We Are The Radicals, St. John's University, New York  
We're First, University of Delaware, Delaware

Contact info:

[columbia.ydsa@gmail.com](mailto:columbia.ydsa@gmail.com)