



# CPW-UAW

## A UNION FOR POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



### CPW-UAW Local 4100 stands in solidarity with the Columbia-Barnard tuition strike

The Columbia Postdoctoral Workers-UAW Local 4100 (CPW-UAW) stands in solidarity with students participating in the tuition strike organized by the Columbia-Barnard chapter of Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA).

For years, we have watched Columbia disregard the needs and widely supported demands of its own students and employees. Despite a rapidly ever-increasing endowment, which grew by \$310 million in 2020, operating as one of the largest private landowners in NYC, and doling out some of the highest salaries in the country for top university administrators, Columbia has failed to live up to its educational and societal missions, or fulfill its financial responsibilities to our community. This disconnect has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As postdoctoral and associate researchers, the most recently unionized workforce on campus, we understand all too well that financial pressure and cross- and off-campus solidarity are critical to ensuring that Columbia lives up to the ideals of an equitable, transparent, and inclusive institution. Furthermore, Columbia can no longer ignore the impacts of its operation and real estate practices on its surrounding community, nor can it ignore the impacts of its investments which are in direct opposition to its stated mission.

This tuition strike is an opportunity for members of the Columbia community to hold their institution and workplace accountable. We therefore wholeheartedly support and stand with YDSA and their tuition strike pledge signatories as they make these demands, as detailed below:

1. *Columbia must alleviate the economic burden on students by reducing the cost of attendance and increasing financial aid. 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.*

**CPW-UAW statement:** Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic this March, students have been demonstrating against the injustice of exorbitant tuition rates. Other institutions including Princeton, Johns Hopkins, and Georgetown have instituted 10% reduction in tuition. Columbia has only lowered the rate of tuition increases. Increased financial aid is also essential to remove the increasingly insurmountable barriers to attending Columbia, especially in light of the significant financial hardships many students and/or their families face.

2. *Columbia must fulfill its responsibilities to the people of West Harlem by committing to provide employment, education, and affordable housing, and to end expansion. Columbia must also*

*defund Public Safety and invest in community safety solutions that prioritize the safety of Black students and West Harlem residents.*

**CPW-UAW statement:** We believe that the University must address its role in upholding racist policing practices, damaging local communities, and inadequately supporting Black students [1, 2, 3]. Multiple calls for an end to campus policing, at institutions around the country, have gone ignored by Columbia. The impacts of Columbia's financial and real estate decision-making on the communities surrounding campus cannot be ignored, and the institution has a responsibility to provide resources to empower the people of West Harlem and Washington Heights while ending its expansion projects and the reach of Public Safety into surrounding neighborhoods.

- 3. 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 results of referendums at Barnard and Columbia College relating to investment decisions.*

**CPW-UAW statement:** Almost a thousand students, faculty, and alums signed on in support of full divestment from fossil fuels last semester. Over the past few years, multiple referendums at Barnard and Columbia College have occurred during which students voted overwhelmingly to divest from companies whose practices diverge from the University's mission. Columbia must use its financial resources responsibly, including with respect to climate change, one of the major priorities of the institution, and be responsive to its community.

- 4. Columbia must bargain in good faith with unions on campus around their key demands for improved compensation, benefits, and protections.*

**CPW-UAW statement:** Academic student-workers in GWC-UAW are demanding many of the same protections and improvements that we won in our recently ratified collective bargaining agreement in July. We call on Columbia to bargain with GWC-UAW in good faith negotiations and show its commitment to improving working conditions and protecting vulnerable workers.

We encourage Columbia students to [sign onto the pledge](#) to commit to withhold their tuition if they are able to. The pledge also offers ways to get involved (other than striking tuition) to support these demands. Postdocs can also [share the pledge](#) with their students and departments and show solidarity with students striking tuition by committing to continue teaching students who are withholding tuition. This could involve providing Zoom links and materials outside of Courseworks should the University lock students out, but we will know more details as the tuition strike progresses.

[1] [With Security Becomes Flashpoint Over Racism on Campus](#) - New York Times, April 2019

[2] [Black Columbia student physically restrained on countertop by Barnard Public Safety requesting to see CUID](#) - Spectator, April 2019

[3] [Barnard Public Safety faces extensive investigation as students cite incidents of antiblack racism](#) - August, 2019