



# CPW-UAW

## A UNION FOR POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



### **Columbia postdocs support the graduate workers' strike. Here's why.**

For years, graduate and postdoctoral workers at Columbia have been fighting to improve our working conditions through unionization and collective bargaining. Although Columbia Postdoctoral Workers (CPW) ratified our first ever contract agreement last year, negotiations between our union siblings the Graduate Workers of Columbia (GWC) and the Columbia administration have stalled. In recognition of the administration's consistent refusal to bargain in good faith over [key topics that matter to graduate workers](#), CPW voted in our last membership meeting to support GWC's [strike deadline of March 15](#).

The administration has used the successful conclusion of our own negotiations as evidence of their commitment to good faith bargaining and to persuade graduate workers to not go on strike. We would argue the complete opposite. Our contract was hard fought and hard won, and we know firsthand Columbia's tactics of stonewalling at the bargaining table. Salaries and protections in our contract were not simply handed to us - in fact, Columbia lagged behind other institutions for years and argued throughout our 16-month negotiations that they did not need to raise minimums or provide increased protections for survivors of harassment. Pressure applied away from the table - including published op-ed articles, petitions, delegations, phone calls to the Provost, support from New York City and New York State politicians, and most importantly one-to-one organizing between postdoctoral workers leading to an [Open Letter to the President and Board of Trustees](#) calling for a Strike Authorization Vote if Columbia did not make real progress - were critical to our bargaining's eventual success.

Our contract was overwhelmingly ratified not only because it transformed postdoc minimum salaries from the [lowest in NYC](#) to the highest. Establishing a timely grievance and arbitration procedure for discrimination and harassment cases with access to a neutral third-party to resolve disputes, instead of allowing Columbia to indefinitely drag out EOAA investigations, was similarly essential for the success of our contract. Our contract also secured union rights and a union shop, which are vital for a union to enforce its contract, protect the rights outlined in the agreement, and quickly identify and solve workplace issues. **However, in the negotiations with GWC Columbia now refuses to put forward fair offers or even discuss these and other critical issues that we won in our union contract.**

Despite the close working relationships and overlapping work of postdocs and graduate workers, we have watched Columbia treat our units very differently throughout the past two years of negotiations. We hope that Columbia recognizes that these rights are as important for graduate workers as they are for postdocs. Indeed, the rights to fair wages, increased protections against harassment, and a strong union are intimately tied to the right of every worker to a safe, equitable workplace which can also be held accountable. Over the years, both graduate and postdoctoral workers at Columbia have realized that the most effective way to achieve these protections and to ensure that they are upheld is through a legally binding and enforceable union contract. Columbia's refusal to make progress at the bargaining

table, makes it necessary for GWC to go on strike in order to continue their fight for a fair contract, a move which over 96% of their unit supported.

We urge the university to renew bargaining efforts and agree to negotiate on topics they have avoided thus far. We hope Columbia will build on the success of our own negotiations and the articles negotiated by GWC already to provide its student workers with a fair union contract. Until this happens, we will stand in solidarity with our colleagues on strike.

In Solidarity,

The CPW-UAW Local 4100 Executive Board