

GESO GSEU Voice

Striking Graduate Teachers at Yale and Columbia

April 20, 2005

Thousands rally for Yale, Columbia Strikers

Len Nalencz, GESO

NEW YORK - The national coalition of academic workers that graduate teachers at Yale and Columbia have been discussing all year became a reality yesterday. Hundreds of members of GESO and locals 34 and 35 joined a massive rally of GSEU members, UAW and UNITE-HERE workers and other New York unions near Columbia University. This part-

AFL-CIO president John Sweeney declared that graduate teachers at Columbia and Yale are "setting a new standard for solidarity." And the fiery Thania Sanchez, a graduate teacher at Columbia, shouted: "We're all workers. And we're getting stronger!" Looking out at a sea of blue-and-white GSEU/GESO placards, UNITE-HERE co-president John Wilhelm called out to groups he recognized. "I see New Jersey!" he shouted. "Connecticut, New York...Florida!" Wilhelm said that graduate teachers would educate the next generation of labor activists. "The labor union...needs your energy," he said. Columbia and Yale are "special in [their] arrogance," he added, and praised graduate teachers for standing up for their convictions.

Thousands of organized workers marched down Broadway during rush hour, stretching nearly ten blocks and shouting their vision and demands. CUNY faculty and NYU instructors chanted with Yale and Columbia teachers as New Yorkers smiled and cheered.



nership of thousands of workers sends a powerful message to administrators: we are proud of the work we do, we have a vision of the academy that lives up to its mission statement, and we want a voice in our workplaces.

Graduate Labor Actions to Sweep Nation's Campuses

Benjamin M. Looker,
American Studies graduate
teacher

The momentum established at yesterday's tri-state labor rally continues to build. Today, in a flurry of coordinated actions, graduate teachers on more than eleven campuses will speak in unison for organizing rights and a voice at work while declaring their solidarity with strikers at Yale and Columbia.

Meanwhile, here in

New Haven, delegations from a number of the schools will join us on our picket lines. The day's events range from a graduate teachers' walkout at the University of Massachusetts to a march on the Wisconsin state capitol by graduate employees decrying spending cut-backs in higher education. "It's only through such forms of direct action that graduate employee unions have won anything against intransigent administrators," explains Rob Henn, an organizer at Wisconsin.

The National Day of Action highlights the newly developing cooperation among organized adjuncts, lecturers, and graduate employees. Recognizing that industry-wide problems require industry-wide solutions, GESO will continue to forge broad programs for action along with our allies around the country.



Today!
Jesse Jackson
5:00 p.m. rally
In Front of
Sterling Library

"Declaration of Principles" Sets out New Standards

Daniel Gilbert, American Studies graduate teacher

"We are higher education workers, joined by community members and elected officials, who believe that quality higher education and the right to collective bargaining are essential to building a more just, democratic and equal society." So begins the Declaration of Principles for Collective Bargaining in Higher Education, which dozens of unions across the country have endorsed as part of today's National Day of Action.

The Declaration first began to take shape in February, when nine graduate-teacher unions, including GESO, began meetings and discussions in New York City. In the weeks that fol-

lowed, GESO members collaborated with other academic workers to craft the statement, which declares, in part, that in order to serve the public good, universities must: 1) recognize their workers' fundamental right to organize; 2) remain neutral in unionization efforts; 3) uphold living wage standards and 4) provide steady – not casual – employment.

Among the signatories are many of the colleagues and allies we joined with at yesterday's rally and march in New York City, including GSEU/Columbia, PSC/CUNY and John Sweeney, President of the AFL-CIO.

The statement is online at www.geso.org.

Press Roundup

"Hundreds of graduate students have been participating in rallies and events, as well as abandoning their classes, in an effort to bring school administrators to the table and gain union status for their groups."

- Daily Pennsylvanian, April 21, 2005

"Fists pumping and voices strained, hundreds of graduate students, local union mem-

bers, and labor advocates gathered near campus yesterday to further the unionization efforts of two Ivy League graduate groups."

- Columbia Spectator, April 21, 2005

"Felicity Palmer, 27, a graduate instructor at Columbia who teaches African civilizations to about 20 undergraduate students, said she makes about \$18,000 a year but gives half of that back to the university in rent."

AP - New York City, April 21, 2005

Quotes from the Line

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"The strike by graduate assistants at Columbia and Yale is the first coordinated strike in the history of the Ivy League."

John Sweeney AFL-CIO

"I believe in the potential of the university to be a force for labor, to be a force for justice and to be a fair place to work."

Issac Reed, Sociology, GESO

"I'm here because the faster that administrations realize that this is a national movement, the faster they will listen to its demands."

Matt Williams, GESO (Ohio State University)

"I went to New York yesterday because local 34 supports GESO. It was powerful to see the crowd and the number of supporters, confirmation that this is truly a national movement."

Christine Alves, Local 34



Thurs., April 21: A National Day of Action

Columbia/GSEU - Strike continues; solidarity rally at NYU.

U-Mass Amherst/GEO - T.A. walkout and undergrad class boycott for a fair contract; picketing and speak-out w/Barbara Ehrenreich.

NYU/GSOC - Demonstration to preserve the graduate teachers union at NYU, featuring the Rev. Jesse Jackson.

Rutgers/AAUP - Rally and press conference w/other N.J. schools demanding acceptance of "Declaration of Principles."

U-Penn/GET-UP - Rally and delivery of "Declaration of Principles" to university president; representatives to attend Yale strike events.

U-Wisconsin/TAA - Multi-union campus rally for better-funded public education; march to state capitol for demonstration with thousands of state-employed union members.

U-Cal. campuses/UAW 2865 - Solidarity actions with Yale and Columbia strikers.

Ohio State/GESO - Representatives to join Yale picket line and speak at rally here.

SUNY/GSEU and U-Florida/GAU - Actions to deliver "Declaration of Principles" to university administrations.