

the PROG



SEPTEMBER 2017

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Reader,

Thank you for picking this up. Focusing exclusively on Princeton University, this issue inaugurates the decision to make our magazines themed, a shift that demands rigorous reporting standards and dedicated examination of the subjects we examine within.

Devoting that first issue to Princeton may sound like gazing inward at a time when we can't afford to be. But over the course of this issue, our authors build the case for at least momentary introspection. Taken collectively they suggest that, first, one of the best ways to process and begin work on large-scale problems is to start where you are. For us, at least from September until June, this means examining Princeton—its assets, flaws, idiosyncrasies, and relationship with the outside world—and our identities as students within it, in order to be intentional and accountable as we determine how to direct our action.

Second, even when your environment can be daunting to contend with, let alone thrive in, you can't hold off for the most amenable conditions to get to work. As many of the pieces in this issue bring to light, the University is as unwieldy as it is

opaque, and moreover, it is not and indeed cannot be at the center of the change that we fight for. Yet since the alternatives are compromising our ideals or worse, total inaction, we must work anyway.

Third, and perhaps most important, every step of progress, especially at Princeton, has faced backlash. Only once we do the work of unearthing indelicate history does it become clear how much past struggles for justice have been white-washed. As it happens in real time, progress is and should be uncomfortable. As a publication, as a presence on lawns and in campus spaces, and as a community, we aspire to provoke and also to help navigate that discomfort.

The pieces you'll read here can stand on their own, but when read start to finish, the magazine is meant to have a consistent direction to it. For the class of 2021 in particular, we hope that it offers some grounding as quarrels in the news about college campuses take on a personal shade, and as you start considering how you might chip away at these questions yourself.

In love and solidarity,

The Editors

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Pricey Chairs: Class & Privilege at Princeton

By MASON COX

It sounds obvious to some—to others not so much—but it is incredibly difficult for socio-economically disadvantaged students to thrive at Princeton without assistance beyond basic aid. Although I do concede that financial problems face everyone, it must be stated that they have a substantially larger impact on low-income students like myself. Any minority faces some degree of setback, the magnitude of which is dictated by how its identities fit within the power dynamics and hierarchies of the larger society. At Princeton, this

manifests not unlike it does in the entirety of the United States, where those who exist outside the status quo have found (and continue to find) themselves struggling against an institution designed for other people.

The University earnestly tries to mend this disparity through programs to help those who haven't benefited from the privilege that made its foundation. Unfortunately, however, Princeton's history of slavery, sexism, racism, and the like still leaves traces in its structure today, embodied in part in its misuse of its funds.

When building its Lewis Library, Princeton spent sixty million dollars on its construction.¹ That money—an incomprehensible amount to many—was given by Peter Lewis, which, with another fifty-five million a few years prior, made Lewis the largest donor in Princeton history. In his library, the

1) Money and the chairs: <http://www.universitypressclub.com/archive/2009/04/im-writing-this-post-while-sitting-in-a-five-thousand-dollar-chair/>

egg-shaped chairs cost \$5,934.² Although the library is great, from its German math books to sheets of plexiglass sticking out of the roof, it physically represents what is incoherent about Princeton's spending tendencies relative to its mission of helping underrepresented and socioeconomically disadvantaged students.

While Princeton's financial aid program is strong compared to that of its peers, the University nonetheless finds itself in an ambiguous relationship with the students who use it. Customarily, students on financial aid also use other programs designed to assist them with their transition to Princeton and with the accompanying complications and hardships that arise in the process. Some of these programs (Scholars Institute Fellowship Program (SIFP), the LGBTQIA+ Center, the Women*s Center, among others) would be more robust with additional resources. The summer savings contribution could be budgeted away, and the loan repayment policy could be fixed. Yet, the Board of Trustees approves of investing in six-thousand-dollar chairs. Clearly, something strange is happening with funds.

2) <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/11/13/nyregion/alumnus-s-60-million-gift-to-pay-for-gehry-building-at-princeton.html>

President Chris Eisgruber announced plans for increasing the student body's proportion of low-income students³ and constructing a new residential college to accommodate the overall population increase.⁴ To do so responsibly, it must ensure a hospitable environment and address its history of oppression. Allowing more students to receive a phenomenal education is truly great, but to do so, the University must free them as much as possible from the mental burden of financial scarcity so that they may study, grow, and reflect. The first step is managing resources more responsibly.

What compels the University to purchase thirty-three near six-thousand-dollar chairs? Superficially, one can claim that it was the donor's wish. This might be true. But what makes the donor's wish agreeable? The expense offers socioeconomically disadvantaged students the chance to sit in those chairs—items that model,

3) <https://www.princeton.edu/news/2016/11/14/pell-eligible-students-comprise-21-percent-princetons-freshman-class>

4) <https://www.princeton.edu/news/2017/04/18/university-considers-potential-sites-residential-college-engineering-environmental>

and indeed recreate, the circumstances that set them back in the first place. The resulting optics are that the University uses displays of wealth to supplement and compensate for the incomplete assistance it provides, where the simple proximity to (or the actual ability to sit in) the capital Princeton offers is a benefit in itself.

Yet exclusivity and privilege cannot be a reparation for the disadvantaged. This model selects and promotes the "worthy" poor to the economic and cultural elite rather than striving for a more just society at large. Princeton does a remarkable job of getting low income students to high income jobs, and that is a tremendous achievement.⁵ But while many of these students escape the cycle of poverty and education-based discrimination, their communities are still poor, and the cycle itself remains unthreatened. Although it isn't unique in doing so, Princeton shepherds its students into a higher class but doesn't take commensurate action to decrease the absolute number of disadvantaged students. Moreover, this sleight of hand implies that the best course for these students is to assimilate into Princeton and its culture. This not only trivializes

5) <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/projects/college-mobility/princeton-university>

The University uses displays of wealth to supplement and compensate for the incomplete assistance it provides, where the simple proximity to (or the actual ability to sit in) the capital Princeton offers is a benefit in itself. Yet exclusivity and privilege cannot be a reparation for the disadvantaged.

Access to [programs'] support should be unconditional for the students who could use it, rather than reliant on students' readiness and ability to assert their own needs.

the needs of these students by underestimating the difference between them and their better-off peers, but also suggests that they passively join a world that once contributed, and still does today, to what put them at their disadvantage, and a world whose beneficiaries promote the rhetoric that creates the status quo and reap the fruits of it as well.

In the past, the institution has directly supported white supremacy (as Woodrow Wilson blocked the acceptance of black students), and today, it institutes fees (such as the summer savings contribution) that impose acute hardship by demanding money that students don't have. Princeton contributes to the oppression of its community members, and then attempts to absolve itself by directing funds toward bringing more students into its fold. Is this the best thing to do? Does this strategy allow the institution to do everything it is capable of doing, given its endowment, status, and political power? If what is mentioned above doesn't suffice for an answer, it is a no. Rather, the University and its body—students, professors, and faculty; external community members and alumni—need to define a new benchmark of success for disadvantaged students, a path

beyond mere assimilation.

Developing and normalizing this new benchmark would require Princeton to restructure itself. First, it will take working for social equity and dismantling the hierarchies that fill the University. Second, and interwoven with the first task, Princeton must prepare its students not simply to take their places at the top of our socioeconomic hierarchy but to dismantle it. Only then will we see a change in the status quo, at Princeton and on a larger scale. Sitting in six-thousand-dollar chairs familiarizes students with the life of America's ruling classes, but it doesn't sincerely position Princeton to serve in its stated goal of helping disadvantaged students and their families.

Both are idealistic. However, the following changes will be a step in the right direction: Grant low-income students access to cash for freedom of travel over breaks like their wealthy peers and, moreover, the ability to participate in pay-to-access social structures on campus. Ensure them a summer without the anxiety of and responsibility to debt. Abolish the parental contribution for students on financial aid, as it hits hard on students who have unreliable relationships

with their families. Guarantee them medical assistance; cover their non-negotiable textbook expenses; expand the curriculum centered on historically marginalized groups until it carries at least equal weight to the curriculum that denies those groups. Give programs that affirm underrepresented students and combat the status quo what they need to catch up on the decades during which they didn't exist. The loan policy needs change: students who take out loans have a grace period for repaying them once they graduate, but taking time off for even medical or family emergencies triggers that period as soon as they take their leave. The list is overwhelming and it continues.

Some low-income students find the assistance they receive through assistance programs to be sufficient for their immediate needs as they make it through college. Yet, programs like the Freshman Scholars Institute (FSI) and the Scholars Institute Fellows Program (SIFP) are only able to reach a percentage. While both accept student applications, access to their support should be unconditional for the students who could use it, rather than reliant on students' readiness and ability to assert their own needs.

Princeton's structure for resource management is all the more important when bringing in more students, across all classes, into its realm. If we want to create a hospitable environment for all, we must focus on fixing the distribution of resources as part of this larger goal. Across any path of all-encompassing emancipation, there are obstacles to be found. This process at Princeton is just one of those obstacles. Investing in \$6,000 chairs just won't do.



Structure and its Discontents

By ROHANA CHASE

When walking through Princeton University, one can't help but admire its quaint footpaths lined with lampposts, pockets of trees, rolling lawns, and scattered buildings in an eclectic array of architectural styles. In a way, Princeton's campus feels like a park—unlike Columbia's orderly quadrangles and Harvard's methodical complexes, its layout prioritizes leisurely aesthetics over utility. Like Baron Haussmann's renovations of Paris, complete with expansive boulevards and sweeping avenues, Princeton's layout is spacious and aesthetically pleasing. It also makes public insurrection nearly impossible.

Perhaps because of its pastoral atmosphere and park-like design, Princeton does not have

an outdoor social hub. There is no equivalent of Harvard Yard or University of Chicago's quads, public gathering spaces where students can easily meet and socialize. Frist Campus Center supposedly serves this purpose, yet it is heavily regulated by security and administration. Reserving a space in Frist is a multi-step process that requires at least three business days and administrative approval, meaning that you must inform the administration of your organization's purpose and intentions. In 2012, while the Occupy movement was in full swing, Princeton was one of few campuses at which student protesters did not set up an encampment. There was no viable space where they could do it.

Fundamentally, it's very difficult to stage a successful public protest at Princeton. Lack

of unregulated space is not the only reason: many student activists over the years have complained about the apparent political apathy of our student body. In researching this piece, I went through decades of articles in the Daily Princetonian archives about the dearth of activism on campus. Many of the authors were saying the same thing—overall, Princeton students are remarkably less confrontational, controversial, and willing to rock the boat than their peers. In an article titled "Why We Don't Fight," Cindy Hong '09 states: "campaigns to educate, cooperate, and cajole are stand-ins for protests, walk-outs, and hunger strikes that generally come to mind when one thinks of 'campus activism'... Princeton's brand of out-

reach is distinctively politically correct." For the most part, Hong is right. A substantial percentage of Princeton's student body are beneficiaries of a system that has continually ensured them positions of power and privilege. Why would they bite the hand that feeds them? Princeton's reputation as an activist backwater likely results from a combination of these factors—but it's crucial to remember that this system has not always served everyone. Historically, much of the activism on campus has been initiated by students of color, in efforts to secure equal treatment and representation. Despite the considerable obstacles to organizing activist movements at Princeton, these students have succeeded in making waves through an innovative and effective tactic: the annexation and manipulation of space.

As previously illustrated, activist campaigns are tough to keep alive at Princeton. Student organizers have had to deal with the logistical challenges in the lack of unpoliced space as well as the Sisyphean task of mobilizing a largely apathetic student body. To overcome student apathy and administrative hostility, past activists have wielded spaces (i.e. physical expanses) as tools for both staging insurrection and making symbolic statements. One of the first significant applications of this tactic was the establishment of the Third World Center, now known as the Carl A. Fields Center. In 1963, the University administration announced an initiative to actively recruit African-American students. It had long been lagging behind its peer institutions with regard to minority admissions, and it was

"A substantial percentage of Princeton's student body are beneficiaries of a system that has continually ensured them positions of power and privilege. Why would they bite the hand that feeds them?"

not until 1947 that Princeton had African-American graduates (the first black students at Harvard and Yale graduated in the 1870's). By the time the policy took effect, the incoming freshman class in 1965 had 14 black students—the largest group to ever enter a class at the same time. Despite these unprecedented changes, Princeton was still a overwhelmingly white institution engineered to serve the ends of white people. For these first students of color, it was an alienating and hostile environment, pervaded by WASPiness and a largely racist student body. Although the hiring of Carl A. Fields (Princeton's first African American administrator, and first in a majority white college) in 1964 and the formation of groups like the Association of Black Collegians (ABC) began to alleviate the problem, there was still no official safe space for minority students. Taking matters into their own hands, a group of African-American, Latinx, and Asian-American students put together a proposal for a University-sanctioned institution that would prioritize their needs and perspectives. According to their proposal, said institution would "provide a central location to examine the political,

cultural, and social movements of minority groups in the United States, encourage the development of student initiated seminars and courses concerning the present condition of minority groups in the United States, and set up sensitivity groups to examine the personal role of students in rectifying injustice," among other goals. In 1971, the Third World Center was founded as a space created by minority students for minority students. For the next thirty years and following its renaming after Carl A. Fields, the center served as a springboard for diversity and inclusion-centered activism and brought attention to the needs of minorities on campus.

In addition to creating spaces, student activists have seized spaces. The late 1960's were marked by protests and movements at campuses across the country, and this time Princeton was no exception. In 1969, a campaign spearheaded by the ABC called for the University to withdraw its investments from companies supporting South African apartheid. In late February, the United Front on South Africa (a composite of black and white student groups) held a public rally advocating divest-

ment. In response, University president Robert Goheen '40 stated that Princeton would do no more than "inform the companies it invested in of the University's feelings toward apartheid" and that divesting from thirty-nine companies that perpetuated racial segregation in South Africa would "not have a substantial prospect of meaningful impact."

Frustrated with the administration's impassivity, the students decided to escalate their tactics. On March 11th, fifty-one members of the ABC forcibly entered the administrative offices in New South and occupied the building for eleven hours. Members of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), a mostly white group, piled bike racks at the entrance, preventing public safety and administrators from going inside. In the words of student activist and later trustee Brent Henry '69, "In the late sixties, campus building takeovers were not uncommon, so we decided that we would make a statement by taking over New South." As tame as this was in comparison to contemporary actions at U.C. Berkeley and Columbia, a building takeover was unprecedented at Princeton. The seizure of a space used for administrative functions made a forceful statement, strong enough to gain coverage by news media outlets.

History repeated itself on November 22nd, 2015, when members and supporters of the Black Justice League (BJL) occupied Nassau Hall for thirty-three hours in protest of the University's decision not to rename the Woodrow Wilson School and residential college. The BJL

occupation and the discussion that ensued garnered substantial media attention, bringing Wilson's racist and segregationist sympathies to public scrutiny. Although the University ultimately did not rename the buildings, a number of initiatives took place in the months following the sit-in, including the removal

Frustrated with the administration's impassivity, the students decided to escalate their tactics.

of the Wilson mural from Wilcox dining hall and the formation of administrative task forces on diversity and inclusion. Most importantly though, the BJL succeeded in dismantling Wilson's status as an indisputably venerated figure and in exposing his discriminatory views towards people of color. In the context of manipulating space as an activist tactic, the movement to rename the Wilson School was a manipulation of space in itself. The BJL demanded that the University remove the legacy of a racist from its buildings and programs in order to become a more inclusive and considerate space for students of color.

These are just a few of many examples of how students utilized space as a tool for activism. In an institution too often impervious to social change, activists at Princeton have had to be resourceful in their incorporation of University property as a tac-

tic. The act of seizure is not the only approach to this; converting spaces to serve different purposes from what the University intends can also send a powerful message. In March of 2017, the Princeton Private Prison Divestment coalition (PPPD) staged a walkout at the Council of the Princeton University Committee (CPUC) meeting, in retaliation for the CPUC Resource Committee's decision not to accept PPPD's proposal that the University withdraw investments from for-profit prisons. After the walkout, participating students gathered in the Friend Center Lobby, outside of the meeting room, for a PPPD-organized teach-in. By sitting on

the lobby floor and absorbing the powerful testimony from the teach-in speakers, the students converted that space into a platform for communicating the injustices of the private prison system. It is through tactics like these that student activists at Princeton have made any difference at all. While it is true that ingenuity in using space cannot totally overcome the difficulties in enacting social change through activism, it is by far the most effective tactic Princeton students have used to date. "Politically correct" activism, like handing out pamphlets and tabling in Frist, does little but validate the stereotype of complacency at Princeton. History has proven that the only way students can hope to make an impact is by taking command of their own space.

FINE WINES

at

PRINCETON

By REBECCA NGU
(contributing writer)



If you dig through Princeton files long enough, you will find a plain Microsoft document entitled “FINE WINES AT PRINCETON UNIVERSITY: A Manual for the Intrepid Connoisseur” stamped from 2001.

Just below, however, lie two quotes from Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X on collective struggle. The wine connoisseur façade winks and slips away, revealing a forty-two-page manual explaining in succinct style how to effectively organize for change in the University.

No name is given as an author, and while the manual is pervaded with a self-assured and urgent voice, it feels anonymous, dropped from the sky. After some digging, I found that the voice belongs to David Tannenbaum, a Class of 2001 graduate who spent much of his undergraduate time doing activist work, including a gap year community organizing in Brooklyn. Upon returning to school, he became interested in the conditions of campus workers. After interviewing everyone, from the workers themselves to upper-level management, he wrote an exposé on workers’ mistreatment in a widely-read (and now defunct) magazine offshoot of the Daily Princetonian. This marked the beginning of what would become the Workers’ Rights Organizing Committee (WROC), an activist coalition that successfully fought for better wages and conditions for Princeton’s lowest-paid workers. The coalition, injected with David’s hands-on experiences, captivated people from all corners—undergrads, faculty, graduate students, religious leaders, and the workers themselves—ultimately leading to concessions by the University.

Staring down graduation at the end of four years of organizing experience, David sat down and unloaded everything he knew over the course of two days.

The manual states:

“This manual is being written in the hope that future generations of Princeton activists will avoid these mistakes, and learn from the successes and failures of past groups. With any luck this manual will be updated as the structure of the university changes and some of the more specific tactics mentioned below become outdated. The basic strategy behind these tactics—organizing grassroots support to leverage public pressure—is timeless.”

David envisioned the guide as open to change but grounded upon foundational principles. He withheld his name from the document and facetiously titled it “Fine Wines” to keep the guide undercover from administrative eyes. With three chapters—organizing public support, leveraging power, and nuts & bolts—it is written with a rigor reflective of his real-world community organizing experience.

After finishing, he contacted other student activists and held a meeting where he handed out copies and fielded questions. Around twenty people showed up. After graduation, he went off to Oxford on a Sachs scholarship to study economic and social history. WROC continued, but lost steam once former President Shirley Tilghman raised the minimum wage and ultimately dissolved in 2003.

The manual was passed among friends and colleagues in left political circles and used in some campaigns, such as in the now-defunct Princeton United Left’s divestment campaign

from Israeli companies profiting from occupation of West Bank and Gaza. But it never became a well-known resource for activists across intersectional lines. A hopeful line thrown across the water, the document eventually sank to the bottom of people’s computer files.

Fine Wines could save activists months of trial and error, but it remains one man’s vision based on his own organizing experience, omitting dissent that arises from a breadth of points of view. Therefore, we asked various current or recently graduated student activists to read and respond to the manual. This article is not a replacement or update, but an introduction, framing a few relevant excerpts with commentary from current or recently graduated student activists, below.

Arlene Gamio Cuervo, ‘18:

heavily involved with Princeton University Latinx Perspectives (PULPO) and immigrant advocacy group DREAM Team. Arlene uses they/them pronouns.

Destiny Crockett, ‘17:

helped lead the Students for Education Reform student and organized with the Black Justice League (BJL).

Tess Jacobson, ‘19:

founding member of the Young Democratic Socialists of Princeton and sits on the organizing committee.

Micah Herskind, ‘19:

co-president of Students for Prison Education and Reform (SPEAR).

Nicky Steidel, ‘18:

founding member of the Young Democratic Socialists of Princeton and sits on its organizing committee.

On the Basic Strategy of Organizing

ARLENE

DAVID

The key strategy to winning any issue-based campaign is to organize grassroots public support around a morally compelling idea or policy and leverage that support into a public pressure campaign against people and institutions in power.

I agree that organizing grassroots support and applying public pressure are both necessary aspects of organizing, but I don't think it always happens in the order or with the motive that the author describes. Grassroots support should not be organizing to apply public pressure. It should be organized because individuals should have a say in policies and structures that impact their lives and said individuals should be changing their day-to-day actions to create this change...

People are not tools. Or, better said, they should not be treated as tools to achieve a means to an end. The question instead is: how can we engage individuals to both understand our organizing movements, provide their own criticisms, join us while also teaching us of their own initiatives and applying our organizing into their everyday lives.

On the Least Effective Campaigns

A tension threaded throughout organizing work is whether one should use institutional channels or engage in direct action outside University channels, such as through protests or sit-ins. This judgment is sometimes a hard one in a University that professes to care about student voice yet has consistently used protocol to delay and wait out agitating students. Both methods have found success: The Black Justice League's sit-in prompted many changes both in material structures (e.g. increased funding for certain departments) and in people's awareness (e.g. a more critical mainstream understanding of Woodrow Wilson), and queer and trans students managed to push for gender neutral housing through a student life committee. Ultimately, there is no binary: "We exist within and outside of institutions which pushes us to play this game of both cooperating with University officials while pushing on their boundaries as historically marginalized people," Arlene said.

TESS

These two are related. The reason the "proper channels" are NOT the most effective is because of the bureaucratic procedures intentionally put in place to slow change (and at a University, where the student turnover period sits reliably at four years, an established administration naturally has the upper hand when it comes to "proper channels.")

DAVID

[The least effective campaigns] are fooled into believing that the sanctioned "proper channels" are the most effective channels...[they] get caught up with procedure and protocol, and other irrelevant details that are meant to slow and stop change...

ARLENE

But you also need a paper trail of past efforts to build legitimacy, support, and image for your group. You also need to build allies within university structure that will advocate for you behind closed doors.

DAVID

... [they] believe that the formation of a committee is a sign of the University's willingness to change... [and] are distracted by administrators' openness and willingness to have extensive meetings, and believe these are a sign of how reasonable they are.

ARLENE

Definitely true. Institutions can't love you. And no matter how open an administrator is through discussion, action is what matters. Show me you care by changing a policy—because we all know that personal connections run the show for the most part.

On Identifying the Issue

In some cases, identifying the issue is a no-brainer as doing so is a necessary response to maintain one's selfhood and dignity. In others, organizing is an act of recognizing one's complicity in maintaining inequality, and the possibility for a better world. A personally compelling motive, however, does not automatically mobilize a mass group of people. From a worthy cause must be extricated issues that are clear, compelling, accessible, and actionable.

ARLENE

"Discovered" isn't exactly the right word . . . more like being screwed over within Princeton's structure and needing to see it changed for their wellbeing and the wellbeing of others. [As for "easy to explain",] I think "accessible" might be a better description; an explanation can be accessible, or available to most people, but not be in a position to be explained to everyone . . . if that makes sense. Like, not everyone can understand why trans students need gender inclusive restrooms but they can understand that we are in harm and can follow suit.. [Finding "significant" effects of University policy] is the biggest and most difficult part. You need to make a clear connection to university policy and the issue at hand in order to be legible to the public and potential supporters. This doesn't mean that we do the work for admins but it does mean that we need to familiarize ourselves with how the university works, draw power maps, make folders on admins' past support or lack of support, etc.

DAVID

Usually campaigns start because an individual or small group of people has discovered an issue worth fighting for. The best issues are:

- Morally compelling
- Easy to explain to most (though not necessarily all) people
- Potentially affected in a significant way by the policies of the university
- Issues that fit the above criteria at other universities or local institutions (e.g. businesses, local government, etc.)

On Building the Core Group

DAVID

It does not take many people to make a change at Princeton. After you've identified the issue you only need 5-7 people to carry through the next few stages. It is of course better to have more, but the number you initially attract will depend on how immediately compelling the issue is. This is not a reflection of how compelling the issue can become. Even if you could attract a large group of folks at this stage, it's not always desirable to do so. You do not want more than 15 to start.

NICKY

This is certainly true, although it's not always recommended. Some activist groups can be really closed off and non-transparent, which makes it harder to mobilize when the time comes. I think having some sense of transparency and openness to your organizing (even if you start with the 5-7 person vanguard model) is important, although others may disagree.

ARLENE

It also depends on the time of year, diversity of the core organizers, political climate, etc . . .

On Diversity

The language and logic of diversity used in the manual was contested. David, who graduated in 2001, wrote in a time where most University racial and cultural campus groups were not politically robust. "When I was there, there weren't really many activist groups active on those issues [of identity]. It was really a shame." As a result, questions of diversity were not in his radar at the time, which became strikingly clear as many commented that diversity merely to include representatives from minoritized identities risks tokenism and is no longer tenable. Rather, current student activists emphasized the need to create an equitable structure wherein the people most affected by the issue at hand are the leaders or providing counsel to the leaders. While getting a widespread movement inevitably requires diverse appeal, others countered that a core group does not have to be "diverse" in order to effect widespread change.

DAVID

It is incredibly important to have a diverse core. There should be women and men, representatives from minority groups, a range of class years (you don't want the group to be stacked with seniors), graduate students, at least one faculty member and at least one staff member. The appropriateness of these ratios will vary according to the issue, but you want a diverse group no matter what. This will make it much easier to build the group later, and you will also have the benefit of differing points of view that will usefully inform how you present the issue, and the tactics you use.

ARLENE

You need to be aware of issues around diversity, not merely look for "diverse" people to include in your group. For example, during post-election [2016] mobilization many groups on campus randomly cc'ed black and brown activists to their correspondence without asking for our consent or interest to be included. This inconsiderate and unsafe move was made with the intention of "including" a "diverse" core. We need to be thinking of equity instead.

It might be that a movement on campus is made of only POC or only women/femme people, and the change they enact will affect everyone on campus. You need to respect past groups' efforts and collaborate/consult with them but sometimes the labor needs to land more on white and cis het and more wealthy and male folks, which can look like the core group comprising of a less "diverse" (less male for example) group and the outer levels (considered more grunt work) comprised of diverse "privilege-heavy" people. The shots need to be called by the most marginalized in our communities and the work that puts people in danger needs to be carried out by those with more leverage/power.

DESTINY

I absolutely loathe the word "minority." Here is the place to actually name the groups of people who have made impacts on campus organizing and say why these groups (Black people, Native people, LGBT people) need to be in those groups, and not just as tokens but as leaders. Especially since, throughout Princeton's history, it has almost always been those folks who have actually shaken things up at Princeton... I don't know if the numbers of [faculty and staff] matter as much. Faculty are great mentors and listeners but I don't think they ought to be part of any organizing group necessarily.

MICAH

Totally agree that diversity is important, but it needs to go beyond just representation—it's important to not just include different voices but to be led, directed, and informed by the voices of those who are most impacted by the issue. For SPEAR, we're clearly organizing around an issue that disproportionately affects people of color and those living in poverty, and we still have work to do in making sure that we center voices of color in leadership. In addition, the voices we would want most are the ones most excluded from Princeton: currently and formerly incarcerated people. In recognition of that, however, in planning our annual conference, we were really intentional that our speakers were mainly formerly incarcerated individuals and folks of color.

On First Steps

The first steps that a group takes often reveal its priorities. Once an initial group is formed, David recommends members brainstorm a tentative list of demands and start researching the issues at hand. While this was helpful in creating successful issue-based campaigns, it was less so in making sustainable, long-term structures. Arlene emphasizes that the group's needs to first define its raison d'être in the form of principles and methodology as well as familiarize itself with past and current groups that work on similar issues beforehand.

DAVID

Once you have a core group set, you need to have an initial meeting. This meeting is crucial for getting the campaign off on the right foot. The meeting should be well-planned by 2 or 3 members of the core group so that everything gets accomplished and no one person dominates the agenda. The goals of the first meeting are two-fold. First, the issue needs to be identified, and an initial list of demands needs to be formulated... The list will be changed countless times over the next few weeks of your campaign, and the demands will reflect the research the group comes up with, but there needs to be an initial list.

ARLENE

It's too early to identify demands. You need to meet with different parts of campus or work on establishing yourselves as a group or similar activities before you have a sense of what your demands will be. You can start thinking about demands but you're not quite there yet with drafting a list.

Demands aren't the crux of the organizing group because that would center outside actions and structures. So for example, to focus demands as the crux for PULPO would mean something like this: we as people who want to change the retention rate for Latinx students organize in this group to achieve x change. It's kind of a flat purpose. When in reality our focus is more like: we as individuals who have been historically excluded and oppressed within institutions of higher education and the nation at large come together to provide community and support and mobilization for our respective communities, of which retention issues are included. If the demand is the focus then the group would disband when that demand is met or not met, but to build a sustainable organization you need to be motivated by something deeper and more personal.

On the Decision-Making Process

ARLENE

You need at least a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority unless at least one person strongly believes the action goes against the principles of the organization. If, after an extended conversation at the next meeting, a decision is not obtained then you decide whether you would like to pursue the issue as an organization or individually without the organization name or if you want to pass the project to an allied/ neighboring organization.

MICAH

People feeling responsibility is one of the most important parts of a group—if one doesn't feel that it ultimately reflects on them or that they are ultimately responsible for the success of the operation, the team is going to dwindle real fast.

DAVID

It is important that everyone has a hand in making decisions—not just because democracy is good in principle, but because it leads to better decisions. Some groups have attempted to act by “consensus”, which means that everyone in the group has to agree before a decision is made. At Princeton, these groups have so far failed because meetings are way too long and no one takes final responsibility for anything. There may yet be a way to make this work, and it would be great if it did. The best system we've encountered is a compromise between consensus and majority rule. The WROC group agreed that as long as at least $\frac{2}{3}$ of the group agreed to a decision at a meeting, it would go through.

On Leveraging Power

DAVID

The administration will try to co-op [sic] your campaign at every turn, but the most insidious undercutters are your supporters who will discourage you from doing things that really embarrass the university.

TESS

Yes!!! Remember that we don't owe the administration anything. We embarrass the University because the University does things that it should be embarrassed about. As students, we are entitled to make change at the place we live and learn. As human beings and organizers, our allegiance is to our cause and our politics OVER our university.

DAVID

Activists need to be Organization Kids too: not in the sense that they need to accede to power, but that they have to be every bit as organized as the administration will be, and certainly more organized and informed than potential student objectors. Remember that the administrators are paid to deal with your campaign.

NICKY

This cannot be emphasized enough.

DAVID

Mass turnout events get the biggest bang for your organizing buck. They increase the size of your base of support; they draw media; they put embarrassing public pressure on the administration, they motivate your group, relieve stress, and make everyone feel empowered (there nothing greater than screaming at the top of your lungs with 300 other people, especially at staid Princeton).

MICAH

There have been countless protests where 10-20 people stand outside of Frist and chant—the administration loves this, because it doesn't do anything to them. You have to disrupt University events, or at least do it in front of administrators or outside of meetings. Sometimes it seems like protests are more for the people protesting than for the cause itself.



On Ensuring Continuity

The manual's section on "ensuring continuity," at four sentences, is notably brief. It cites the manual's existence as a method, but says itself that "manuals aren't enough." Despite this, it offers little else, ending on a strangely hasty note. In the spirit of progress, I ventured a little beyond the guide's territory and sought out new advice from veteran student activists on how to ensure continuity.

I asked Daniel Teehan, a 2017 graduate who was the former president of SPEAR and an organizer with PPPD for advice. "I would say that it's important that organizations create enough structure that the group doesn't have to continuously reinvent itself, while leaving room for necessary improvements and for giving new leaders a sense of ownership over the group," he stated. This entails creating a central-

ized way to "organize knowledge and maintain group history, set procedures for elections and group meetings."

Specifically, an important protocol to establish is how to deal with interpersonal conflict and abuse, which Arlene cited as a leading cause for organization dissolution. "As organizers you need to sit down every year or semester and decide how conflicts will be resolved and how

violence will be confronted." Oftentimes in activist scenes, particularly identity-based ones, the people with whom you organize are those with whom you study and play, making conflict resolution essential.

Even when organizations don't suffer from infighting, they can still lose energy after key leaders graduate. To prevent this, Daniel urged finding ways, such as holding annual conferences, to maintain con-

by whatever issue the group is working on" is a useful albeit time-consuming method, according to Daniel. "Having annual meetings is a good way of establishing and turning over important relationships, while ensuring a level of continuity and some kind of institutional memory.

Additionally, establishing regular projects such as SPEAR's letter-writing campaign to incarcerated folks, P.S. Solidarity,

and passing down their management to younger members is an easy way to relay knowledge without starting entirely new projects. Such projects can teach "rising leaders the ropes of navigating the Princeton bureaucracy and figuring out how the group works," Daniel stated.

Reflected in the guide or not, the labor of organizing is also emotional labor. Activists invest their hearts and

souls into projects that are at times uncertain, discouraging, and taxing. Individuals, as much as organizations, risk burning out. In light of this reality, emotional honesty and support can go a long way in keeping a group together. "It's a pretty personal thing, but I think having leaders of the group who are open about the difficulties of the work in terms of stress and emotional labor is important."

Oftentimes in activist scenes, particularly identity-based ones, the people with whom you organize are those with whom you study and play, making conflict resolution essential.

nections between alumni and younger group members. Doing so not only establishes the organization's presence and injects regularity, but enables younger members to gain a sense of history and alumni to stay connected.

To combat leadership turnover, setting up an advisory board composed of "alumni, professors, local advocates, and people directly impacted



Experience First, Ideas Second: The Left on Campus and Beyond

By NORA SCHULTZ

This June, the popular North American socialist magazine *Jacobin* published an article by Freddie deBoer titled “Student Activism Isn’t Enough: Eight reasons why universities can’t be the primary site of left organizing.” Among them, he lists four-year student turnover, priority of academic work, and incompatibility of growing as an activist with running an essential site of organizing.

He’s not incorrect—the conditions he cites routinely curb our progress. As activists, we fight our classmates as well as ourselves to make headway on Princeton-centered causes.

Our deficiencies affirm that we couldn’t shoulder a movement for—and under the watch of—the world. DeBoer emphasizes that his article holds “empirical claims, not normative ones,” and that he is “not saying it would be good or bad for campus to be the key site of a given movement’s organizing strategy.”

Yet colleges are even still more complicated than their logistical setup, and in fact the normative argument that he avoids here is the important one: even if it were possible, a campus-grown left would be destructive to pursue.

Since the anti-monarchists

sat to one side of their representative during the French revolutionary parliament in 1789, the political “left” has been defined by egalitarian ends. It champions a just distribution of provisions for survival and for dignity, and in turn, freedom to those whom the political structure disadvantages. It elevates workers because they are oppressed through their exclusion from these provisions, and often face identity-based subjugation as well. Yet it would be false to assume that addressing class conflict will at once dismantle all other unjust hierarchies. Rather, the focus is utilitarian: when unified, workers hold the

decisive power to deliver (or not) the material and financial goods that maintain the existing societal order. In those ways they are the beneficiaries of, and also the means for creating this equitable and freer world.

The “working class” is increasingly difficult to outline, but academia does retain a sliver of it—adjunct professors and graduate students research and the latter often have contractual teaching obligations; while financial hardship and aid packages force undergraduates into on- and off-campus jobs that invoke the union struggles of any wage labor position. Nevertheless, a school’s institutional character does not change with the identities of the former’s transient population; student workers cannot confer their own duality onto their schools. There is a fixed societal purpose in the networks, physical space, and finances of elite colleges. Using these as a means is not an equivalent of seeking out or building up an infrastructure free of their baggage.

Can we accept dissonance between institutional goals

and those of our movement, if campuses can provide the resources we sorely need? Certainly, students at Kent State University, Berkeley, and even Princeton demonstrated passionately against the Vietnam War, and exerted a significant influence on public opinion. But while some of the outrage was moral, students were nonetheless targets of the draft. We can’t count on them to act so decisively on issues outside of their immediate self-interest. University communities should and undoubtedly will continue to take up fights for progressive reforms, but we can’t pretend that those targeted campaigns represent a comprehensive movement. They are branches, but not the underlying bedrock of the left’s reason for being. We would be unable to reach problems at their roots if we were to sow ourselves in academia.

This is because the left chases a paradoxical aim, one that resembles inventing a color: imagine liberation while our relationships, our instincts, the terms through which we understand the world, are products

of the system that necessitates the task. Forging a route that escapes this lens requires exceptionally self-aware and careful methodology, and the strategic direction of a university-led left would be inseparable from the class position of its institution. Instead, the best shot is with the people who know the issues intimately, will inherit the changes, and hold the leverage we will need for closing the distance.

The way forward, then, is clear: to pursue this better world, acting from within Princeton or any venue of its status, we can align our activism with the impetus of the working class. The campus left has a place; not because of the media attention it receives, but because theory is hand-in-hand with practical organizing, adamantly visionary through the failures and periods of stagnation that come with progress. As this start of this school year finds us in a radically different political consciousness than the last, we can begin it with a commitment to working with, as opposed to independently of communities right outside our iron gates and the workers with whom we coexist inside. In doing so we can mirror the alliance that the left needs to build universally, the one that can both create, and refuse to settle. It’s fortunate that deBoer is correct in his practical diagnosis, because those who are tempted by opportunity won’t get very far. But when our strategy is only as deep as the next easiest step, we dismiss our dream and we likely fail our people.

Academia is fraught, but learning is selfless and communal. When we bring those values to the struggle, we fulfill our highest purpose.

The way forward, then, is clear: to pursue this better world, we can align our activism with the impetus of the the working class.



A HISTORY AND ANALYSIS OF WORKERS' RIGHTS ACTIVISM AT PRINCETON

By TÉA WIMER

The Workers' Rights Organizing Committee (WROC) came at the turn of the century, when Princeton's campus was flooded with human rights concerns, including the anti-sweatshop movement and outrage against the University's hiring of the infamous bioethicist Peter Singer. While it would be unreasonable to expect current students to be familiar with every activist movement of seventeen years ago, it is curious that workers' rights organizing have since laid dormant, and hence been largely forgotten by our institutional memory. This past spring, however, the

issue resurfaced when a group of roughly two hundred—undergraduates, graduate students, and campus dining service and facilities members—came together to march during Princeton Preview, which will be detailed later in this article.

I say the wane and now resurgence of concern is curious because workers have never left this campus. They are always here when students are away on break, and even when students sleep. Why is student-organized advocacy only sporadic? Active from 2000 to 2003, WROC was the last to bring it to Princeton's campus until new efforts this

past spring. The group provoked discussion among students and faculty, while bringing the lowest-paid campus workers to the forefront, amplifying voices that had been previously unheard and ignored.

The committee fizzled out with the graduating class of 2003. While there isn't a universal reason for the evaporation of activist organizations, it is possible to gain insight into WROC's through the eyes of its organizers. After conducting interviews, a clear picture came forward: that of an organization started by passionate yet young activists who didn't know how to foresee its future, but who

also simply did not have the time amid Princeton's strenuous academics and the urgency of their organizing efforts.

WROC was founded officially by Nicholas Guyatt '03 Ph.D., Vincent Lloyd '03, Julia Salzman '02, and David Tannenbaum '01, although interviews made it clear that the project was Tannenbaum's, inspired by his year off from Princeton spent working with the advocacy group Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) in Brooklyn. Returning to campus, he, along with the other organizers, used his newly acquired and invaluable skills to perform research into campus workers' economic situation, meet with administration representatives and union members, and publish articles about their findings. Tannenbaum described

the importance of applying "real world" organizing skills as taking a "sledgehammer to a nail," pointing out that key players in policy and community decisions do not have to respond to demonstrations, protests, or other tactics, while Princeton's administration must respond quickly to its students, even if not productively.

WROC's first demands were for a Cost Of Living Adjustment (COLA) for workers, to mitigate inflation and the ever-rising cost of living, and also for raising the minimum wage; the latter of which the University committed to granting. The committee also dedicated itself to eradicating the use of temporary workers. Hired to fill in for others on leave, or for

"temporary projects," their attractiveness is that without a union, they are ineligible for the same benefits as unionized workers, and are not guaranteed consistent work hours. It saved money and cut corners, but undermined the bargaining power of the union. Furthermore, a 2002 ninety-two question survey of the lowest-paid revealed additional

Finance and Administration, (at the time, Richard Spies '72)—an indication that administration considered workers a financial burden before considering them humans.

In hindsight, the founders expressed a desire to have cultivated leaders in the classes behind them and to have responded with additional issues once former Presidents Harold Shapiro and Shirley Tilghman met the demand for a higher minimum wage. But more significant than idle wishes, those criticisms represent the troubles that allowed WROC to end. Ultimately, the group found itself without much wind in its sails. Once the committee had exhausted all apparent channels for reaching its goals, administration was still able to stave off the further demands. The activists took all the steps they knew

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issues. The "pay for performance" program was brought to light as leaving nearly full discretion on raises to the whims of managers. Many reported not feeling that their work was rewarded, and also that they desired more diversity in their workplace.

WROC asked students out on Prospect Avenue to wear stickers in support of campus workers; they marched from Firestone Plaza to Jadwin Hall, conducted surveys with workers, and met with administrators who were most involved with workers—as a side note, it is telling that in seeking meetings with administrators most involved with workers' rights, students were mainly directed to the Vice President of

how to, and ultimately only negotiated one or two of the plethora of issues they could have addressed. When administration conceded to budge, the most minimal victories appeared huge, and the very fact of their success eclipsed all of remaining demands and platforms.

The committee had also decided consciously to keep the fight isolated within the campus. Guyatt '03 Ph.D. illustrates: "Although there was a good deal of organizing going on back then at Yale and Harvard, among other places, we mostly ran WROC as an independent entity." Although this decision was made in an effort to respect the SEIU Local 175—the union administering

ultimate worker-university negotiations—it also isolated Princeton as a campus culture and worked against leftist organizing outside of this “Orange Bubble.”

In light of these errors and obstacles, WROC ended up as a single-issue activist group, as opposed to a sustained structural organizing committee. It was run by an excellent founding cohort followed by less effective leadership afterwards and, in that, left any potential to connect with the greater labor movement in the United States untapped.

Returning to the present, the Spring 2017 march, organized by the Young Democratic Socialists (YDS) of Princeton, came after a pair of Northeastern snow storms during which workers were controversially asked to stay overnight on cots in the Frist basement multipurpose rooms with limited privacy so that students could wake to a functioning campus the next morning.

While most would not argue that the overnight stay was necessary, those who marched with YDS believed that workers deserved more from their employer—better accommodations at the very least. In addition to this action, many students contributed to the USG

(Undergraduate Student Government) project which sought to highlight how important workers are to the campus. The administration was, however, quickly able to elicit warm feelings for labor workers from students in the aftermath. Through official statements and responses to the yDS action, it pushed an image of happy workers who love their jobs, and in turn deflected the call for better conditions. Even when that’s true, do workers enjoying their work preclude asking for better conditions? The question went largely unanswered and ignored. Administration controlled the public narrative surrounding workers, as it did in the time that WROC was active.

The precarious nature of student-laborer relations complicate figuring out how to respond to the administration’s tactics. When a student organization at an elite university looks to connect with a union in solidarity with the workers that clean up for them on a day-to-day basis, how can they do so without calling that same hierarchy into effect? Dissenting public voices during WROC’s time highlight this apparent irony. Furthermore, at what point do students stop speaking and give

room for the amplified voices of workers? Of course, a valid gut reaction is that students are never meant to speak for workers in the first place, but rather, to clear the way for worker concerns to be heard. But how do students make that space? I would argue that the space is made through student voices reaching administration in tandem with those of workers, informed through worker opinions and concerns. Yet other facets of identity complicate our reckoning further: Princeton students are prominently white, wealthy and have a generational expectation of educational opportunities; on the other side, Princeton’s campus workers include immigrants, people of color, and non-native English speakers. Dr. Nick Guyatt ’03 expressed the difficulty of facing these questions, saying: “We made our demands, got some of them accepted, and then we moved on. We didn’t create durable structures for, say, a standing committee bringing students and workers together around ongoing worker issues. There was a very mild politics to that, in terms of the unions: SEIU and AFSCME were the proper venues for [strategizing] about worker remuneration and con-

When a student organization at an elite university looks to connect with a union in solidarity with the workers who clean up for them, how can they do so without calling that same hierarchy into effect?

Princeton is not the exception; it should be the example for relations between other service workers' unions and corporations and universities.

ditions, and one challenge for students is to find a way to be helpful without actually stepping on the toes of the labour unions—i.e., the bodies constituted to represent ordinary workers.”

Despite these shortcomings, self-criticisms, and ethical questions, WROC also was able to inspire momentous change and profound discussion surrounding the labor situation on Princeton's campus. Not only did the University commit to re-examining its policy on temporary workers, but it also committed to raising wages ahead of the projected schedule. President Shirley Tilghman, his successor, also supported raising the minimum wage for campus workers. Now, the SEIU Local #175 contract with the University sets the lowest wage for workers at around \$14.75 per hour, far above that of most of the country.

And as expressed through opinion pieces of the era published in the Daily Princetonian,

WROC forced students to think about the privilege that they held over workers, ultimately prompting appreciation for those who made their comfort at Princeton possible. Although such relationships remain fraught, students are beginning again to take steps in worker advocacy. Around the spring 2017 action, YDS asked students to consider how they viewed campus workers. This left a lasting impression on many students, especially as Princeton's campus community becomes increasingly diverse in terms of class and race. Twenty-one percent of Princeton's incoming class is eligible for Pell Grants, (government subsidies for higher education) and 53.4% identified as “ethnic minorities.” The implication of these developments is more students with family members who work low-income jobs much like the workers on their campus. Equally important, YDS' interviews with workers involved

in the labor union illuminate a resounding appreciation for students' concern for their fair treatment. They have been left with the lasting impression that students do care about them, and will demand respect from the University alongside them. And this coalition building is the essence of community organizing.

Yet my final concerns are about how WROC's 2000 to 2003 work, and now the renewed interest in labor relations here at Princeton, fit within a general left movement. The research I have done, even including some of the interviews, reveal an alarming trend one of exceptionalism. The idea is that Princeton is “morally responsible” to pay workers better than the national average, due to the incredibly large endowment that Princeton enjoys—now considerably higher than it was between 2000 and 2003. But this isolates Princeton from the general background in the United States of labor relations; it tells us that the university should only have to consider treating workers fairly because of its endowment and exceptional fairy tale community created within the Orange Bubble. Campus leftists should reject this idea if they hope to connect to the larger purpose of left activism. Princeton is not the exception; it should be the example for relations between other service workers' unions and corporations and universities. Frankly, a living wage and dignity for workers, along with a functional relationship between unions and the businesses and organizations that depend upon them for profit is not something that should only exist in the magical fairy tale world that Princeton sells. It should be non-negotiable that if we fight for one, we fight for all.

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