



# Introduction

We're always told that if we work hard we'll succeed.

We wake up in the morning, get ready, then go off to school, or work, or work AND school, so that we can have enough money to go about our lives today and get the credentials we need for tomorrow.

We spend all of our free time studying or trying to relax because of all the pressure.

Many of us come from immigrant families, who came to the US for freedom and economic opportunities. Some of us are descendants of slaves, and we're told that now that we have a black president, racism is pretty much a thing of the past. We're told that now, if we just work hard, if we obey the rules and don't cause trouble, we can all live the American Dream.

But is this dream a reality?



# No!

You've probably noticed that the price of food and rent is increasing, it's getting harder and harder to find a job, and the cost of tuition is going up.

Funding for education is being destroyed, public schools are closing, university budgets are being slashed, people can't afford to stay in the neighborhoods their families grew up in and worked to build, we have to pay more for our basic needs while unemployment is rising, debt is STILL increasing, and so on...

For most of us who come from families that aren't rich, who are people of color and/or immigrants, the American Dream is seeming more and more like an illusion.

So what's really going on?



## SOME FACTS:

—> Statistics show that there is now an average of six applicants for every available job. For many jobs that once required only a high school degree or GED, employers are asking for graduate degrees.

—> The jobs that are available pay less and less, while it's getting more expensive to get by.

—> Once we get jobs, most of them are dead-end. For example, if I get a job washing dishes in a restaurant, it's unlikely that I'll be promoted to manager, especially if I'm a person of color and don't look or act like a future CEO.

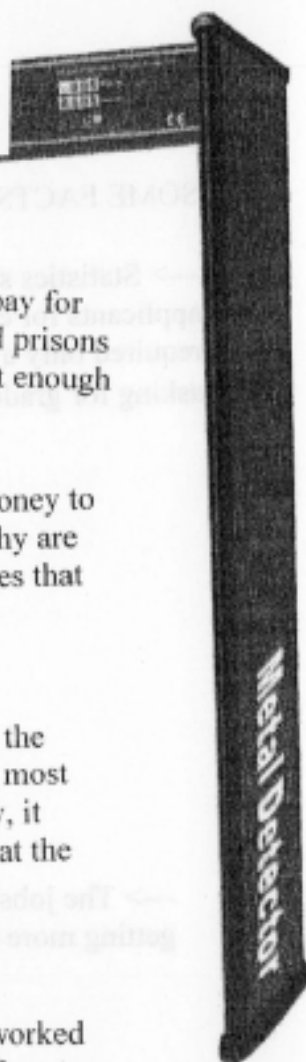
so what's going on?

Why does New York City have enough money to pay for more and more police officers, metal detectors, and prisons to warehouse members of our communities, but not enough to give us a decent education?

It just doesn't add up. If there's really not enough money to pay for education, health care, and transportation, why are bankers floated billions of dollars to fix their mistakes that many of us are paying dearly for?

The truth is, we're living in a society that prevents the majority of people from living well and that keeps most people in a permanent state of insecurity. This way, it seems as if the only option is to continue working at the crap jobs that make other people rich.

We've been told we're failing because we haven't worked hard enough, but the truth is they WANT and NEED us to 'fail' so they can keep making money off our backs.



BUT A SHIFT IS HAPPENING



People are starting to reclaim houses, land, and schools. People are saying NO to the destruction of our families and communities. We are fighting back as we have always done. And in fact, we are part of a long history of people that have had to push back against the powers that be.

This is a history that we are still in the process of making, and what's most important to remember is that there are more of us than there are of 'them.' There is power in our numbers.

Let's ask ourselves, what future do we want? And let's ask ourselves, what do we have to build and what do we have to destroy in order to get there?



Pass



Alarm

**Multi-Zone Metal Detector**

# The continuing deterioration of student life

"My ideal college experience would be full of freedom, where I can study whatever I want and I don't need to care about how others think I should learn." (Hunter College student)

"From my college experience I am Hoping to learn things that will affect not only myself but the world and learn how to make educated decisions in areas like politics, health, environment and life in general. We have the access in college to become educated in various fields and to become well-rounded and wise people." (Queens College student)

For some, college is something to look forward to, a place to learn and grow and explore the world.

For most students, however, college is a way to get a job, a financial investment in their futures.

"I am in college to gain an education in order to succeed in my career path." (Queens College student)

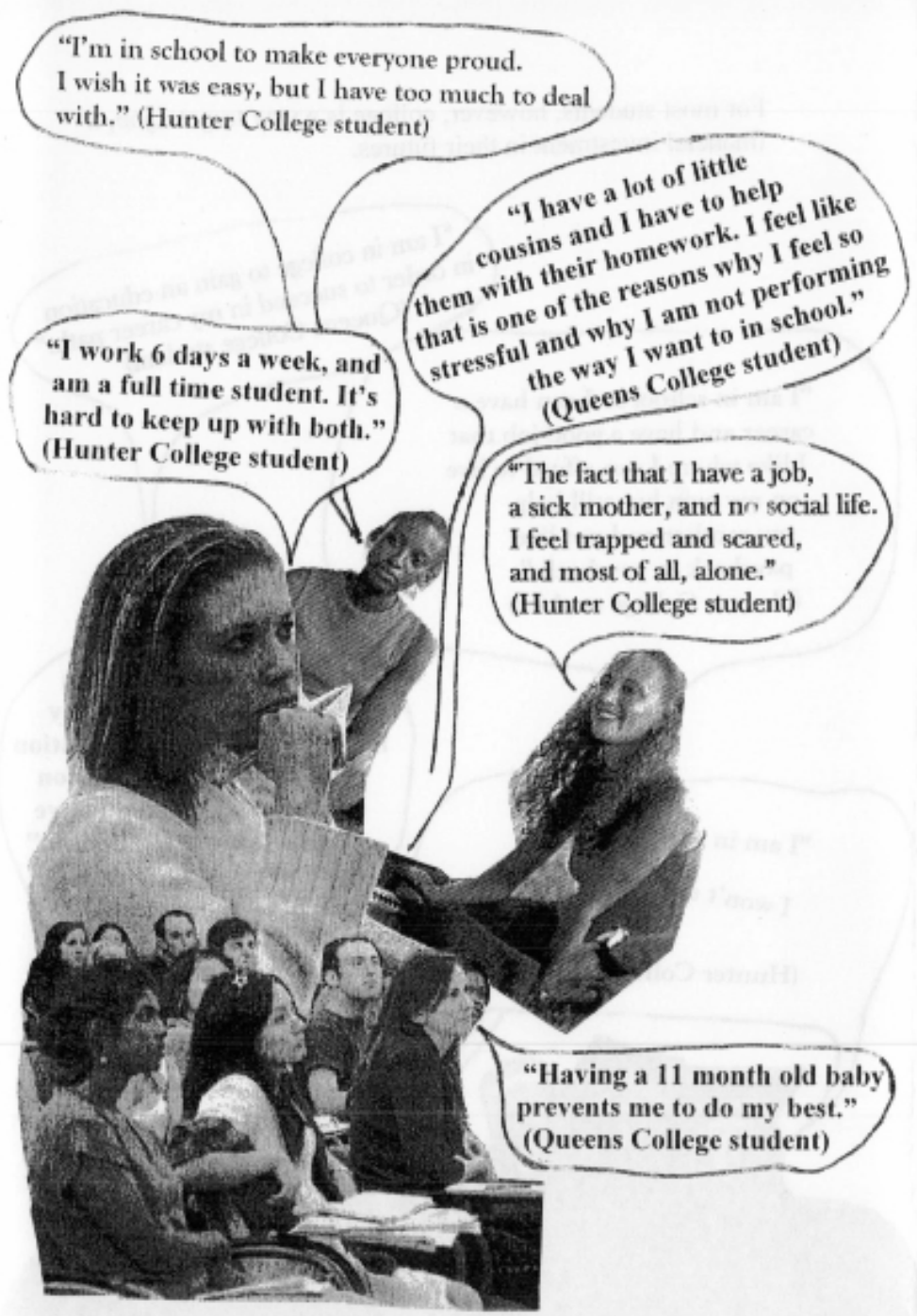
"I am in school so I can have a career and have a good job that I like where I can afford to live on my own but still help my mother and not live paycheck to paycheck." (Hunter College student)

"I am in school to obtain a financial security in my future. I feel that an education is an important motivation towards your ability to live comfortably in the future." (Hunter College student)

"I am in school so I won't end up in a low paying job." (Hunter College student)







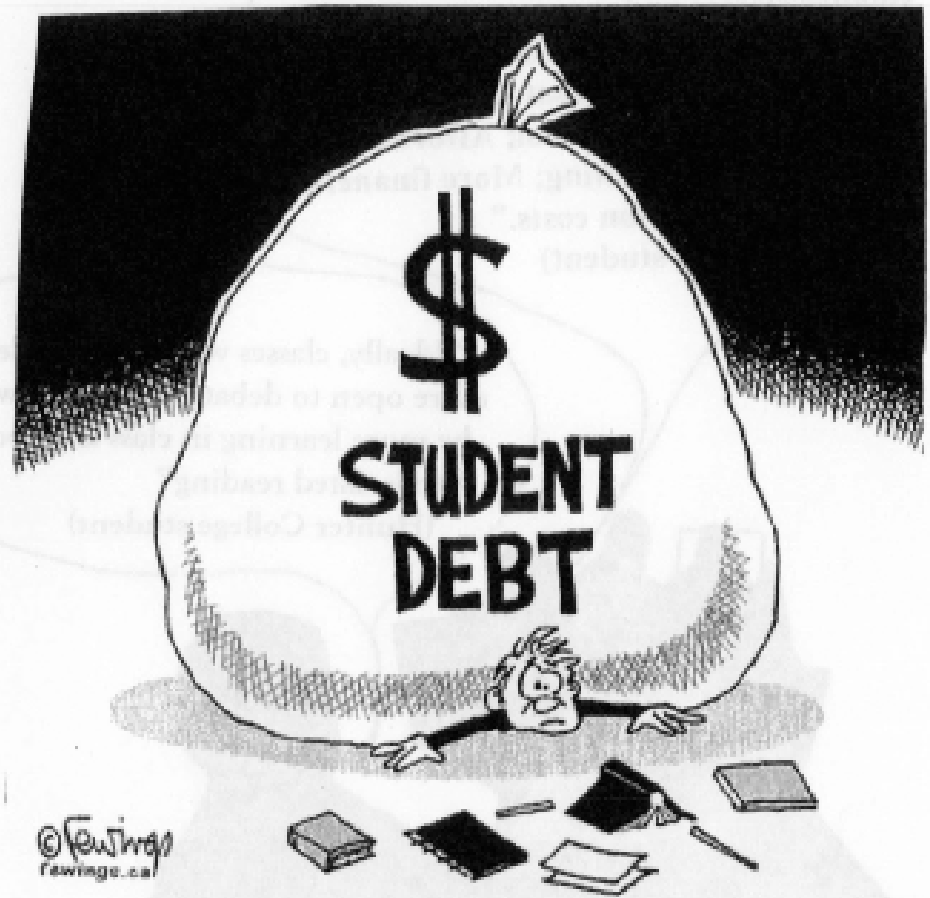
"I'm in school to make everyone proud. I wish it was easy, but I have too much to deal with." (Hunter College student)

"I have a lot of little cousins and I have to help them with their homework. I feel like that is one of the reasons why I feel so stressful and why I am not performing the way I want to in school." (Queens College student)

"I work 6 days a week, and am a full time student. It's hard to keep up with both." (Hunter College student)

"The fact that I have a job, a sick mother, and no social life. I feel trapped and scared, and most of all, alone." (Hunter College student)

"Having a 11 month old baby prevents me to do my best." (Queens College student)

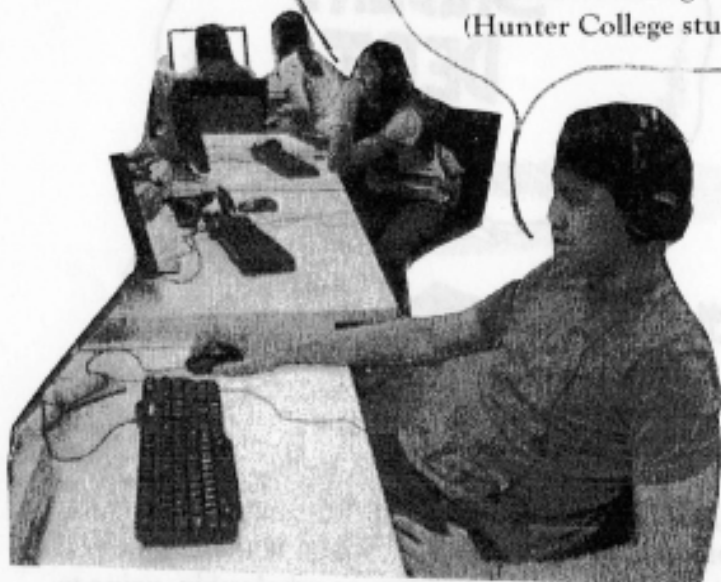


College degrees have become the gatekeepers of the job market, but college is not free—and it's only getting more and more expensive. With the exception of those with wealthy parents and the select few on scholarship, going to college means taking out loans. So students are paying to access the job market, and going into debt in order to make money in a decent job.

As a result, we're spending our college years struggling to make ends meet, struggling to balance jobs, school work, and all of our other responsibilities, including trying to enjoy life on occasion! In the end, most students feel stressed out and unable to do as well as we hoped.

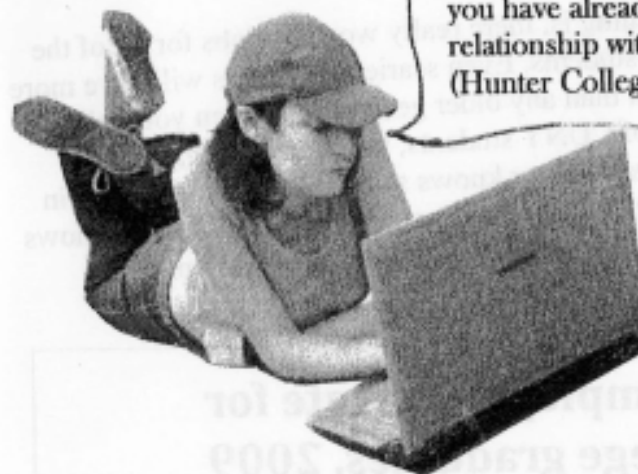
"My ideal college experience would be more time to study and less working; smaller classes and more personal relationships with professors; fun and educational activities that make me look forward to going to school; Affordable textbooks; Free printing; More financial aid and lower tuition costs."  
(Hunter College student)

"Ideally, classes would be smaller, more open to debate, and there would be more learning in class as opposed to isolated reading"  
(Hunter College student)



For those who somehow manage to balance it all, school life itself is deteriorating. Class sizes are getting larger. Teachers have less and less time to prepare lessons and grade assignments. Students have more and more work responsibilities that cut into the time they can spend on their studies, and more and more debt to stress out about – which puts a dark cloud over everything that we do and makes us feel trapped, even when we are spending our time trying to learn, expand, and develop ourselves as free individuals.

"I would change the advising program at Hunter. It is very hard to get answers you need regarding registration, grades, schedules, degree tracks, etc. unless you have already established a relationship with an advisor."  
(Hunter College student)



"If I could change anything about CUNY, it would be more people that care and are willing to take action."  
(Hunter College student)

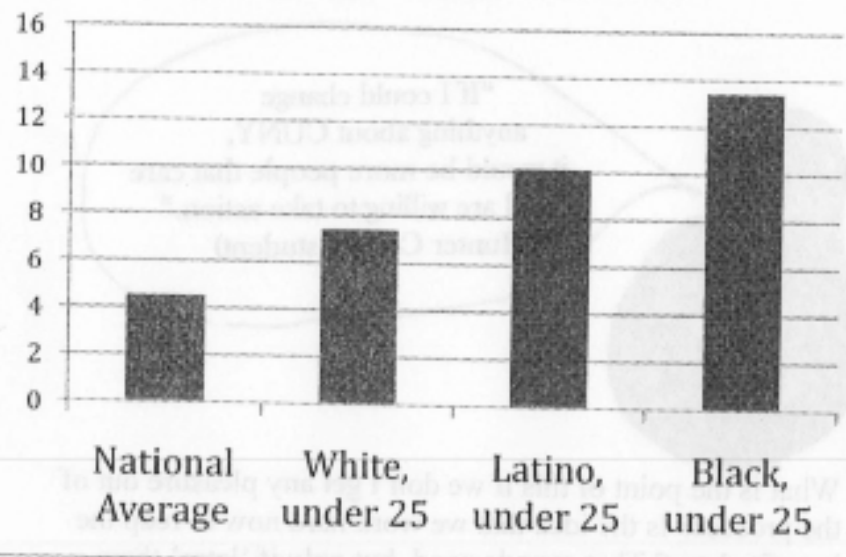


What is the point of this if we don't get any pleasure out of the process? Is the idea that we work hard now to reap the benefits later? That sounds good, but only if 'later' there are jobs for us, only if 'later' all of the different careers that we've thought about will pay us enough to live comfortably. Maybe then we'll be able to relax. But are these jobs that we're promised real?

# On getting jobs

The scary thing is, there really won't be jobs for all of the graduating students. Even scarier, graduates will have more student debt than any older generation. When you poll a classroom of CUNY students, you hear the same story. Who has lost work or knows someone who's lost work in the last year? 95% of hands go up. Who's in debt or knows someone in severe debt? The same hands go up.

### Unemployment Rate for college graduates, 2009



While tuition at CUNY schools has been rising over the last thirty years, wages have fallen. That means we need more and more credit cards and loans to MAKE UP for the fact that we can't get jobs that pay enough!

The bad news – which the mainstream media tries to hide – is that things are probably going to get steadily worse in the coming months and years. The proposed budget for New York State this year reduces funding to elementary and secondary education by about 5% (roughly \$1,100,000,000.00); it reduces funding to CUNY and SUNY schools by almost 6% (about \$191,000,000.00). What is the government doing to close the enormous gap this will leave in school funding? (see sidebar for details)

They are cutting and restricting tuition support for poor students. They are mandating regular yearly tuition increases. They are cutting wages and making the working conditions worse for people doing construction and repairs in our schools.

**WORKERS VS. STUDENTS?  
BUT STUDENTS ARE  
WORKERS!**

It's easy to see all this as a personal problem, as YOUR problem that YOU have to deal with. When we look around us these days, it seems like this is just the way of the world—schools, organizations, programs, and social services are losing funding everywhere, just like they have for the last 25 years.

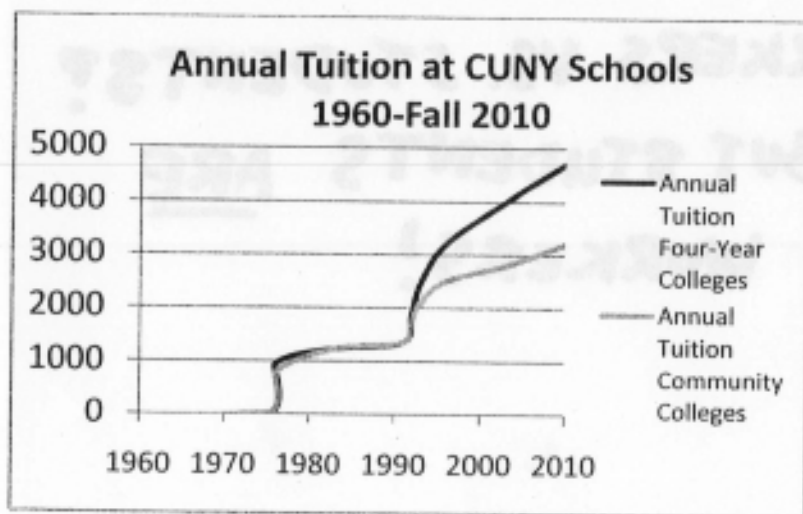
**BUT IT'S NOT A PERSONAL  
PROBLEM IF EVERYBODY'S  
FEELING IT.**

**IT'S SOMETHING  
BIGGER.**

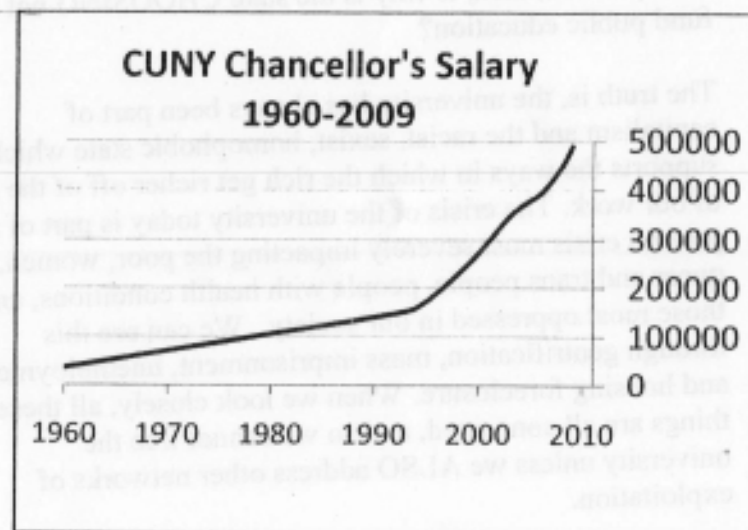
## THEY SAY THERE IS NO MONEY

They say we have to cut the education budget because we're in a crisis, and there's no money. They say there's no money for public healthcare, there's no money for smaller class sizes, there's no money for full-time, well paid faculty, there's no money to continue giving high school students free MTA cards . . . the list goes on and on.

But we've just watched the government find more than enough money to bail out the large financial institutions from their huge investment losses. We are also watching the government find more and more money to spend on military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, and more and more money to police the same people that there's no money to educate. Here at CUNY, we've been watching the chancellor's salary continue to rise, right alongside tuition...



← TUITION  
GOES UP  
AND UP...  
BUT WHERE  
DOES THE  
\$\$ GO? →





The truth is that there IS money to pay for education, transportation, and healthcare, if these were the priorities of our government. The government chose to give the bailout money to large banks instead of to homeowners facing foreclosure, and it's choosing to take money away from us and put it into policing and the military.

## **WE MUST ALWAYS REMEMBER, DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION, CUNY WAS FREE!**

History seems to be repeating itself. During the New York City fiscal crisis of 1975, CUNY began forcing students to pay for their tuition. Now with the current crisis, tuition is increasing dramatically. Are the hikes ever going to end?

The question, then, is why is the state CHOOSING not to fund public education?

The truth is, the university has always been part of capitalism and the racist, sexist, homophobic state which supports the ways in which the rich get richer off of the rest of our work. The crisis of the university today is part of a general crisis most severely impacting the poor, women, queer and trans people, people with health conditions, and those most oppressed in our society. We can see this through gentrification, mass imprisonment, unemployment, and housing foreclosure. When we look closely, all these things are all connected, and so we cannot free the university unless we ALSO address other networks of exploitation.

## **RIISING TUITION\$\$\$**

has been used to keep some people out of universities, and more recently, to keep them in DEBT while they go to school. This is a way that they DISCIPLINE us. When we're all taking five or six classes, working two jobs, and juggling responsibilities at home, how can we possibly take time to organize and take chances to fight against the destruction of public education in New York City?

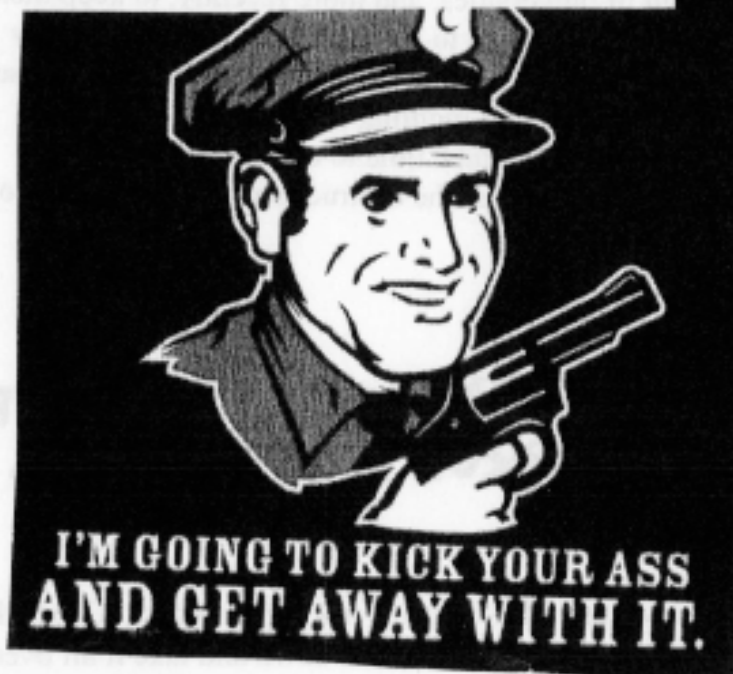
## **THAT'S EXACTLY WHY THEY KEEP US SO OVERWORKED & UNDERPAID.**

So that we feel like we can't risk fighting back. Cause they know if we did, we'd tear it all down and take it all over.

In an era where most people work in the service sector (like in restaurants, cafes, retail stores, call centers, etc), what business owners—and the politicians who need their support—need are plenty of workers to wash dishes, answer phones, and stock shelves (though there aren't even enough jobs like this for everyone who needs one!) What they don't need are too many people asking too many questions about why they have so much debt, so few job options, and such little hope of actually living the lives they want.

*So lets start asking those questions...*

# Police and prisons



Cops in the schools.  
Cops on the street.  
Cops in the subway stations.  
Cops eyeing you as they drive by.  
Cops, cops, everywhere.

Courtesy.  
Professionalism.  
Respect.

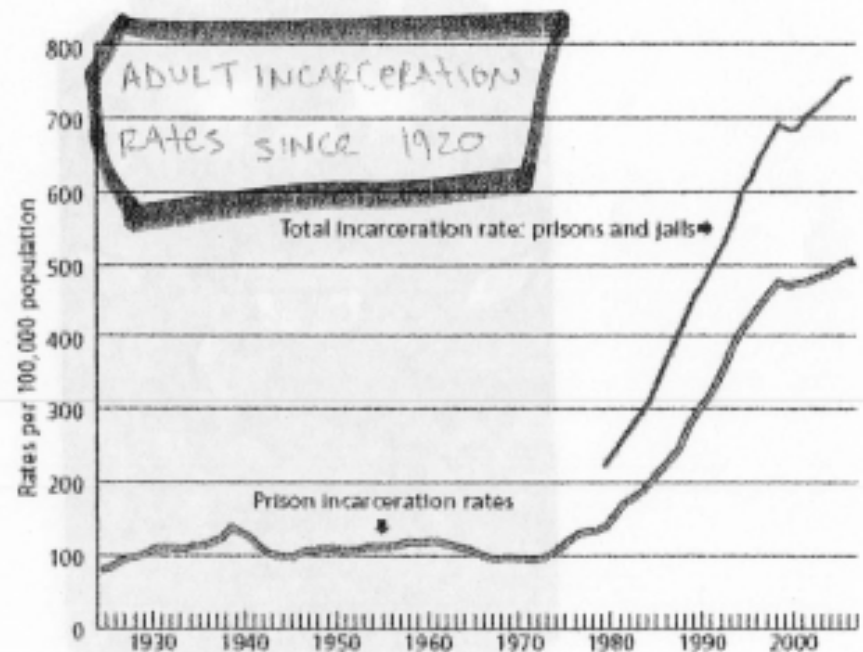
This is what you see on police cars. They pretend they're your friends.

But we know better:

Community fragmentation.  
Protecting private property.  
Repressing dissent and freedom.

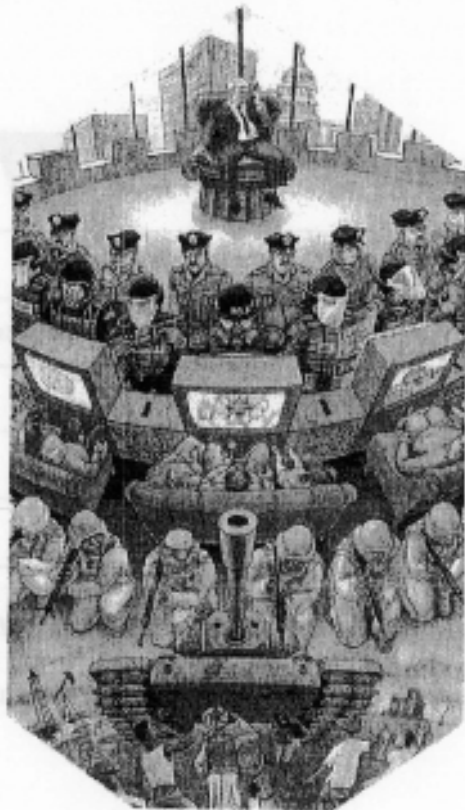
Since the 1980s, the number of people in prisons and with criminal records has increased dramatically in the US. As of last year, over 1 out of every 100 Americans was inside of a prison or jail!

Five percent—that's one out of every twenty—of all US black men were in prison. For black men aged 25-34, the number jumps to more than one in ten. Across age groups black men were between 5.7 and 8.5 times more likely than white men to be imprisoned. Black women were imprisoned at nearly four times the rate of white women (1).

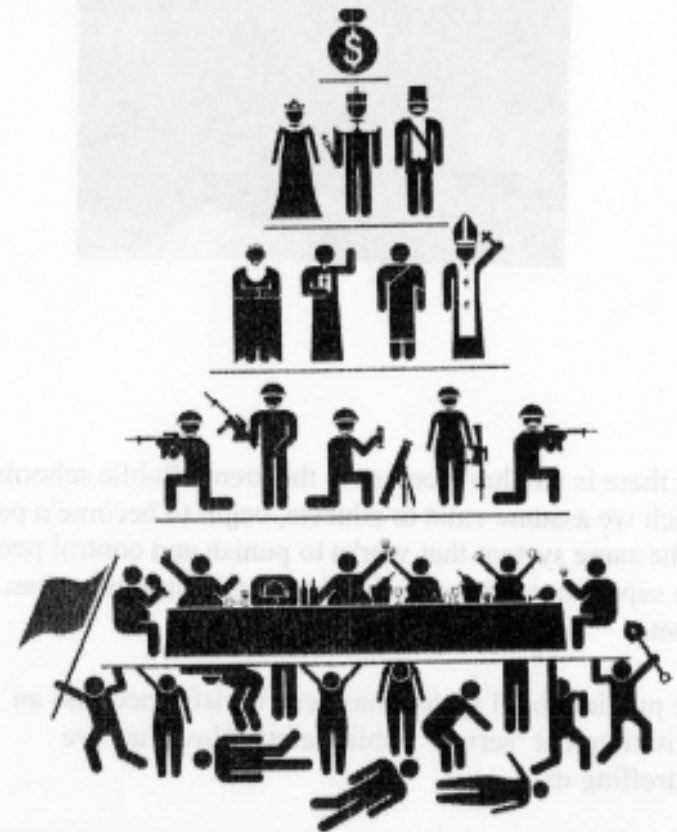


When a society's resources are only serving a few elites while remaining unavailable to the majority, folks get angry. The goal of the legal, economic, and political systems in the US, then, becomes to manage those angry people, the people most likely to rebel: people of color, young people, poor people, queer people, working people, unemployed people, homeless people, and women (even though there are mostly men in jail, this means women have to work more to pay the bills and take care of their families alone). There is nothing scarier to the rich than the rest of us getting together, organizing, and fighting back, using collective power to take what we deserve.

In the 1930s, workers rioted and struggled and took over their factories and the US government responded by giving SOME workers (mostly white, mostly men) more rights and benefits.

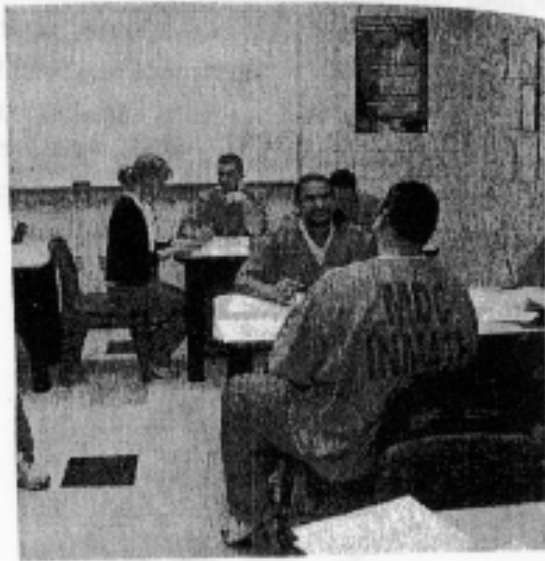


In the 1960s poor communities, people of color, and workers struggled and rioted and took control over their neighborhoods and workplaces and schools, and the US government responded by steadily increasing the amount of resources used to control, monitor, and incarcerate its citizens – more money to police, prisons, and other 'internal safety measures.'



The biggest indicator of this trend is the increasing amount of the federal budget going toward 'public safety,' in other words cops, courts, and cells. From the late 1960s to the present, funding for public safety has more than doubled (2).

As a society we've decided to up the budgets for police departments and prisons, instead of committing money for making schools and other social services better. The issue here is simple: money that could be used for one thing is being used for something else.



But there is another element to this trend. Public schools, which we assume exist to educate, begin to become a part of the same system that works to punish and control people. The separation between schools and prisons has broken down.

The public school system has been transformed into an institution that 'serves' public safety. How they are controlling us:

1. Schools increasingly resemble prisons. According to the New York Civil Liberties Union, 99,000 students must make their way through metal detectors to go to class every day. The number of School Safety Agents (SSAs – undertrained correctional personnel) in schools in New York outnumbers the total police forces of many large cities, including Boston, Washington DC, and Las Vegas (3).

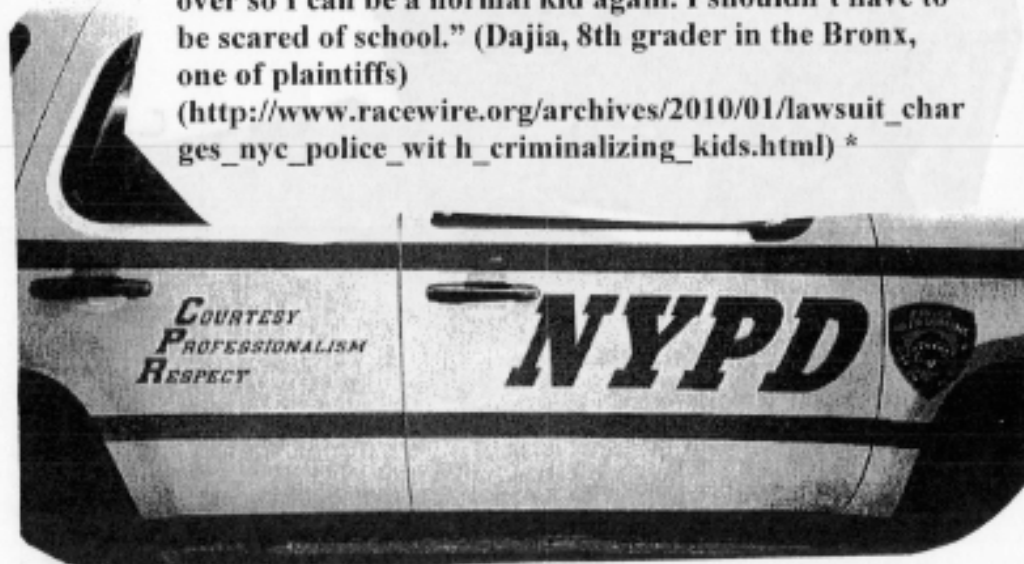
On January 20, 2010, lawyers filed a class-action lawsuit against the City of New York claiming School Safety Agents have repeatedly used excessive force to arrest students who are not committing crimes. These actions have terrified students and made them afraid to go to school or even transfer schools.

“When one of our clients was 11 years old, she was handcuffed and perp-walked into a police precinct for doing nothing more than doodling on a desk in erasable ink. Amazingly, no one in the police department or the school seemed to think there was anything wrong with that,” said Joshua Colangelo-Bryan, senior attorney at Dorsey & Whitney and co-counsel on the case.

“It’s a sad day when you need to resort to a lawsuit to keep an 11-year-old from being arrested for drawing on her desk, but in this case it is clear there is no alternative.” (<http://www.nyclu.org/news/nyclu-aclu-file-class-action-lawsuit-against-nypd-over-excessive-force-wrongful-arrests-new-york>) \*

“And I’m scared a lot of the time. I feel unsafe at school. I’m afraid that that School Safety Officers could attack me again for no reason. I just want the school year to be over so I can be a normal kid again. I shouldn’t have to be scared of school.” (Dajia, 8th grader in the Bronx, one of plaintiffs)

([http://www.racewire.org/archives/2010/01/lawsuit\\_charges\\_nyc\\_police\\_wit\\_h\\_criminalizing\\_kids.html](http://www.racewire.org/archives/2010/01/lawsuit_charges_nyc_police_wit_h_criminalizing_kids.html)) \*





2. Schools are becoming institutions of control that weed-out 'undesirable' and rebellious students. Many people call this the 'School-to-Prison Pipeline.' Others refer to these trends as a 'push-out' problem (certainly not a 'drop-out' problem). Students are being handcuffed and arrested for things like talking back, being late, or having cell phones (4). Often the students punished for this behavior are those students with specialized needs that are not being addressed. Disciplinary policy, then, criminalizes the behavior of the students 'at the bottom,' taking them to prison—the School-to-Prison Pipeline. And of course this hits African-American youth the hardest, more than twice as hard as any other population.

Why does the US spend more on prisons than the total economic output of some entire nations? Why are schools looking and feeling more and more like jails? Why are entire neighborhoods being put on lock down?



ONE OF THESE BUILDINGS IS A SCHOOL THE OTHER TWO ARE PRISONS.

A.



B.

C.



CAN YOU TELL WHICH IS THE SCHOOL?

3. Police resources are used against dissenting students and their organizations that challenge these changes. When poor people and people of color fight back, to take back our schools and make them accessible for everyone, the government is happy to send in police and the FBI to crush the communities we build and the power we gain. Our schools become locations of police presence in directly repressive ways.

However, we have a long history of resistance to racist policing and people are already fighting against policing in schools. There is a long history of student organizing and walk-outs in high schools and colleges across the United States.

1. Check out [criticalresist.live.radicaldesigns.org](http://criticalresist.live.radicaldesigns.org) for the source of these and other facts about the prison industrial complex.
2. Source 'The Penal State in an Age of Crisis' Hanna Holleman, Robert W. McChesney, John Bellamy Foster, and R. Jamil Jonna
4. Source [www.nyclu.org/news/nyclu-aclu-file-clas...](http://www.nyclu.org/news/nyclu-aclu-file-clas...)
5. Source [nyclu.org/schooltoprison/lookatsafety](http://nyclu.org/schooltoprison/lookatsafety)
6. Source [naacpldf.org/content/pdf/pipeline/D...](http://naacpldf.org/content/pdf/pipeline/D...)

# The struggle over CUNY

Student movements have won major victories in the past at CUNY. Even though CUNY was free for decades, it was still an elite and racist institution until 1969, when Black, Puerto Rican, Dominican students and their allies at City College occupied buildings, held strikes and walkouts. By fighting against the racist and classist structure, these students forced the city to open CUNY to people of color and the working class by guaranteeing admission to any NYC high school graduate. Between 1969 and 1975 CUNY's enrollment bloomed from under 100,000 to more than 220,000. The student body at the senior colleges, which in 1969 was 96 percent white, by 1975 became predominantly non-white and working class. Today, CUNY has a student body that is 72 percent people of color and 6 percent women.

CUNY stayed free until 1975 when, during a 'fiscal crisis' kind of like the one we're in now, CUNY instituted tuition for the first time (a new way of keeping out the poor and people of color, since they opened the admissions door). During every 'fiscal crisis' we've had since then, (1983, 1991-6, 2003, 2008-?) the government has used it as an excuse to close access to education by raising tuition, denying education to thousands of people of color and the working class. In the 1990s, however, CUNY student groups like SLAM effectively deferred or delayed tuition hikes through occupation and organizing.

ANSWER: A IS HUNTER COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL!

# ISN'T IT TIME TO FIGHT BACK?

Today, similar forms of protest are happening in California. After a wave of much-publicized student occupations and student/worker strikes, the governor there gave a speech announcing plans to decrease funding for prisons and increase funding for public education. "Those protests on the University of California campuses were the tipping point," the governor's chief of staff, Susan Kennedy, said in an interview after the speech. "Our university system is going to get the support it deserves."

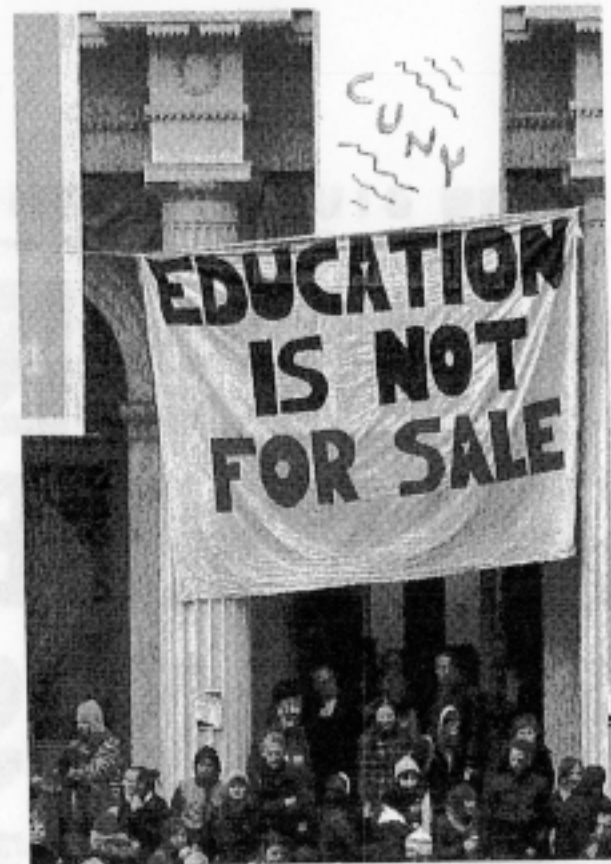
We will only make real gains once students can show that we have the power and the will to force them to listen to us. So far at CUNY, there has been some lobbying, some petitions, and a few scattered protests at City Hall. These things have been going on for months without results. We don't think this will be enough.



Do we want **JOBS**? Jobs that we hate or can barely tolerate, that are meaningless, that take away from our meaningful time learning or being creative or organizing in our communities or spending time with our families? Do we want **LOWER** tuition, or do we want **NO TUITION**, and a university that is controlled by the students, faculty and staff, instead of chancellors who make half a million dollars a year and don't do shit for us?

We want **CONTROL** over our lives, our communities, and our neighborhoods! Over land, food, and education!

We will not find the path to a better future by looking backwards, by asking the state to re-fund the university (even if they did, and it looks more likely that they **WON'T**, they would take it away again whenever they had the chance). Our struggle—our future—is fundamentally different.



We need to take action **NOW** to determine this future. Some questions for us to ask are: What do we want our lives to look like? Are there alternatives to the current educational and policing systems? Of course there are. If we come together, we can create a different future, but that means we need to work now to create that future.

That's why it's so important to act now! For students across the CUNY system to talk about what's really going on, protest, walkout from classes, and do whatever is necessary to **TAKE BACK OUR EDUCATION**.

When we show our power, anything is possible.