



GRADUATE EMPLOYEES OF NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

GENU-UAW: A UNION FOR RESEARCH AND TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Statement on the murder of George Floyd and equity on campus

The Organizing Committee of the Graduate Employees of Northeastern University – UAW condemns the murder of George Floyd by the Minneapolis Police Department. We fully support and express our solidarity with Black activists and anti-police brutality protestors who have taken to the streets across the country to demand #JusticeForGeorgeFloyd. Police across the country have long committed and continue to commit disproportionate violence and murder against Black people. We stand unequivocally in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement in protesting far more than this latest outrage.

We are unnerved by the actions of the Boston Police Department in response to these protests. According to videos and first person accounts, a peaceful Sunday evening protest turned violent only after police rammed vehicles through the large crowd gathered by the State House. The BPD ordered protestors to disperse just as the city prematurely closed MBTA mass transit, effectively trapping members of our community who had no way to get home: protestors were harmed by BPD's use of pepper spray, tear gas and rubber bullets. We are outraged by the unacceptable [BPD use of Northeastern property](#), including the Renaissance Park Garage and parts of campus on Columbus Avenue, as a staging ground for their militarized protest response. Northeastern has a responsibility to prevent its property from being used to support police violence.

On Monday morning, Northeastern President Joseph Aoun [sent an email](#) to all active NU students acknowledging that while "COVID-19 does not recognize skin color, [...] it has exacerbated the inequality and racism that afflict our society." Aoun goes on to state that "the virus has hit [communities of color] hardest; the economic collapse has impacted them disproportionately; and the ugliness of persistent racism has marginalized them systematically."

In light of this letter, we point out that our university is far from an innocent bystander in the issues of "inequality and racism that afflict our society." While we agree with President Aoun that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the inequities that drive these protests, we call attention to Northeastern's role in perpetuating the very marginalization it gestures to condemn. In the very early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Northeastern swiftly responded by laying off much of its campus staff, including dining hall workers, janitors, parking attendants, and security guards, abandoning them as the pandemic was intensifying.

Many of these workers are fellow union members organized with UNITE-HERE Local 26. They, along with Progressive Student Alliance - USAS Local 115, a progressive group on campus, gathered nearly 6000 signatures on a petition that calls on Northeastern to pay these workers through the end of May, following other institutions in the Boston Area including Harvard, Tufts, and MIT. Despite Northeastern's alleged institutional commitment to reducing inequity (as voiced in President Aoun's emails), **Northeastern has STILL not responded to the petition, thus failing to redress the harms enacted by the sudden dismissal of its workers and leaving them unpaid.**

We also emphasize Northeastern's complicity in the overuse and militarization of on-campus police forces: in late 2015, NUPD [announced](#) that they would equip officers with semi-automatic rifles, to the alarm of many [students](#),

faculty, and staff. The Northeastern administration regularly sends armed NUPD officers to peaceful demonstrations by students, organizers and activists on campus, often serving as the only representatives of the administration present on the site. Even more concerning, the administration has called in NUPD officers to remove GENU organizers from public events. On-campus organizing efforts should never be met with the threat of militarized violence, and we condemn the militarization of the NUPD as an unnecessary danger to all members of the Northeastern community.

Knowing all of this, we call on Northeastern to address the ways in which it contributes to the inequities that President Aoun claims, in his letter, to be matters of the University's concern to remedy by upholding "our core values of inclusion, equality and harmony." We call on Northeastern to recognize and **meet the demands of the dining hall workers [petition](#)** to support campus workers during the pandemic. We demand that Northeastern immediately **remove the BPD officers and vehicles from our campus** and forbid them from using Northeastern grounds, especially those it shares with the Roxbury community, to prepare for violent anti-protest policing. Finally, we demand that Northeastern immediately move to **disarm and disband NUPD**, whose presence on campus threatens all of us, especially the marginalized members of our community, including Boston residents who live and work near Northeastern campuses. To this end, [in accordance with the demands of the Movement for Black Lives](#), we have joined unions, campus organizations, and individuals across the nation in signing a [petition to terminate university-police ties](#).

We urge all GENU members and supporters to join us in demanding that Northeastern meet its claims to stand against inequity by providing material support to the contractors, staff, and workers it has further marginalized, and by addressing the violence inherent in maintaining a police force on campus. We encourage our members to support the protests against police brutality in any way you can, including donating, if you are able, to your local mutual aid groups, anti-racist organizations, and bail funds. We invite you to make use of the following resources:

- Donations to local organizations: [BLM Boston chapter](#), [Mass Bail Fund](#), [UNITE-HERE Local 26 COVID -19 Education and Support Fund](#)
- Support protestors nationally: [Black Lives Matter](#), [Minnesota Black Visions Collective](#), [Louisville Community Bail Fund](#), [Reclaim the Block](#), [National Bail Out](#), [Atlanta Solidarity Fund](#), [The Bail Project](#),
- More ways to donate and get involved: [Official George Floyd Memorial Fund](#), [Campaign Zero](#), [Black and Pink](#), [Justice for Breonna Taylor Petition](#), [Justice for Tony McDade Petition](#), [Justice for Ahmaud Petition](#), [Justice for Sean Reed Petition](#)