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NEW YORK CITY FILIPINO YOUTH SAY NO TO TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Fight against the neoliberal attacks on our education! Defend public education for working-class youth!

NEW YORK, NY— Anakbayan New York calls on progressive Filipino and non-Filipino youth and students to join in the opposition to unseat Betsy DeVos as the U.S. Secretary of Education. Since her appointment into the Trump administration, DeVos began her agenda of defunding public education, denying federal financial student aid, paving the way towards overall privatization of education with little government intervention and more power to business-like entities made solely for-profit. The appointment of DeVos as Secretary of Education confirms the heightening neoliberalization of our education system but the imperialist, capitalist system in crisis.

In New York City, our K-12 system is one of the largest public school systems in the U.S. serving more than 1 million students, yet it remains highly segregated based on socioeconomic standing. The city's vaunted cosmopolitanism—espousing values of equality, opportunity, and diversity—only serves as a facade to mask the sharp class divisions within our education system. Though Mayor Bill de Blasio vows to defend New York City as a sanctuary city, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids have increased across the five boroughs, Trump has promised to repeal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and tax money continues to be unequally distributed throughout the NYC public education system. Mayor de Blasio's call for sanctuary, as well as his calls for universal access to education does not address nor combat the conditions that make education inaccessible to the youth of working-class black and brown communities. To truly address the inequities of the education system faced by working-class black and brown peoples is to address histories of slavery, colonialism, and imperialism. And although we give full support to the movement for sanctuary cities and campuses in order to exhaust any and all means to protect and defend the undocumented communities, we recognize that there is no such thing as sanctuary campus, or sanctuary city, as long as the most marginalized, exploited, and oppressed peoples continue to live under the U.S. capitalist-imperialist system.

The neoliberalization of our education system continues to veil histories of oppression with an emphasis on individual responsibility and suffering as low-income, working-class people and people of color are labeled as failures when it is their conditions that have raised them to fail within the state's terms, justifying a denial of funding of and access to education. Generations of black and brown people continue to face deprivation of economic advancement and experience state repression of civil rights because of heavy policing and gentrification in their communities thus increasing the likelihood for students to succumb to the school-to-prison pipeline. It is neoliberalism's cultural offensive of individual responsibility that frames education as something one must be "worthy" or "deserving" of receiving. That the U.S. system grants an education—that all people deserve—only to a select few in oppressed communities while the rest continue to be exploited, policed, deported, or incarcerated only reinforces a narrative that such an education does not rightfully belong to them.

The increasing defunding of public education and conversion to charter schools affects students and teachers alike. NYC teachers are particularly affected, especially to those that are part of a union. Trump's deregulation agenda will prevent teachers from collective bargaining, places "merit-based" pay tenure & pension systems at risk and ultimately lessens their job security. Teacher retention and high turnover rates are directly linked to not providing enough economic compensation to teach low-income students, which creates the condition where more experienced, highly educated teachers flock to academic high-performing schools. Even if NYC charter schools were to become more racially integrated, it does not address nor resolve the stark income disparity of student body populations between charter schools and public schools. We can see from alternative certification programs like Teach For America, NGOs and the like that although they may fulfill a need of some low-income public schools, it places students at a

disadvantage as becomes revolving door for unstable teaching staff, often less culturally savvy of the oppressive conditions students of color face daily. These temporary educators enter working-class communities under the false pretense of “saving” their students from their conditions without having a deep historical understanding of the systemic forces at play. These programs undermine long-time teachers in low-income public schools, and prove the NGO approach to solutions are not sustainable. These reforms are solutions that only provide a “band-aid” solution to a much deeper-rooted problem.

Recently, DeVos also expressed her revisionist history of why Historically Black Colleges were created. She revealed her ignorance of the legacy and the need for Historically Black Colleges (HBCU). Many of these colleges were founded because black students were not allowed to attend segregated white colleges nor had the economic means. The reality of the myth of “school-choice” is that access to education does not grant education for all, but for the elite few. As a result of this inaccessible education for working-class youth, students are left with limited options for higher education and pushed to seek other options. Students then resort to utilizing loans in a time where student debt continues to reach record-breaking highs as the economic beneficiaries of this burden are universities and loan-granting entities. As of last year, about 43 million people in the U.S. hold student debt that amounts to \$1.3 trillion, while tuition rates have increased by 10% over the past five years. Tuition hikes make it increasingly harder for working-class youth to attend. Working class students then are faced with having to work full time while also attending school. This increased pressure makes it difficult for student to finish school or attend school full-time, delaying the time it takes them to complete their education. Even after completing university, students are then faced with high unemployment rates, sometimes working for wages that do not match their earned degree.

As Anakbayan New York, we see the link between U.S. militarization and U.S. privatization of education, and we demand the redirection of military funds towards public education. Military recruiters are placed in high schools and public universities predominantly recruiting people of color, as well as undocumented youth, tempting them with false promises of fully funding their education and adjusting their immigrant status to become expendable to U.S. imperialist wars of aggression and further fuel the military-industrial complex, when it is U.S. imperialism that is responsible for the conditions that lead people of oppressed communities to become part of the U.S. war machine.

Filipino youth and all oppressed communities face decreasing accessibility and affordability towards attaining higher education. Touted as one of the largest urban public higher education systems in the nation, the City University of New York (CUNY) continues to fall towards the trend of privatization and militarization. Hunter College administration has made previous attempts to silence students who openly speak out against U.S. imperialism and Zionism. This repression is well-documented by New York City Students for Justice in Palestine (NYCSJP) and take the form of unwanted excessive security at events, sudden cancellations, and public letters from the CUNY administration denouncing actions that oppose Zionism. This blatant repression extended to the state-level, as Zionist investors threatened to defund CUNY after these NYCSJP events. CUNY administration fails to provide sufficient support of ethnic studies courses to be available and taught at all campuses within CUNY. Hunter College administration disregards demands for Asian-American Studies. The Coalition for the Revitalization of Asian Americans Studies at Hunter College (CRAASH) was formed in response to ensure Asian-American Studies are a mainstay in the curriculum. This form of ideological repression may seem less blatant, but is symptomatic of white supremacy, from the denial of learning about atrocities committed against oppressed peoples and the major contributions oppressed peoples made in the fight for justice here in the U.S.

We see the trends of neoliberalism and how the ruling class works together in their own interest to dismantle public education towards the route of privatization and promotion of for-profit education—an education that indoctrinates millions to serve, reproduce, and defend U.S. imperialism. The reach of imperialism extends further to our motherland, the Philippines, as the education system there is largely created and based on the U.S. K-12 education system, with the added incentive to produce skilled workers to easily send abroad after high school through government-instituted policies such as the Labor Export Policy (LEP) that treats our people as commodity exports. The U.S. economy prevents the Philippines from creating industries that create jobs, with every interest to

maintain this backwards development. Brilliant minds leave the country daily, often times tearing families apart, simply because the Philippines' economic conditions, under the weight of U.S. imperialism, are unsurvivable.

As Filipino youth, we recognize how imperialism has shaped our lives, our families, and our history, but we recognize that, our history is not one of defeat but of resistance. Now, more than ever, do we recall the fierce resistance of Kabataang Makabayan against the fascist dictatorship of former President Marcos and martial law and how youth and students united with workers and peasants to fight against fascism. And in that same revolutionary spirit and tradition do we fight against the neoliberalization and privatization of the education system and the U.S. imperialism linked with and embedded in it.

We recognize that education is an absolute human right that should be pro-people and not for-profit, culturally-relevant, scientific, tuition-free, debt-free, open admission, and genuinely accessible to for all regardless of cultural, socioeconomic standing or immigration status. New York State and City has failed to implement policies and programs to create an environment where black and brown youth can genuinely learn, succeed and flourish. The current Trump Administration, previous administrations, and the entire "democratic" system has proved that they do not serve the people and only serve the interest of corporations and capitalists. We cannot rely on these governing bodies to grant us the immediate relief and protection our communities need now and must take it in our own hands. Not only must we fight for the liberation of our education system but we must also continue to educate and empower ourselves and our communities on what our liberation looks like.

Therefore, we call on all Filipino and non-Filipino youth and students to join us in the collective action to fight for an education free from the chains of capitalism and imperialism, which is only possible in joining the larger people's movement for a better society free from exploitation for now and for future generations. #TakeBackOurEducation is an ongoing nationally-coordinated campaign under Anakbayan-USA which aims for: (1) Free, accessible, and unconditional education for all (2) To end funding for wars of aggression and intervention and state violence and re-direct funds towards social services including public education, health care, housing, job training, etc. in the U.S. (3) To end the privatization and commercialization of the U.S. education system and implement pro-people, culturally relevant curriculum that recognizes the history, struggles, and resistance of Filipinos and other historically oppressed groups in the U.S. (4) Direct educational institutions to implement social justice-based curriculum to encourage students to serve the needs of their community and not be profit-oriented. Anakbayan New York understands that to fight for a liberated education is to build movements beyond our school and university walls and so we call on the youth to stand firmly on the right side of history not only in fighting for a free and accessible education for all but in a genuine liberation for all oppressed peoples.

#OpposeDeVos

#TakeBackOurEducation

#PeopleFirstNotProfitAndWar

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