

**OUR
UNIVERSITY,
OUR
FUTURE**

A MANIFESTO FOR CHANGE

WE'RE AT A CROSSROADS

Our university, meant to be a launchpad for dreams, more often feels like a space where hope and enthusiasm are on the wane. Amidst stress and endless cups of coffee, we voice our worries, feeling stuck within these walls due to the debts we've taken on, betting on a brighter future.

Yet, there's a growing sense of detachment. Despite its standing and resources, the university seems like an island, out of touch with the wider world that it is meant to serve. It's more insular than ever, failing to reach out and enable its graduates to make a tangible difference in their communities.

So, what if we could change the narrative? What if the university could be more than just a stepping stone to a well-paying job, but instead, a place that truly commits to making a positive contribution to society?

This manifesto is our shout into the void, challenging the status quo. We are interrogating a system that seems more interested in churning out ready-for-work

graduates than in fostering critical, community-conscious thinkers. We've been told our goal here is just to secure a place in the workforce, but we believe education can do so much more—for us and for society.

We're calling for a fundamental shift, a rethinking of what our university is and what it can be. This isn't about making small tweaks; it is about transforming the heart of our educational experience, moving from a 'degree factory' to an institution that shapes informed, involved, and compassionate members of society. As we stand on the precipice of possibility, we recognise that our journey forward is not just about reform; it is about rewriting the very DNA of our educational experience.

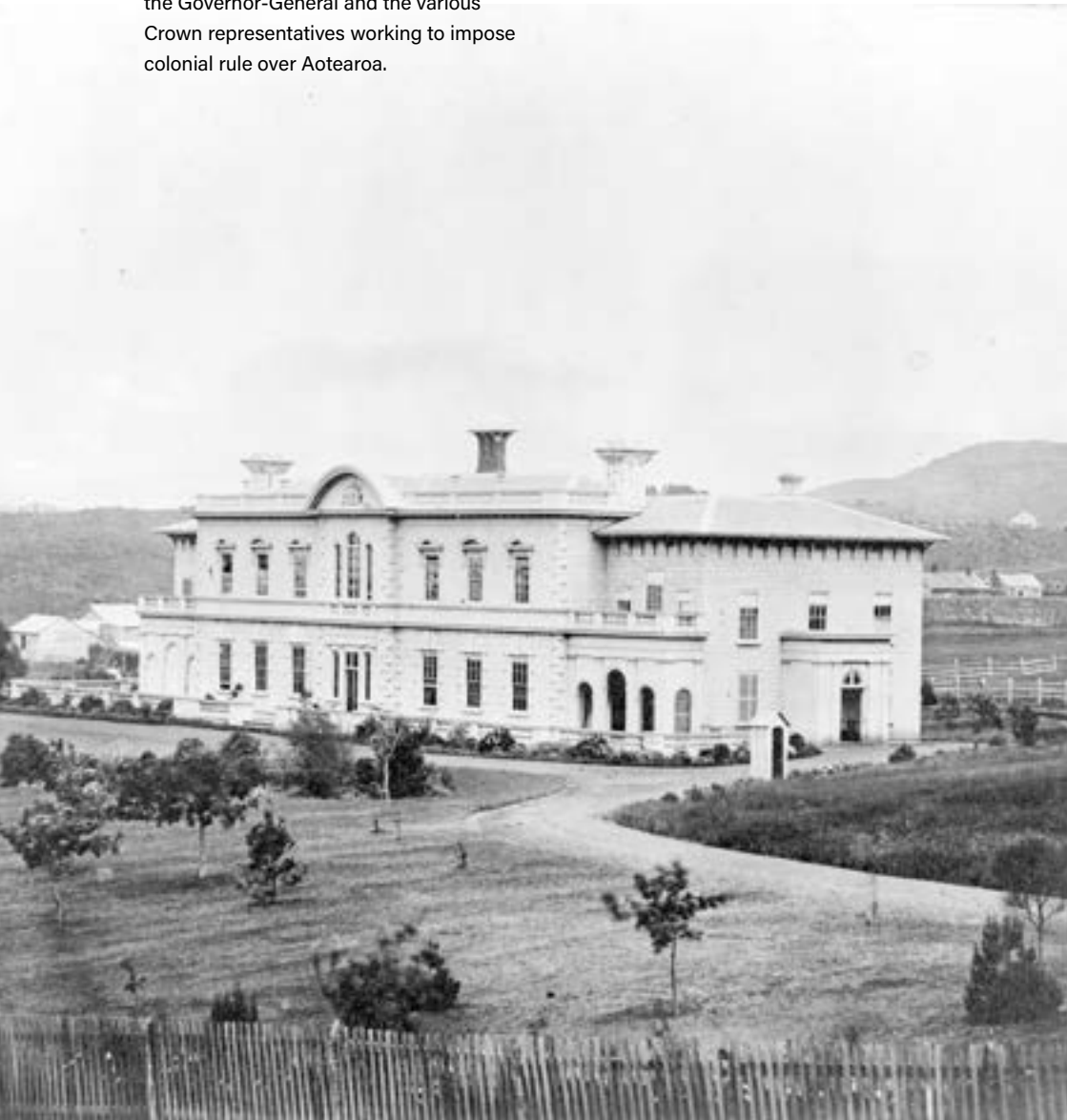
This manifesto is a collection of student voices. We hope to unearth the roots of our discontent, to challenge the oppressive traditions that have silenced diverse voices and histories. We hope to tear down the marketplace mentality that sees students as commodities rather than minds to be nurtured. Above all, we hope to find a way to ensure that our institution embodies a space where ideas, opportunities, and voices flow freely, not just for a privileged few but for everyone.

THIS IS OUR UNIVERSITY. THIS IS OUR FUTURE.

THIS IS A COLONIAL UNIVERSITY

OLD GOVERNMENT HOUSE

Now known as the staff common room, this building was once the seat of New Zealand's colonial government, housing the Governor-General and the various Crown representatives working to impose colonial rule over Aotearoa.



BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE

Since the very beginning, this university has contributed to a colonial project of marginalisation and oppression. It has systematically excluded peoples, knowledge, and ways of being, perpetuating a culture of racism at every level.

We believe our university should be better than this. It should be a place in which all peoples can come together to share and create knowledge; a place for critical, community-minded thinking; a place that works towards social change instead of merely upholding a colonial status quo.

In this section, we share our experiences of this colonial institution, outline our hopes for the future, and put forth our demands for a decolonised university.



WE DO ~~NOT~~ BELONG HERE

The walls of our colonial university were not made to hold us in. They were meant to keep us out. But we are still here. Indigenous. Minorities. Ethnic. Women. Others.

Western knowledge seeks to silence our voices, holding onto its dominant 'universal' position. As it tightens its grip on higher education, it has never been more fragile.

We must tear down the walls of 'universal' knowledge and rebuild an inclusive knowledge body for us all.

'UNIVERSAL' KNOWLEDGE WAS NEVER MEANT FOR ALL OF US

Erected from colonial histories of violence - foundations of exploitation, expropriation, ecological destruction, and exclusion – colonisation destroyed indigenous homes and live(lihood) s to make possible the expansion of institutions such as universities, and with it, the emergence of the 'universality' of Western knowledge.

In theory, 'universal knowledge' was a tool for liberation and enlightenment. In practice, it was a destructive weapon. Devastating local cultures, landscapes, traditions, histories, and knowledge systems. It systematically pervaded every crevice of wider society - with it, education institutions - until it was no longer necessary to enforce. It was assumed. A dangerous assumption, which justified horrific injustices to be perpetrated against indigenous and other marginalised groups, in the name of progress and the 'greater good'.

"IN THEORY, 'UNIVERSAL KNOWLEDGE' WAS A TOOL FOR LIBERATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT. IN PRACTICE, IT HAS BEEN A DESTRUCTIVE WEAPON."

This 'universal knowledge' was exclusive. It privileged white normative ideologies over any other way of knowing and being in the world. It centred the white male colonial perspective as the blueprint for truth and reality. The Western knowledge mandate was simple: to uphold colonial male power and exclude all other forms of knowledge and people. It still is.

TRAMPLING ON THE MANA OF MĀTAURANGA MĀORI

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in 1840 marked the beginning of an unequal partnership between

colonial settlers and indigenous Māori, where colonisation unleashed a full-blown assault on Māori people, land, culture, and their traditional knowledge systems. Colonial processes such as the confiscation of land, forced conformity and the banning of Te Reo Māori contributed to the development of settler colonial universities in Aotearoa, into sites of discrimination, disempowerment, and delusions.

Delusions of a fair and just university. Delusions of indigenous knowledge as inferior. Delusions of Western knowledge as a superior knowledge system.

The importation of colonial university systems and curricula continue to reproduce whitestream higher education. It is a paradox that claims universality without embracing indigeneity and diversity. Indigenous knowledge is not valued by colonial universities because it threatens their very existence. It holds the university accountable for its complicity in the production of institutional racism. It challenges the

colonial logics which are embedded in our classrooms and university policies, where discrimination and disempowerment are expectations for indigenous and minority bodies.

Colonial universities in Aotearoa New Zealand position Mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) as supplementary rather than complementary to Western knowledge, trying to limit its validity and agency. It is used by our universities to satisfy inclusion and equity policies and practices. In these ways, universal Western knowledge tramples on the mana (supernatural force) of Mātauranga Māori, with academia seeking to diminish its value in many direct and indirect ways.

"WE ARE RUNNING OUT OF SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS THAT THIS NARROW LENS HAS CAUSED"

**THE PATH TO UNIVERSAL KNOWLEDGE IS NARROW.
IT DOES NOT DEVIATE.
WITHOUT CONCERN FOR THOSE IT DISREGARDS.
PROGRESS AT ALL COSTS.**

**THE PRICE IS INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE.
PUSHED TO THE MARGINS OF SOCIETY.
WHERE MINORITIES AND OTHERS RESIDE.
TO BE CONFINED TO A LIMITED EXISTENCE.**

**OUR DIVERSE VOICES ARE REGULATED AND CONTROLLED.
ALTERNATIVE WORLDVIEWS UNDERVALUED.
DENYING POTENTIAL FOR PLURAL KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS.
PRIVILEGING A COLONIAL WESTERN EVIDENCE BASE.**

**CONFORMITY OR EXCLUSION.
ACCEPT OR BE DENIED.
THESE ARE NOT CHOICES.
THEY ARE THREATS.**

**INVISIBLE WALLS TO STALL OUR MOVEMENT.
ENDLESS FEES AND GROWING DEBTS.
SUBJECTIVE HIRING AND PROMOTION PANELS.
INHERENTLY COLONIAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES.**

**SAFEGUARDING THE SECURITY OF ACADEMIA.
AN INSECURE ACADEMIA THAT IS BLACK AND WHITE.
THERE IS ONE PREDETERMINED DESTINATION:
UNIVERSAL WESTERN KNOWLEDGE.**

PLURAL KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS: BROADENING THE SCOPE OF ACADEMIA

Our university has too long been constrained by the narrow scope of academia and its pursuit of 'universal' knowledge. Western knowledge in its exclusivity has taken many of us down the path of debt, desperation, and despair as we struggle with a knowledge system that prioritises profits over people. Placing us in precarious positions where we find ourselves implicit or complicit in ongoing colonial violence. We are running out of solutions to the problems this narrow lens has caused. Ignorance or neutrality are no longer viable options when the current system is unsustainable. We must explore plural knowledge systems and broaden the scope of academia towards an inclusive knowledge body.

Our indigenous knowledge system in Aotearoa New Zealand - Mātauranga Māori - is the most valuable asset we have in higher education. Local observation and intelligence shared through storytelling and wānanga, open critical discussions encompassing

the holistic understanding of our relationship with the natural world. Collective decision-making based on the acknowledgment of whakapapa (lineage in connection to people and places), tikanga (Māori customs and protocols), and ensuring the preservation or enhancement of mana and mauri (life force) in all things.

This worldview is based on values that promote the balance of unity with self-determination; belonging with guardianship; all guided by tohunga (expert practitioners) to ensure the sustainability of knowledge and our world.

Indigenous knowledge is not driven by global shifts and financial incentives, but instead focuses on mitigating the implications of these issues locally, creating the base from which we are able to explore diverse ways of understanding our world and future possibilities. Indigenous knowledge lays the foundation for plural knowledge systems to be incorporated, including Western knowledge.

Plural knowledge systems encompass diverse values, methodologies and pedagogies

which enable a depth of critique and reflection in learning and research. Engaging with the diverse methods and voices of plural knowledge systems enables learning to become a true mechanism for change. Because understanding the world through a multitude of lenses enables us to form more profound perspectives with a holistic understanding of people, context, worldviews, and impact. This reframes 'reason' from a universal concept to one that incorporates multiple possibilities.

Diversity is not a threat to higher education; it is a necessity. With Aotearoa New Zealand being one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world, we are privileged with a richness of knowledge and dialogue that reflects our distinct worldviews. Plural knowledge systems in higher education would promote critical learning and thinking, elevating our understanding of societal issues and sustainable solutions.

An inclusive knowledge body would do more than acknowledge diversity, it would break down walls – real and invisibilized – that have too long excluded diverse bodies

and knowledge systems. A university that embraces plural knowledge systems is a place that cultivates real inclusion and equity, loosening its colonial grip by confronting discrimination and countering the marginalisation of indigenous and minority groups.

This reframing of knowledge from universal to plural; reconstructing of teaching and learning methods; and rethinking of academia, would work to decolonise our university by resisting our current reality, breaking through colonial barriers to a more inclusive knowledge body for us all.

**“ENGAGING WITH THE
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CHANGE”**

TO REALISE AN INCLUSIVE KNOWLEDGE BODY FOR US ALL, WE MUST...

1 ACKNOWLEDGE THE VALUE OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS IN ACADEMIA

By taking a clear stance of recognising Mātauranga Māori as a complex knowledge system that is as respected as Western knowledge, our university would set a precedent of acknowledging the value of indigenous knowledge and commit to restoring the mana of our university and its people. This would acknowledge Mātauranga Māori as our point of difference, distinguishing us from the rest of the world.

2 CONTINUALLY CHALLENGE THE COLONIAL IDEOLOGIES AND FRAMEWORKS EMBEDDED IN WESTERN KNOWLEDGE

A university that upholds colonial ideologies and frameworks in policies and practices, remains complicit in the continuing violence perpetrated against indigenous and minority groups. Our student body has the power and privilege to challenge these colonial logics through critical research and engagement, activism and exercising our student voice mechanisms.

3 REJECT THE NOTION OF UNIVERSAL KNOWLEDGE AND EMBRACE PLURAL KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

There is no place for impartiality where discrimination and racism take place, where universal knowledge makes possible the exclusion of diverse groups. Our university has employed this narrow lens in academia since its inception, so we must critically engage with and challenge Western knowledge, exploring the potential of alternative knowledge systems.

4 UTILISE PLURAL METHODOLOGIES AND PEDAGOGIES

There is strength in the collective, looking beyond individualistic approaches to research and learning, towards an inclusive knowledge body that is innovative and creative. Utilising plural methodologies and pedagogies in research and learning would enhance the credibility and integrity of knowledge building, and thus. the credibility of the university itself.

**WE REIMAGINE A
UNIVERSITY THAT IS BUILT
AROUND AN INCLUSIVE
KNOWLEDGE BODY;
WHERE PLURAL
KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS
ARE RECOGNISED AND
RESPECTED, WITH
INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE
AT THE CENTRE.**



O AFI ESE'ESE A LE PASIFIKA

Someone once said, "sometimes adding gasoline to the fire is the only way it'll grow." This person is a liar, because if this idea were realistic, I would have burnt the whole god damn university down on day one. To avoid being the only brown face in classes. To avoid the butchery of my name by pale faces. To avoid the intense stares of dead eyes. In order to just grow intellectually in peace and comfort.

For four uncomfortable years, my presence has been recognised every time I enter a room; heads turn and eyes glare back. For four uncomfortable years, the desperate search for another brown brother or sister in lecture theatres never ended. For four uncomfortable years, anxiety and imposter syndrome accompanied me to class whispering about potential downfalls and sudden dropouts. But this is just the unsettling reality of being a brown Pasifika student attending this university.

The discomfort that Pasifika students experience derives from the lack of Pasifika diversity within the university. Despite being one of the largest universities in the Pacific and its location in the most Pasifika populated city in New Zealand, the University of Auckland falls short on 'Pasifika-ness.' The (un) lucky Pasifika bodies existing in the university also do not sufficiently represent the needs of Pasifika students and the vastness of Pasifika culture.

But why does the university fail to include Pasifika culture and people? Because the university fails to train its inhabitants on quality implementation of cultural competency and awareness. Because there is inadequate representation of Pasifika perspectives in decisionmaking roles. Because there are insufficient resources allocated to Pasifika programs and associations to promote Pasifika culture and learning. Because the university's Eurocentric curriculum and classroom pedagogy do not acknowledge Pasifika methodologies of sharing and

producing knowledge. We do not only need more Pasifika-ness, but *we also need more of everything else in between.*

Instead of existing as exiles who hopelessly romanticise our separation from our culture and our identities, let us watch together as the university burns in self-destruction. As the smoke and flames grow, let us create a new form of CPR to resuscitate a university that reflects the diversity of the ocean that surrounds us. A university where Pasifika people and knowledge are embraced, appreciated, and flourishing.

"DESPITE BEING ONE OF THE LARGEST UNIVERSITIES IN THE PACIFIC IN THE MOST PASIFIKA-POPULATED CITY IN NEW ZEALAND, THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND FALLS SHORT ON 'PASIFIKA-NESS.'"

MANAOGA MO LE LUMANAI NEEDS FOR THE FUTURE

1 THE UNIVERSITY NEEDS TO ADOPT PASIFIKA CLASSROOM PEDAGOGIES AND METHODOLOGIES FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING.

'Copy and paste' is the best descriptor for my undergraduate years because this is all I did. Copying content from lectures and pasting it onto my assignments, but not as perfect as Word. The mere act of just absorbing knowledge for the sake of applying it made those years torture. This torture, however, was not inflicted through my own doings; it was due to the university's current classroom pedagogies and teaching methodologies.

For current and future Pasifika students to avoid this pain, the university needs to adopt Pasifika classroom pedagogies and methodologies of learning and teaching. Pedagogical alternatives like Talanoa and Te'u Le Va will benefit not only the Pasifika students but the wider student body. Talanoa revolves around the idea that conversations produce and transfer knowledge. While Te'u Le Va focuses on nourishing the relationships within a shared and sacred space. By applying Pasifika frameworks and abandoning the current banking method, interactive intellectual discussions will occur in the classroom. Furthermore, the existing teacher-student hierarchy

“SIMPLY, THE UNIVERSITY NEEDS TO ADOPT PASIFIKA PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORKS TO CHANGE CLASSROOM LEARNING”

will dissolve into itself as the teacher is no longer seen as the holder of knowledge but also as a student learning from their students. In this way, the learning is reciprocal and informal.

Having active Pasifika frameworks in the classroom will allow Pasifika students to engage with content, classmates, and teachers. Learning then becomes a relationship-building process, a conversational process, and most importantly, a fun process for everyone. Students will no longer simply copy content and paste it into assignments and exams, but copy shared knowledge and apply it to different aspects of life.

2 THE UNIVERSITY NEEDS TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES THAT WILL PRODUCE PASIFIKA ACADEMIC SUCCESS.

Instead of investing in constructing 600 million NZD glass buildings, the university should invest in nourishing the current and future Pasifika students' and staff's future success on campus. This is

a crucial first step towards building a comfortable university environment for current and future Pasifika students and staff. If I knew the university was committed to seeing me succeed, I would be happy to stay. However, my ninety-ninth reason (waiting on the hundredth) is the current lack of spaces and opportunities on campus for me to grow and learn as a Pasifika woman. To resuscitate this hope, this demand will be divided into two parts.

For starters, the university needs to produce opportunities for Pasifika students to enter the institution. Simple acts of investment, such as financial aid programs and Pasifika scholarships on all levels which can assist in the paying of on-campus accommodation and student fees, can reduce the financial barriers to education. With such investments, the university offers financial assistance for Pasifika students who may struggle to pay fees and

are not eligible for student loans or allowances.

For courses, the university needs to abandon Pacific Studies as a major and construct a solid Pacific Studies degree pathway for those students wishing to study Pasifika knowledges and issues. The current Pacific Studies major is an undergraduate major and cannot be furthered into postgraduate.

The development of Pacific Studies as a degree will allow Pasifika students to explore and specialise in Pasifika knowledges as well as allow for postgraduate pursuits with research opportunities. Offering such opportunities will produce more Pasifika individuals specialised in our homes' knowledges, generate Pasifika diverse research, and possibly create the next generation of Pasifika lecturers in Pasifika knowledges.

Secondly, the university needs to invest in the production of Pasifika spaces. Yes, we have a whole ass fale, hidden away and hard to reach with all those damn Business school stairs. Yes, we have one open Pasifika space on level four in Kate Edgar called 'Sea Space.' This is not enough! The university needs to create spaces littered with Pasifika art and showcasing Pasifika ways of living. Through such areas, the opportunity for mingling can take place, and, of course, the creation of Pasifika future excellency.

Having such spaces will liven up the University's blank walls and blank faces. Such areas will enable easing energies within Pasifika students: comfort, hope, or home? Who knows? Because I do not, as those spaces do not exist yet! Pasifika students will have a place of comfort, a place of hope, a second home that is not selfish, resulting in its own self-destruction.

3 THE UNIVERSITY NEEDS TO EMPLOY MORE PASIFIKA LECTURERS & TEACHERS

Oh great, another old, white man here to complain about his cats. "Why aren't my lecturers Pasifika?" This question always lingered during the first week of classes but later slipped into the abyss of forgotten questions I have about this university. During my entire learning journey at this university, I have had only four Pasifika lecturers: two from undergraduate psychology and two from post-graduate sociology. Ironically, the two sociologists were the only full-time Pasifika women sociology lecturers in the whole university; a full circle moment. However, the majority of my lecturers were old, white folks. The call for more Pasifika lecturers and tutors is urgent; we need them, and we need them NOW!

To recruit more Pasifika teaching staff would mean changing the general recruitment process into

"TO HAVE SOME SENSE OF HOPE IN ESCAPING THIS BURNING BUILDING, WE NEED MORE PASIFIKA LECTURERS & TEACHERS"

a target-specific process. One alternative can be advertising job openings in locations and communities with a high Pasifika population.

However, before we start searching outside of the university for potential candidates, we shall start from the inside. By exploring the existing Pasifika teaching staff's networks, promising candidates may occur. Other than networking for possible recruits, departments can develop pipeline programs that allow for the mentoring of current Pacific graduate students. By doing so, faculty members become guides for Pasifika graduate students on the road to an academic career pathway. The existence of such

programs promotes academic careers for Pasifika students and early-career researchers. Such programs can operate during the summer as research opportunities or postdoctoral positions.

With this, the recruitment of Pasifika teachers will not only increase Pasifika staff representation but also on-campus and in-classroom representation. As a Pasifika student, nothing is more comforting than walking into a classroom and seeing that your lecturer is of Pasifika descent. The comfort is more significant when you are the only people in the room who are Pasifika. Besides the improvement in representation, more Pasifika teachers would mean more diverse perspectives and bodies in departments and faculties, as well as the birth of diverse research topics. The essence of vast experiences and knowledges that Pasifika lecturers and tutors

hold are no joke! Their ability to balance and traverse between the Western and Pacific world is a valuable asset that can contribute to the quality implementation of 'Pasifika-ness' in the university.

4 THE UNIVERSITY NEEDS PASIFIKA-TARGETED PROGRAMMES & WORKSHOPS FOR STAFF AND TEACHERS

If I received fifty dollars every time someone asked, "Where is Samoa by the way?" or "Are you Fijian?" I definitely would not be here. From such questions and conversations, the realisation dawned on me that many of these well-renowned researchers and lecturers do not know much about the Pacific or the people from the Pacific. Most of the time, their lack of knowledge about the Pacific was fascinating and almost cute. But then the tables turn and I suddenly become an expert on the Pacific. Despite my dislike of wasting time talking about my

"YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE OF PASIFIKA DESCENT TO MAKE YOUR PASIFIKA STUDENTS COMFORTABLE WITH YOU; JUST KNOW *SOMETHING* ABOUT MY CULTURE AND MY PEOPLE!"

home country (because I honestly do not remember much about it), I always tried my best to recount the exact location of my country in the Pacific Ocean for the sake of explaining my presence to confused Americans.

This is why the university needs to conduct diversity training programmes and workshops for staff and teachers focused on building cultural competency, and awareness of the Pasifika culture and people. Holding regular sessions would allow staff members to ask burning questions and engage in discussions related to the Pacific culture, people, and disparities. These programmes will use Pasifika learning methodologies, such as talanoa, which value the sharing and production of knowledge as a collective rather than as individuals. The participation of staff members will promote inclusivity and diversity in the

university and educate staff about cultural bias and the struggles that Pasifika students and staff experience.

Such vital bodies within the university must uphold performative and well-implemented diversity initiatives and be aware of the underlying factors that play into the lives of minority bodies. Furthermore, the awareness gained will foster the much-needed support for Pasifika student success at the university. As educators, it is vital to encourage and address the success of your students as well as the challenges they experience.

THESE DEMANDS ARE NOT JUST OUR NEEDS, THEY ARE CALLS FOR CHANGE. SO, UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND:

GET IT TOGETHER AND IMPLEMENT THEM!

**ALLOW PASIFIKA PEOPLE
TO ENTER, THRIVE, AND
SUCCEED BEFORE WE
ACTUALLY BURN THIS
PLACE DOWN.**

**BUT, BEFORE WE DO, WE
WILL TRY TO RESUSCITATE
HOPE AMONG OURSELVES -
BECAUSE WITHOUT US,
YOU WOULD NOT BE
WHO YOU ARE TODAY.**

The background of the entire page is a collage of New Zealand banknotes, including 50 and 100 dollar bills, which are semi-transparent and overlaid with a solid red color. The text is white and bold, standing out against the red background.

THIS IS A COMMODIFIED UNIVERSITY

OUR UNIVERSITY, OUR FUTURE

VOLUME 2



NZ students protest the introduction of user-pays tertiary fees, 1990.



UoA students blockade Symonds St in 2012 in protest of increasing University fees. (NZH)



UoA students stand with TEU members to demand fair pay for University staff, 2022 (RNZ)

BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE

Our university treats knowledge like a commodity, putting profits over people. It routinely exploits its students and staff, ostracises all but the most privileged, and leaves most of us deeply in debt, struggling financially and emotionally.

In this booklet, we explain how years of neoliberal education policies have seen our education captured by economists, and how this has shaped our lived experiences of studying. We believe a university that treats knowledge as a product to be bought and sold should not exist.

In this section, we share our experiences of this commodified institution, outline our hopes for the future, and put forth our demands for a decommodified university.

WE'RE OVERWORKED, OVERWHELMED, AND OVER IT

But that's just how being at university is, right? Being here is meant to be exhausting. We're expected to live a life of financial strain; to walk a tightrope between learning and earning a wage. We're not supposed to be able to survive on a student income alone. We should be forced to pick up a job, even when we're studying full time. Rents are high, so is kai, and there's never quite enough left for the bus; but that's just normal. It's normal to feel this burnt out.

Despite the stress, we're supposed to keep slaving away for our grades, and we're supposed to compete with each other for them. We're meant to live in constant fear of failure. It costs a lot to be here, and failure would only make it cost more. We're meant to feel like dropping out all the time. Being here is supposed to be monotonous, too. We've got to take

classes we don't particularly care about, to learn about things that don't ignite our passions. We should only bother learning things that will help us get a job later, even if they leave us feeling disconnected from ourselves and our lived reality. Most of us won't actually end up with a job based on our degrees, anyway—but that's just how it is, because university is meant to be an investment, and investments are risky.

We're happy deal with all of this, though, because being at university is supposed to be a privilege. Yes, it's hard being here, but it's a lot harder out there. Outside the university, people are overworked and overwhelmed too. They're working longer hours than we are. They're struggling to pay their own rents, their own bills, their own bus fares. Like us, they're grappling with

stress, anxiety, and depression. We're supposed to think that being at university can help us avoid all of this. Not everyone gets given a lottery ticket for a better life, but that's exactly what coming to university is. Right?

OUR UNIVERSITY HASN'T ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS

University used to be free. No student loans, no need for part-time jobs. Some of our parents got paid to be here. Every student got an allowance, and StudyLink wasn't a thing. In the 1990's, though, the government decided that universities cost the taxpayer too much, and things changed. The cost of learning fell onto students' shoulders. Student Allowances became means-tested, and for those above the line, the government rolled out Living Cost Loans. Course fees went up, pockets got lighter, and part-time work became the norm. In the 30 years since, allowances and living costs haven't grown enough to keep up with inflation and soaring rents. Today, most students in Auckland can receive a maximum allowance of \$360 a week. That is way below the poverty line. To get by, most students need to work at least 20 hours per week on top of full-time study. Our university is making us

choose between poverty and sixty hour weeks.

Being in debt has become normal, too. Since the 1990's, students have had to borrow more than \$24 billion for the privilege of education. Our government started pushing the narrative that universities weren't just about learning, but about boosting the economy and improving the workforce. Student loans became 'career investments,' and education became a means of finding not just enlightenment, but financial reward. It became a trap—today, the average student owes around \$24,000. The pressure to pay back student loans has amplified the pressure to land a high-paying job after studying, forcing us into lives of labour. Our university is making us debt slaves.

This financial pressure extends to our under-funded university itself. Successive governments have

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“SLOWLY BUT SURELY, OUR UNIVERSITY HAS BECOME A PIPELINE TO THE CORPORATE WORLD”

progressively cut tertiary funding, and with this, our university has had to cut costs—it has cut teachers, cut support staff, and cut out communal spaces. It has cut faculty-specific student services, consolidating them into a single, shitty Student Hub. It has had to find new sources of funding, commercialising programs and partnering up with private businesses to bring in extra cash. It takes scholarship money from oil companies. Today, our university is mostly focused on securing funding, at the expense of everything else. Because of this, the Arts and Humanities are under threat. It's becoming harder for students to learn things that don't have an immediate economic benefit, stimulate productivity, or enhance our employability. Slowly but surely, our university has become a pipeline leading directly to the corporate world, relegating us to a life of labour.

Alongside finding funding, government policy says that our university is supposed to contribute to the social development of the

country. It's meant to act as the “critic and conscience” of our society. Clearly, its economic focus has overshadowed this social role, and the need to chase funding has distracted the institution from the goals of teaching, learning, and working towards positive social change. With this, it's losing its ability to help us understand and address social and political issues. How many of us feel powerless, like we can't really do much to help with the state of things? What can students really do about people working long hours, struggling to pay rent, bills, and bus fares? What can we do about stress, anxiety, and depression? How do we deal with racism, inequality, and climate change? And why should we even care when we're struggling ourselves? Our university has made it hard to make a much of a difference beyond these walls.

**INSTEAD OF TREATING
UNIVERSITY AS A WAY
TO IMPROVE THINGS FOR
OURSELVES AS INDIVIDUALS,
WE NEED TO START TREATING
IT AS A WAY TO IMPROVE
THINGS FOR EVERYONE. TO
REALISE THIS, WE NEED TO
DECOMMODIFY IT.**



HOW CAN WE DECOMMODIFY OUR UNIVERSITY?

We need to refuse the status quo of overwork, financial strain, and crushing debt. This place can be so much more than a training ground for a life of labour. If you're as frustrated with the state of our university as we are, things need to change.

WE NEED TO REINTRODUCE FEES-FREE STUDY

Students should not be burdened by massive debt for wanting an education. We demand the abolition of tuition fees for tertiary education. This would free students from the weight of lifelong debt, ensuring equitable access to education and removing the financial barriers that limit the pursuit of knowledge and the development of solutions for social change.

It was possible in the past, it's possible now.

WE NEED LIVABLE STUDENT INCOMES

Being a student should not mean choosing between poverty and burnout. We demand a guaranteed income for all students that makes full-time study financially viable. We need enough to pay our rents, pay our bills, and pay our bus fares while we learn. This would guarantee students the financial stability to focus on their education without the burden of excessive work hours.

It was possible in the past, it's possible now.

WE NEED RESOURCING FOR ALL SUBJECTS

We need subjects that help us understand the world around us, cultivate critical thinking, and imagine a future beyond the status quo - not just subjects that the university can commodify and sell via UniServices. Resources should not be allocated based on enrolment numbers and commercial impact, but spread equitably across topics to keep a plurality of knowledges alive.

It was possible in the past, it's possible now.

WE NEED TO TAX THE RICH

The current funding structure of universities prevents them from making positive change in the community. The university system is slowly but surely becoming incapable of contributing to society, and is left in a constant battle to secure funding and turn a profit. We need more tertiary education funding, and we need to tax the rich to make it happen.

It was possible in the past, it's possible now.

PAYING THE PRICE: TUITION, INEQUALITY, & NEOLIBERAL VISIONS

**“INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS, ESPECIALLY
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NATIONS, OFTEN FIND
THEMSELVES TREATED AS
'GOLD MINES'”**

Are you paying more in tuition to buy inequality? In this rapidly evolving era, neoliberalism covers the social and political skies in shadows. Particularly in the realm of higher education, we discern the commodification of education, soaring tuition, and the myriad challenges international students face on their path to pursuing their dreams.

Neoliberalism, a doctrine that emphasises economic efficiency, reduced governmental intervention, individual liberties, and market competition, is gradually reshaping our perception of education. Under its sway, education has shifted from being a noble pursuit of knowledge, talent cultivation, and societal service to a mere commodity—a tradable, profit-generating product. Within this framework, international students, especially those from developing nations, often find themselves treated as ‘gold mines,’ with their tuition fees becoming the ‘golden eggs’ many universities covet. But is this market-driven educational paradigm truly the way forward? When we treat education as a commodity, students as consumers, and knowledge as a tradable asset, have we lost sight of the original essence of education?

Does exorbitant tuition deprive underprivileged students of the right to quality education? Are international students truly treated with fairness, equality, and respect on their journey?

While neoliberalism undoubtedly presents us with economic growth, technological advancements, and opportunities for globalisation, it also introduces division, inequality, and alienation. Within the sphere of higher education, we need to reflect deeply: What are we genuinely chasing? Short-sighted gains or long-term growth? Serving market demands or contributing to the advancement of human civilization?

**“WHAT ARE WE
GENUINELY CHASING?
SHORT-SIGHTED
GAINS OR LONG-TERM
GROWTH? SERVING
MARKET DEMANDS
OR CONTRIBUTING TO
THE ADVANCEMENT OF
HUMAN CIVILIZATION?”**

TRADING WISDOM FOR PROFIT: THE COMMODIFICATION CRISIS

Firstly, let us delve deep into the tuition dilemma. In recent years, as governmental investments in the educational sector have waned, universities and other higher educational institutions are grappling with significant financial constraints. To bridge this funding chasm, raising tuition fees has emerged as their primary solution. International students, viewed as significant revenue streams, often become the primary “targets” for these tuition hikes. They have journeyed from various countries, seeking enhanced educational opportunities, only to discover that the price for their dreams has dramatically escalated.

“WHEN LEARNING BECOMES A LUXURY ONLY THE AFFLUENT CAN INDULGE IN, WE ARE COMPELLED TO QUESTION: WHAT KIND OF FUTURE WILL SUCH AN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM CULTIVATE?”

Such prohibitive tuition burdens mean that studying abroad is no longer a vision easily realised for every dream-driven student. Education, once regarded as the key to altering one’s destiny, is gradually morphing into a luxury item on the market, accessible only to the well-heeled. Those from modest socioeconomic backgrounds, even if endowed with exceptional talents and unyielding aspirations, find themselves compelled to forsake opportunities abroad due to financial constraints. This trend not only deprives countless youths of their right to knowledge but also engenders severe class stratification within the educational sphere.

When knowledge and learning become luxuries only the affluent can indulge in, we are compelled to question: What kind of talents will such an educational system cultivate for the future? The relentless rise in tuition fees signals not only that premium higher education is becoming a privilege of certain societal echelons but also hints that we are gradually losing a fair, democratic, and open educational environment.

Next, let us address the disparity in rights and opportunities. In this era of increasing globalisation,

we enthusiastically welcome international students, as they infuse our universities with a rich tapestry of cultural hues and diverse thought processes. Regrettably, despite their transnational quests for knowledge, in many respects, their treatment pales in comparison to their local counterparts. Be it scholarship allocations, internship opportunities, or future career prospects, they often seem to be perennially at a disadvantage. This palpable inequality, like an ostensibly transparent yet impenetrable wall, segregates them from their peers, depriving universities of the diversity and inclusivity they ought to champion. In a modern society that prides itself on equality, diversity, and inclusivity, how can we condone such disparities?

Lastly, we must confront the commodification of education under market-oriented dynamics. Under the profound influence of neoliberalism, the essence of education is increasingly distorted. It is no longer a sacred venue for pursuing wisdom and nurturing future leaders but has transformed into a factory catering to market demands and short-term gains. Many international students, caught in this milieu, find themselves gravitating towards seemingly “prospective” majors rather than

their true passions. Such deviations not only shackle their innovative potentials but also render the entire educational system pragmatic and superficial. Such an educational model, for every knowledge-seeking student, is an insidious harm, a deviation from the true essence of education. We urgently need to rethink and reposition the core values of education, ensuring every student can find their genuine path here, chasing their dreams and visions.

THE SILENT INEQUALITIES: INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

When discussing the escalation of tuition fees, we cannot overlook the deep reverence neoliberalism holds for the market. The retreat of governments has caused universities to become heavily reliant on tuition fees as their primary source of revenue. In pursuit of heightened economic benefits, international students, especially their “elevated” tuition fees, have become the preferred target for many universities. This is not just about money. At a deeper level, it is about how we perceive education. Education, inherently, should be public and egalitarian. However,

under the logic of neoliberalism, it morphs into a commodity, accessible only to those who can afford it.

Similarly, when we observe the unequal treatment faced by international students, the shadow of neoliberalism is unmistakable. Within the neoliberal framework, the individual becomes the fundamental unit of competition, no longer a member of society. This mindset leads us to view international students predominantly as economic contributors, overshadowing their roles as learners, researchers, and innovators. Their rights and opportunities are sacrificed at the altar of economic gains.

Furthermore, the commodification of education is a direct offspring of neoliberal logic. Under this paradigm, everything is susceptible to quantification and marketization. Education no longer remains a haven for the pursuit of true knowledge and nurturing talent but transforms into a “production line” catering to market demands. Students’ choices are no longer driven by their passions and interests but are dictated by market necessities.

Behind these issues lies the profound influence of neoliberalism on our way of thinking. To construct a

fairer, more open, and vibrant educational environment, we need to delve deep into the root causes behind these problems, re-evaluate our educational philosophies, and abandon outdated mindsets that solely chase short-term economic benefits. While the current state of education raises concerns, we hold both the responsibility and the capability to reshape its core values.

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NEEDS FOR THE FUTURE

While the current state of education raises concerns, we hold both the responsibility and the capability to reshape its core values.

1 VALUE THE TRUE ESSENCE OF EDUCATION

Education should not merely be regarded as a market commodity. We need to re-evaluate and reposition the fundamental values of education, ensuring every student, regardless of their origin, can find their unique path here, chasing their dreams and visions. Our aim should be to nurture responsible, creative, and visionary global citizens, rather than merely training “tools” to serve the market.

2 EMBRACE GENUINE DIVERSITY

Globalisation is not only an exchange of economies but also a fusion of cultures, knowledge, and values. We must ensure that every international student feels the warmth of home in the university, receiving equal treatment and opportunities as any other student. Our institutions should champion diversity, openness, and inclusivity, allowing every student to freely voice their opinions, share their stories, and dream their dreams.

3 VIEW EDUCATION AS A SOCIAL INVESTMENT

We can no longer allow education to be a mere tool for profit. More resources should be allocated to education, ensuring high-quality learning for every student. The real investment in education is not in infrastructure or facilities, but in people — in teachers, in every student with a thirst for knowledge. Only by doing so can we ensure the true value of education is realised, fostering leaders who will contribute to the future of society.

4 ADVOCATE POLICIES THAT BENEFIT STUDENTS

Close collaboration with governments and other relevant institutions is essential to guarantee more options for international students post-graduation. We cannot let their futures be constrained by narrow policies and market demands. Every student, irrespective of their nationality and background, should have equal opportunities to pursue their dreams and aspirations.

**"THIS IS OUR OUTLOOK
FOR THE FUTURE:
A WORLD OF
EDUCATION FILLED
WITH OPPORTUNITY
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COLLECTIVE EFFORT."**

In the future we envision, education will no longer be a symbol of wealth or status, but a dream that everyone can realise. No matter where you come from or what your background is, everyone will have the opportunity to access top-tier educational resources. In such an environment, international students will not be mere economic pawns; they will be recognized as unique and powerful voices, representing global prospects and diversity.

The education we seek will no longer be swayed by the market, but will return to the true essence of learning. Students will have the freedom to choose their

subjects based on their interests and passions, rather than being influenced by external economic or societal pressures. Moreover, the universities of the future will become melting pots of culture and knowledge, with no boundaries. The presence of international students and the diversity they bring will be seen as invaluable assets. Together with their peers, they will study and grow in an environment filled with respect, collaboration, and vitality.

Within this vision, educational decision-making will also undergo a transformation. Decisions will no longer be made by a select few; instead, everyone, from students to academic staff, will have a say in advancing education, collectively shaping a more equitable and open academic world. Furthermore, educational institutions will continuously strive for progress and innovation, ensuring they remain at the forefront of knowledge.

This is our outlook for the future: a world of education filled with opportunity, hope, and collective effort.

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KNOWLEDGE IN CHAINS: AGAINST THE WESTERN EPISTEMOLOGICAL HEGEMONY

What is the real price we pay for knowledge? For too long our universities have championed only one form of knowledge, one way of knowing, one way of doing, one way of seeing, and one way of being. Many of the alternative conceptions of the world around us have fallen beneath the oppressive shadow of the Western epistemological hegemony. This shadow not only blinds us but, like a poisonous and engulfing fog, it does immeasurable violence to those with the courage to see things differently, who seek to honour their ancestors, who refuse to obey, who dream of a more expansive and encompassing future. Thus, it is time now to construct a counter-hegemony that moves us beyond this wall of blinding darkness and towards not only a more socially just world, but also towards a greater understanding of human knowledge itself. In this

way, we will invite an infinite set of possibilities for reconstructing a better society using all of those knowledges that lie beyond the Western epistemological hegemony.

Settler colonialism, and by extension, neoliberal capitalism, which was born out of the foundations laid down by empire, are two key forces that have worked tirelessly to secure the tyranny of the Western epistemological hegemony. In helping to secure the Western epistemological hegemony, settler-colonialism and neoliberal capitalism—as well as those powerful few who seek ceaselessly to secure the individual and structural benefits they stand to gain from the continuation of these systems—are all therefore also responsible for limiting the future of possibility for tertiary education. And by limiting the future of possibility

via the restrictions they place on knowledge itself, so too have these forces restricted the very future of humanity.

Settler colonialism marks the dawn of the Western epistemological hegemony, where settler colonialists descended from Britain and Europe to conquer and supplant countless Indigenous peoples as well as the peoples of the global South. The Empire established the institution of the university to strip Indigenous and Southern peoples of their knowledge and sought to erase non-Western knowledge forever. The link between settler-colonialism and the original emergence of the Western epistemological hegemony is therefore undeniable.

Neoliberalism as a political philosophy on the other hand, was initially born out of the intellectual activity that occurred during the Enlightenment period, which traces directly back to the Western-European nations; to the true home of the colonisers. Further, neoliberalism has prevented knowledge from fulfilling any purpose other than to service the needs of capital. Neoliberalism has sought to privatise, marketise, and commodify every facet of society, while drastically diminishing the presence of any public forms of good. In turn,

this has severely limited the forms of knowledge that are deemed valuable enough to study, and has thus also worked to secure the Western epistemological hegemony. Under these conditions, knowledge only has the power to limit, not to grow. Under these conditions, knowledge itself becomes oppressive rather than emancipatory. Under these conditions, we can exist only within the definitions predetermined by the dominant classes, rather than transform our conditions, our reality, shaping the existence of humanity in the form of what is just and what is good. Under these conditions, knowledge is nothing but an

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instrument of pure domination. Under these conditions, the meaning of knowledge has been shaped only by the interests of the settler-colonialists, the dominant classes, the interests of industry, and the interests of capital. By now, as we know, the language and techniques deployed by power, of the oppressors, of the deceivers, has become all too painfully familiar. Thus, we must break free and liberate both ourselves and also knowledge itself from the shackles of hegemony.

To escape this tyranny, we must build a strong and lively counter-hegemony. This counter-hegemony must be built using the plural knowledges of all, not the singular knowledge of the powerful few. Within this counter-hegemony, these plural knowledges will be free to transform the world and to help us navigate the fraught times that are upon us. It is glaringly evident that we live now in a time of major and extended crisis. All around us we feel the presence of the climate emergency, ceaseless war, global pandemics, wealth disparities; and ultimately: it is the Western epistemological hegemony that has led us here. The singular perspective of the Western epistemological hegemony, which also lacks any conviction for change and transformation, has blinded many to the error of their own ways. Unable

“WE MUST BUILD A STRONG AND LIVELY COUNTER-HEGEMONY. THIS COUNTER-HEGEMONY MUST BE BUILT USING THE PLURAL KNOWLEDGES OF ALL, NOT THE SINGULAR KNOWLEDGE OF THE POWERFUL FEW.”

to see beyond its narrow view, we have tried hopelessly for too long to escape this moment of darkness using only one vision, one knowledge. This way of seeing, however, is itself designed to maintain and oppress rather than to transform and to liberate, to keep us trapped here in darkness, where humanity will only continue to suffer. It makes sense, then, to abandon this broken lens, and to develop anew using the collective wisdom of a thousand generations, the wisdom of all. This will allow us to forge and honour our own ways of knowing, of doing, of seeing, of being; and in so doing, not only free ourselves, but also establish novel, fruitful and urgent solutions to the critical problems of the 21st century.



| | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| Compulsory fees | \$33,427.40 |
| Living costs | \$43,782.04 |

Total loan balance: \$75,885.99

NEEDS FOR THE FUTURE

The formation of this counter-hegemony begins with four clear demands for higher education, all of which are interrelated, and all of which must be heard and acted upon if we wish to secure the possibility for real change.

1 KNOWLEDGE MUST BE SHAPED BY THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE

Knowledge should be disseminated on both a local and global level to address the needs of the people and the communities dependent upon and active within the world-system. By distributing knowledge across these axes, knowledge is better able to reconfigure itself to the specific demands of geographically and culturally specific instances; to adapt when necessary in order to fulfil the pressing and varied demands of a glocal world. In addition, knowledge in this form will be fluid and dynamic, unable to be caught within any form of hegemonic capture. Transnational capital will no longer hold sway over the importance of knowledge, and knowledge will be returned to the people so they may autonomously use it as is needed by each local community-based context.

2 KNOWLEDGE SHOULD BE DEFINED BY THE PEOPLE, NOT BY THE VALUES OF THE RULING CLASSES.

It is vital that knowledge be defined by the people in order to avoid settler-colonial and corporate capture. If only those with the capital to enter into our university system are afforded the right to determine what is and what is not knowledge, neither us as the people nor knowledge itself, will be free from the tyranny of the Western epistemological hegemony. Knowledge will always remain the property of the elite classes if only they are afforded access to it and therefore also the means to decide which forms of knowledge are and are not valuable enough to study.

3 KNOWLEDGE SHOULD BE USED TO TRANSFORM REALITY AND TO MOULD IT IN THE SHAPE OF WHAT IS JUST AND WHAT IS GOOD FOR ALL HUMAN BEINGS AND OTHER-THAN-HUMAN BEINGS, NOT JUST THE FEW AND THE POWERFUL AND TO ONLY MEMBERS OF THE HUMAN SPECIES.

By necessity, knowledge must now extend and attend to the needs of all life on Earth, including all of the constitutive parts of the natural ecosystems that sustain our planet. If knowledge is not shaped by the needs of our Earth, then we will never be able to rectify the state of the climate crisis; to restore balance to the natural systems that have given us life since the very dawn of humanity. If knowledge remains imprisoned, these sacred and vital systems will be laid to waste by the ceaseless onslaught of settler-colonialism and neoliberal capitalism, whose unending enterprise continues to transform this vibrant and lively planet into nothing more than an economic resource to be extracted and commodified.

4 KNOWLEDGE SHOULD BE COMPLETELY DEMOCRATISED AND AVAILABLE TO ALL

This final demand underpins all of the former, in the sense that none of these aims can be achieved if knowledge remains locked away in an ivory tower behind exorbitant paywalls. As has already been alluded to, if education and thus also access to knowledge remains privatised and commodified, then the knowledges of all will never truly be free. The fee structure of tertiary education engendered by the ever expanding market must be replaced in order to liberate knowledge and ourselves from this soulless, corporatised approach to education.

If we fail to platform these dictates, and if tertiary education remains as it is, all those alternative forms of knowing, doing, seeing, and being will never be free, and the possible social realities they work to illuminate, and which they will eventually help to shape, shall be lost to us. If we continue to reside beneath this engulfing shadow only violence will follow; and the violence endured by those already passed will have been in vain. Countless generations before us have already suffered immeasurable violence and oppression beneath the suffocating weight of Western epistemological hegemony. And the generations that are yet-to-be-born will remain trapped beneath this suffocating cloud of darkness if this hegemony is not dismantled by us, for us, for our ancestors, and for those who are yet-to-exist. Those future generations, those not yet-to-exist, are waiting to see what comes next, to see whether we will uphold the mantle of responsibility and adopt the knowledges of all so that we may reconstruct the future in the shape of what is just and what is good—there will be no limits to the expansiveness of our vision.

However, time is running out. Soon, there will be nothing left of this world

if we cannot find the necessary courage to transcend our narrow sightedness. And if, in this moment of darkness, we cannot find the light embedded within the knowledges of all, our collective fate will be decided by our own inaction. The future of knowledge has been stolen from us by the powerful few, whose only hold over us is the capital they possess. These powerful actors have both determined the shape of knowledge, transforming it into a mere commodity to be bought and sold, and set restrictions on our access to it. This has led to a limited set of possibilities for real change.

There is still hope left for tertiary education, and we will need this hope in the struggle to reclaim the future from the powerful few. Together, we must realise that a better future for tertiary education and thus also for society writ large is possible. We must use what is at stake here to inspire the need for change—the future of humanity, the future of the Earth, and the possibility to save our collective futures using the knowledges of all. There is simply no telling what may be known, what may be done, what may be seen, and how we may be, once we have liberated knowledge and ourselves from the shackles of the Western epistemological hegemony.

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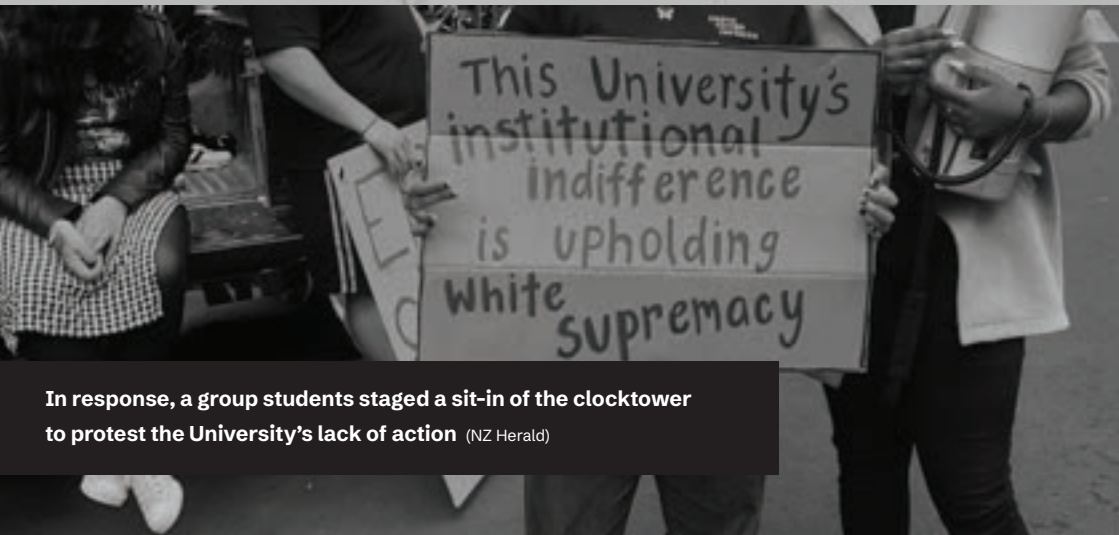
THIS IS A RACIST UNIVERSITY



From the late 1950's, UoA Engineering students held an annual 'haka party' pub crawl, turning the mockery of the haka into an institutional tradition. Māori student protest brought the parties to an end in the late 1970's (E-Tangata)



In late 2019, a wave of white supremacist posters went up around UoA. Management refused to remove them, suggesting they were protected by 'free speech' (Clockwise from top left: RNZ, Newshub, Stuff, The Spinoff)



In response, a group students staged a sit-in of the clocktower to protest the University's lack of action (NZ Herald)

BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE

Despite its attempts to appear inclusive, this institution has systematically perpetuated racial injustice, blocked paths to social justice, and silenced the voices of those that do not conform to its Eurocentric norms. As students, our experiences at this university have been profoundly marked by inequality.

In this booklet, we voice our frustrations, investigate the roots of our discontent, and present our vision for a truly inclusive institution.

We demand a future university in which every student is a full participant, where knowledges are given equal status, and where social justice is not just a goal, but a lived reality.

A MANIFESTO FOR RACISM-FREE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

Higher education has always been weaved as a vivid thread, a beacon illuminating the road towards personal and societal growth, in the tapestry of human progress. We nourish the seeds of critical thinking, innovation, and progress within the hallowed halls of universities, and foresee a world where knowledge knows no borders. In this utopian vision, universities serve as citadels of enlightenment, inviting many perspectives and harmonising them in a symphony of ideas to construct a brighter, more egalitarian future. However, the harsh reality is that this ideal remains distant for many. A shadow looms in the academic sphere: the shadow of racism and discrimination. This shadow has put a long, terrifying pall over the

educational careers of countless students. It restricts their potential, dims their dreams, and undermines the entire core of higher education as a means of empowerment and transformation.

As a student, I stand as a torchbearer of development, armed with aspirations, dreams, and the confidence that change is not only necessary but also feasible. I'm here today to present this manifesto, a clarion call to universities all across the world. It is an impassioned plea, a rallying cry, and a plan of action, imploring universities to take this important moment in history and commit decisively to the abolition of racism. I present a united vision, one that goes beyond hyperbole

and resonates intimately with the ambitions of a generation. The vision urges universities to not just consider inclusivity, diversity, and equity as abstract concepts, but to integrate them as fundamental principles shaping their very core. This manifesto is a statement of intent, a road map to a university landscape in which all students, regardless of race or background, can prosper and attain their full potential.

I firmly believe that by uniting in purpose, universities can become not just centres of academic excellence, but also bastions of social justice, pillars of empowerment, and beacons of hope. As a student, I aim to catalyse transformation, holding universities accountable and marching forward with unwavering determination. Join

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us in this collective endeavour, for together, we can and will shape a future where universities truly live up to their potential as vehicles of enlightenment and change. A future where diversity is celebrated, equity is the norm, and racism is but a relic of the past.

BREAKING THE SILENCE: CONFRONTING SYSTEMIC RACISM IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Within the intricate framework of issue resolution, the indispensable inaugural step resides in the recognition of the problem. This pivotal and non-negotiable primary phase stands as the cornerstone, demanding unequivocal acknowledgment and acceptance. I committed to advancing the cause of racial equity within the realm of higher education, I recognize that acknowledging the existence of racism within universities is paramount. The recognition of systemic racism in universities goes beyond a mere formality; it represents a profound acknowledgment that signals the potential for significant change. Within policies, curricula, and practices, systemic racism has taken root, requiring universities to confront this pervasive issue deeply ingrained in their foundations.

This insidious presence appears in various ways, notably in institutional policies. Admission criteria, for instance, might overlook the diverse backgrounds and experiences of applicants, perpetuating racial disparities. Similarly, disciplinary measures often disproportionately affect students of colour, exemplifying areas where systemic racism is embedded. Additionally, curricular biases persist, affecting the content and delivery of academic programs. In essence, universities must address these issues comprehensively.

Acknowledgment must translate into proactive measures, ensuring policies and practices are inclusive and equitable. By recognizing these challenges clearly, universities can initiate substantive changes, fostering a learning environment where diversity is celebrated, and systemic racism is actively dismantled. Outdated curricula that overlook the contributions of marginalised communities, the absence of diverse perspectives in course materials, and a failure to adequately address issues of race and social justice in education are all manifestations of this issue. Finally, policies and curricula, institutional practices play a pivotal role in either perpetuating or combating racism.

For instance, unequal access to resources, unequal opportunities for career advancement, and insufficient support systems for marginalised students are stark examples of how systemic racism infiltrates daily university life

SHINING A LIGHT ON PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

Acknowledging the existence of racism is just the first step; universities must also be transparent about their findings and intentions. Transparency is a cornerstone of accountability and serves several essential purposes: when universities openly share the results of their self-assessments, they invite scrutiny from the broader community, including students, faculty, staff, and the public. This scrutiny, in turn, fosters accountability, ensuring that universities remain committed to their promises of change. It also builds trust and demonstrates a commitment to honesty and integrity in the pursuit of racial equity, which is essential in gaining the confidence of all stakeholders.

However, it's crucial to emphasise that transparency goes beyond mere data points. While universities like the University of Auckland might present equity reports outlining key

demographic stats, it's essential to delve deeper. True transparency goes beyond mere statistics; it entails providing comprehensive breakdowns that not only highlight disparities but also offer contextual insights. Universities must openly share their methodologies, explaining the processes involved in data collection and analysis. Moreover, they should publish clear, actionable plans that specifically address the challenges identified in the self-assessment. This comprehensive approach to transparency is what fosters genuine accountability. By sharing not only the challenges but also the strategies in place, universities invite collaboration and engagement from various stakeholders. This inclusive approach can lead to more effective and sustainable solutions, ensuring that the pursuit of racial equity is not just a promise but a tangible reality within the academic community.

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CALLS FOR CHANGE

DIVERSITY IN LEADERSHIP & FACULTY REPRESENTATION ARE IMPORTANT

To foster an inclusive and equitable university environment, it is imperative to prioritise diverse representation in leadership and faculty recruitment, transcending mere symbolism. This commitment must be continuous, reflecting a steadfast dedication to reshaping the face of leadership within academic institutions. By actively recruiting and promoting leaders from underrepresented backgrounds, particularly people of colour, universities can initiate transformative change. Diverse leadership is not just symbolic; it enriches the decision-making process by incorporating a wide array of perspectives, leading to policies and practices that resonate with the diverse needs and aspirations of every member of the university community. Transparent hiring practices, inclusive policies offering equal opportunities regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or other identities, along with training programs that sensitise faculty and staff to the importance of diversity

and inclusion, are fundamental. Furthermore, establishing mentorship programs supporting the growth of underrepresented faculty members is pivotal. Diversity in faculty and leadership roles is not about meeting quotas; it's an investment in the future of education. A diverse faculty enhances teaching and research, bringing unique perspectives that enrich the overall educational experience for students. Therefore, prioritising diversity in university leadership and faculty representation is not merely a social responsibility but a strategic investment, creating an environment where everyone, regardless of their background, can thrive and contribute meaningfully to the academic landscape.

CURRICULUM & PEDAGOGY FOR INCLUSIVE LEARNING: AN EQUITABLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

To promote a racism-free university education, universities must conduct a thorough re-evaluation of their curricula and pedagogical practices. This means assessing curriculum content on a regular and continuous basis to ensure that it reflects the

plurality of voices, experiences, and opinions in society. Furthermore, universities should prioritise the inclusion of courses that particularly address issues of race, racism, and social justice, establishing them as a core component of the educational experience. Simultaneously, faculty members should be provided with assistance and tools to facilitate curriculum reform and the implementation of inclusive teaching practices. These practices should include incorporating multiple viewpoints, creating inclusive classroom environments, participating in ongoing professional development, and being committed to assessment and feedback procedures. Universities may establish an inclusive learning environment by providing students with the knowledge and skills they need to engage with the complexity of race and social justice, encouraging empathy, critical thinking, and a truly equal educational experience.

MECHANISMS FOR SAFE REPORTING

Developing secure reporting mechanisms within institutions like universities is an important step towards eradicating institutionalised racism and providing a safe

environment for victims to express their concerns. Victims of racism, prejudice, or bias are sometimes hesitant to disclose instances owing to fear of retaliation, disbelief, or the potential consequences of speaking up. To prevent this, institutions should implement anonymous reporting procedures that safeguard the reporter's identity while simultaneously ensuring that their complaints are taken seriously and treated confidentially. This anonymity can be achieved by online reporting methods or specialised employees who have been trained to handle such matters with discretion.

Furthermore, the mechanism for dealing with these reports should be strong and transparent. All reported incidents should be thoroughly investigated, including gathering evidence, interviewing witnesses, and consulting racial prejudice experts as needed. The goal should be to discover the truth behind each report and evaluate whether any institutional policies or standards have been violated. Accountability is crucial, thus persons who are proven to have engaged in racist behaviour must face appropriate consequences. Depending on the gravity of the offence, this could entail punitive actions, instructional programmes, or restorative justice.

In the tapestry of human progress, higher education has always been woven as a vivid thread, illuminating the path toward personal and societal growth. Just as seeds of critical thinking, innovation, and progress are nurtured within the hallowed halls of universities, so too must we cultivate an environment free from the shadows of racism and discrimination. As a student deeply committed to the ideals of higher education, I am confident that the concepts outlined in this manifesto possess the transformative power needed to dispel the lingering darkness within our academic sphere. We stand at a pivotal moment, a juncture where the principles articulated in this declaration can cease being mere words and transform into tangible actions. I extend a heartfelt invitation to universities worldwide, urging them to not only acknowledge but embrace this manifesto.

Let us together set the groundwork for a future where knowledge truly knows no borders, where the symphony of ideas harmonises diverse perspectives, and where every student's potential is unleashed without fear or prejudice. This manifesto, born from the collaborative spirit of students, mirrors the essence of our utopian vision. Through collective efforts, we can dissolve the pall of racism and discrimination, illuminating the educational journey of every student. Let our universities become not just citadels of enlightenment, but beacons of hope, diversity, and inclusion. In this pursuit, we rekindle the initial imagery, stitching a brighter, more egalitarian future into the very fabric of higher education.

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CHINESE STUDENTS READ THIS

THE BLEEDING WOUND WE PRETEND NOT TO FEEL OR SEE

You are here to be a student, not a colour. You have travelled here from thousands of miles away to get educated, not discriminated against. You pay a fortune every year to invest in your dreams and future, not racial treatment or oppressive memories. Equal identity and status, and mutual respect and understanding on campus are meant to be the least a university should guarantee for you to have a pleasant and rewarding university journey. However, what we have been experiencing on campus is quite a different story, and each of us Chinese students, from time to time, might encounter or get involved in a racial moment, have a racial incident, and even get racially traumatised during our study here. From racially stereotyped opinions and remarks to racist jokes, from a dirty look

to a cold/distant manner, from offensive language to various forms of microaggressions on campus, from institutionalised prejudice in student admission and assessment to widespread racial discrimination in the employment market, racism against us is everywhere, and it would be incredibly hard to imagine how lucky you are if you have not even got a brief taste of it throughout your whole university life.

What is worse, there has been a sharp and rapid surge of anti-Chinese racism since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, and we have been experiencing a “double pandemic” that involves both the fear of the viral infection and fast-spreading anti-Chinese discrimination magnified by the virus. Anti-Asian hate and crimes have been going rampant both locally and globally, and we have been struggling to negotiate the increasingly hostile

political-social atmosphere against us, while coping with the pandemic's impacts and restrictions on our modes of study. Social alienation, verbal attacks, physical harassment, which used to be occasional encounters, have become much more common and frequent to us since the pandemic, and many of us have been blamed for being the cause of the pandemic and even been treated as the virus itself.

Despite all these racial injustices and violence, many of us, unfortunately, are oblivious to the gravity of our situation, and what our fates could be if we remain indifferent or keep silent as always. The reasons behind this are complicated. You might be just lucky enough to be one of the few who have not experienced a moment of racism yet; or you might be depressed by your experiences on campus but cannot see the hope of any meaningful change so just let it be; or, very sadly, you have not only been harmed but also been assimilated into the racially hierarchical culture of the society and your institution, and racial consciousness and practice have become normal and even justified for you. Whatever your story is, you need to understand that it is not only about yourself but your family, friends, classmates, and peers who

share the same culture and origin as yours, and they have been taking turns suffering what you have turned a blind eye to. Your indifference or ignorance will normalise and perpetuate the racially unequal and oppressive systems of the society and your institution, which is exactly what the racialized power structure and privileged social groups intend. You know it is right there, no matter how hard you try to disregard or downplay it. You know your loved ones and millions of peers are struggling with it out there, and there won't be any change if we keep silent and take no action. Let's not ignore a leaking roof by doing nothing but avoiding sleeping under the drips until this house is completely ruined! Let's not treat a bleeding wound by simply putting a dressing on it to keep it out of sight and out of mind, without properly cleaning and sterilising it! Let's stop being silent victims! Let's get united and stand up against racism together!

**“LET’S STOP BEING
SILENT VICTIMS! LET’S
GET UNITED AND STAND
UP AGAINST RACISM
TOGETHER!”**

WHY THE HECK DO THEY LOOK DOWN THEIR NOSES AT US?

To put out a fire, you need to find its origin and sources. To make a change to our situations, we need to question and challenge what is behind our struggles. If you have a look at the colonial history of this society and your institution, you will start to get a sense of why there has been a racial hierarchy on this land and why both indigenous and racialized bodies are treated inferior. Although multicultural social policies and inclusive institutional values have been made well known to us, the authorities won't be very keen on telling you the inglorious settler colonial history of this country, and the universities' deep involvement and complicity in the historic process of colonisation. Driven by capitalist expansion and its primitive accumulation, colonisers engaged in a violent and unscrupulous dispossession, appropriation, and exploitation of indigenous peoples, land, and natural resources.

As two sides of the same coin, White supremacy and settler colonialism have always been intertwined with each other. It is White supremacy that has ideologically underpinned the domination of the indigenous society and

population. It is White supremacy that has logically underlain the discrimination of racialized people. It is White supremacy that has epistemologically established and perpetuated the racially oppressive social systems and norms. Under the assumption of white supremacy, White is naturally and inherently privileged, and being not white means being second.

When it comes to us Chinese students, although we do not come from a settler colonial background, we do have a long colonial history of more than one hundred years from 19th to 20th Century. We used to be deeply colonised by numerous Western powers at the same time, and White supremacy has played a prominent role in forming the racial bias and stereotype against us. Being the historic origin and the root cause of structural and institutional racism in modern times, settler colonialism and White supremacy should not only be targeted as the chief culprits of racial domination and discrimination but also be regarded as an essential part of the general debates and initiatives on decolonization.

Moreover, racism is not an ideology that never changes. Instead, it has been in a constant state of evolution

"THE SETTLER COLONIAL HISTORY OF THIS UNIVERSITY, THE RACIALLY PREJUDICED RATIONALITY OF WHITE SUPREMACY, AND THE CULTURAL EVOLUTION OF RACISM HAVE COLLECTIVELY SHAPED THE INTERACTIVE RACIAL DYNAMICS IN THIS SOCIETY AND THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS WITHIN IT."

as the historic, political, and social contexts and circumstances develop, and neo-racism has been a modern mutation of traditional racism which is based on not only one's skin colour but also preconceptions and stereotypes against one's ethnic/national culture. On top of biological traits, one's languages, traditions, customs, beliefs, religions, histories could all be targeted by this new version of racism which is much more lethal and oppressive. Originating from traditional cultures that have one of the longest histories in the world, we Chinese students have been particularly prone to this new type of racism, and our language, philosophies, and traditions have frequently been derided and degraded by its followers. As a result, not only our black hair and yellow skin have become signs of racial subordination, but our ethnic consciousness and spirit have been racially stigmatised.

In brief, the settler colonial history and foundation of this university, the racially prejudiced rationality and logic of White supremacy, and the cultural evolution of racism have collectively shaped the interactive racial dynamics in this society and the educational institutions within it.

RISE UP FOR WHAT WE ARE OWED

So how should we make a change? How should we effectively address our struggles and make an improvement on our situations? How should we gradually shake, disrupt, and dismantle the entrenched racialised systems and institutions? Like all the endeavours made in pursuit of promotion of human rights in history, the pathway to racial freedom and equality will certainly not be an easy or smooth one, and numerous difficulties and challenges will be ahead, but we have got no choice if we don't want to suffer the relentless and ever-worsening oppression. To achieve what we want, we need to be motivated, united, determined, and strategic throughout the expedition to our grand goal of racial equality and justice.

FIRST, we need to learn to SAY NO to racism in our everyday life. We have shown too much patience and forbearance for the privileged group to take us seriously. Our persistent indifference, ignorance, and silence have been contributing to our own suffering. In addition, our culture and its core values such as benevolence, righteousness, and trust are a vital part of our national identity which we should always be proud of, but no culture is perfect, and we need to critically reflect on the negative side of our own culture. When running into social injustice and violence, it is typical for us to swallow it and let it go. This passive and senseless compliance and servility has been a considerable disadvantage of our traditional culture which not only disgraces our national dignity but encourages the recurrence of racial behaviour and practice against us. Stand up and speak up when you should! That is the least you should do if you want to make a difference!

SECOND, what we are striving for should not be racial equality and freedom only for Chinese people, but for the general cause of racial liberty for all. This is not only for the racial struggles of the Chinese. This is for the universal challenges of everyone who has been racially classified and treated. We need to build a multi-racial coalition and get actively involved in the efforts and struggles for other races' equal identities, statuses, and rights. Only in this way can we band together, support each other, and fight for our common goal all the way until it is achieved for all!

THIRD, as university students, we do appreciate the lofty and enlightened declarations and statements on racial equality and diversity on campus, but we have long been tired of seeing these frequently advertised promises failing to be fulfilled. We earnestly call on the university management and diversity workers to put these proclaimed liberal values

into practice, so that they could be realised in word and deed. Racial equality and inclusiveness on campus are supposed to be a sincere and solid commitment made by a university to its students and the public, not merely one of its branding and marketing strategies.

FINALLY, we need to expand our horizons and take a global approach to our resistant activism. All members of the global Chinese community should unite as one and rally to our common enterprises and aims of racial emancipation. Our shared racial status and experiences have been striking a chord with each of us for a rather long time, and all we need is to come together and release our potential for making a change. We can firmly declare and uphold that "Chinese Have A Voice!" Wherever you are in the world, when each and every of us keep saying it to ourselves and say it out loud in public when we need, a progressive change will be bound to take place!

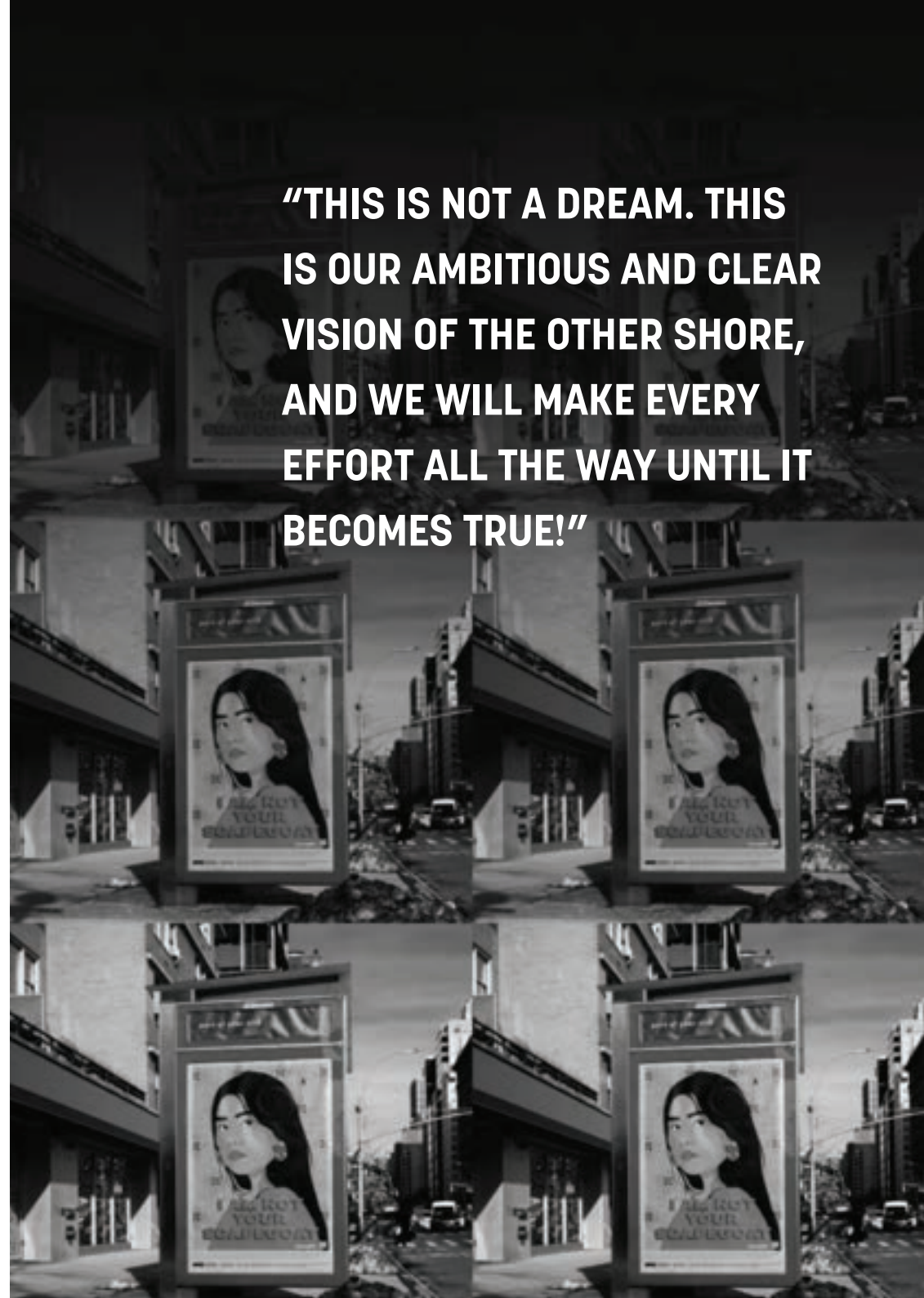
LOOKING BEYOND: AN EQUAL AND HARMONIOUS SPECTRUM OF RACES AND CULTURES

With common dedications and sustained efforts from us and other racialized groups, we will definitely have a chance to build an alternative future. One day, no Chinese or other racialized student will have to worry about being an outsider on campus during their university journey. One day, there will be no racialized admission barriers for students, no racial moment or oppressive experience during their stay, and no racialized obstacle to their employment opportunities after they graduate. One day, racial equality and diversity will not be an empty promise anymore, and universities will do what they say and make a real effort to translate their policy and paperwork into practice and reality. One day, there will be only reflection on colonial history in the past and no (neo)colonial existence at present. One day, white supremacy and its

whole set of white privileges will be completely abandoned and become regressive consciousness and practice to be ashamed of, not proud of. One day, there will be neither bias and prejudice against one's hair or skin colour nor assumption and stereotype against their language, religion, and tradition. One day, the Chinese and other racialized peoples will live an alternative life where they are not struggling in the gap between the structural and institutional inequalities, and we will live with dignity and honour. One day, even White people will live an alternative life where they don't succeed by taking advantage of the domination and oppression of other races and become a participant in building a just and equitable world for all.

One day, our future generations, no matter what skin colour they are born with or what culture they grow up with, will live an alternative life where there are no racial boundaries or categories, and a close multi-racial and multicultural bond has been built and fostered by all races, with everyone treating each other and getting treated as family.

**"THIS IS NOT A DREAM. THIS
IS OUR AMBITIOUS AND CLEAR
VISION OF THE OTHER SHORE,
AND WE WILL MAKE EVERY
EFFORT ALL THE WAY UNTIL IT
BECOMES TRUE!"**



THIS IS AN UNDEMOCRATIC UNIVERSITY



BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE

This institution has stifled critical thinking and civic engagement, established massive barriers to entry, and silenced the voices of the people it is meant to serve. As students, our experiences at this university have been profoundly marked by inequality.

In this final section, we express our frustrations with our undemocratic university, delve into the underlying reasons for our discontents, and share our visions for a more participatory future—not just for us as students, but for us all.

We demand that our university takes steps to make this a truly inclusive and equitable institution. It must provide equal access to education, ensure that students are actively involved in decision-making, foster a culture that cultivates critical citizenship, and commit to protecting and uplifting our people and planet.

Home / New Zealand

**Controversial Auckland Uni
course shake-up sparks
emergency staff, student
meetings**

In August 2024, UoA students and staff gathered to voice concerns over potential course cuts that University management are attempting to impose without adequate community consultation (NZ HERALD)

OUR VOICE, OUR COMMUNITY, OUR FUTURE.

PARTICIPATORY DECISION-MAKING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Students are the collective heartbeat of universities, yet why is our voice often treated as an afterthought, marginalised in a system that should be catering to our educational needs? It is time for change, and it is time for our voices to not only be heard but valued in the decisions that influence our academic journeys. The problem lies in how higher education is controlled, how decisions are made, and how old systems cling to power while lacking the ability to adapt to the changing needs of both students and society.

What we need is participation, inclusion, and democratisation that respects the perspectives of all students. Higher education should be catering to a wide variety of interests and desires, especially as many different types of people increasingly choose to enter into university. Because of this, democratisation of universities should be about diversifying the institutional missions and types that are accessible to any person seeking to use the services that higher education has to offer. Let it be clear, our demand is to break down the barriers limiting the educational opportunity of some for others, and offer a diverse array of higher education services that all people can access. It is time that the voices of students are respected and transformative change initiated.

As we see in “Democratising Higher Education”, the supply of higher education has experienced a continual expansion as people increasingly demand greater educational opportunities (Blessinger & Anchan, 2015). In many developed countries, entering into higher education has become the norm that is expected by most young people. For example, the OECD shows that more than three quarters of young adults will take part in higher education in some form or another (OECD, 2023). In light of this trend, we need to ask ourselves “how can we make higher education more accessible or more meaningful to all who wish to participate?”

**“IT IS TIME THAT THE
VOICES OF STUDENTS
ARE RESPECTED AND
TRANSFORMATIVE
CHANGE INITIATED.”**

WHY WE NEED THE STUDENT VOICE

Student voices are key to the democratisation of universities. One of the only ways to ensure a complete and representative academic freedom is to construct a political body within higher education that is based on the principles of co-governance (Newfield, 2016). This is best seen as having “joint decision-making rights over both policy decisions and specific cases”(Newfield, 2016).

The pipeline of teaching and research is currently controlled by those officials that sit atop the pyramidal hierarchy within universities. This means that students and indeed teachers hold little sway over decisions within higher education. Academic freedom, when defined correctly, should revolve around the collective production of knowledge thereby

**“IT IS TIME THAT THE
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diluting academic freedom, which when defined correctly should be about the production of knowledge for all our society (Newfield, 2016). For instance, involving students and faculty in curriculum development allows for a more flexible and adaptable educational system. Different individuals have unique learning needs and aspirations, and their input in shaping the curriculum ensures that higher education is more responsive to these varied requirements.

The commitment of universities to institutional change toward democracy will most effectively be demonstrated in participatory decision-making. Although this might be resisted by the traditional understanding of higher education, embracing such change is essential for the vitality and relevance of these institutions in the modern world. This democratisation does not mean the abolition of administrative responsibilities. Rather, it offers a collaborative approach in which administrators, teachers, and students collaborate to determine the university’s future, each bringing their own views and talents. For instance, since higher education is supposed to support the development of skills that students themselves are seeking to develop, students should

be given a voice in the expansion or elimination of courses rather than having what courses are on offer be determined by those at the top of unrepresentative hierarchy. Brooman et al. (2015) found that a closer alignment of curriculum development with the “student voice” was able to facilitate the emergence of perceptions that are typically not revealed through traditional feedback mechanisms. The authors argued that this was because of how student views often challenged the assumptions of staff with regarding to the teaching and learning process (Brooman et al., 2015). This illustrates a key point – involving students in curriculum development not only empowers them but also leads to more student-centered and responsive education.

PAVING THE PATH TO SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR ALL STUDENTS

The Ministry of Education in New Zealand has also begun to recognise the importance of the “student voice”. Recently they have started an initiative titled “Partners in Decision Making”, where the Ministry of Education undertook an initial attempt at responding to requests from within tertiary education to strengthen their incorporation of

“FOR PARTICIPATORY DECISION MAKING, IT REQUIRES INSTITUTIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION TO ACTUALLY UNDERSTAND WHAT STUDENTS ARE TELLING THEM”

tertiary student voices into decision making bodies (Education NZ, 2021). What emerged from this initiative were two simple routes that highlighted a way to embed a culture of “genuine partnership” between students and institutions, which included listening to each other and learning together (Education NZ, 2021). For participatory decision making, it requires institutions in higher education to actually understand what students are telling them, and thus, for instance, needs to involve active boards and committees that are dedicated to ensuring all diverse student voices are heard. In a continuously changing world, institutions must constantly modify their programmes, research objectives, and institutional policies. Students’ and faculty offer different perspectives that play a vital role in helping to achieve a more robust

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FINANCIAL CONDITION,
BACKGROUND, OR**

decision-making process. Without these voices, institutions may never be able to effectively recognise and address their evolving needs. Democratising university is about self-determination and justice. The level to which human rights are protected is a major determinant of the level to which people are provided with justice. Because of this, in any democratic system there are two cornerstones that are represented by justice and self-determination. In higher education, justice begins with fair access. It necessitates those educational opportunities be made available to all people, regardless of financial condition, background, or personal

traits. This entails removing obstacles that may prevent people from obtaining higher education. Justice also demands that once students enter the university, they are treated fairly and without discrimination. This includes measures to ensure that students from underrepresented groups to have their voice in the university.

Self-determination implies that students and professors are free to pursue their academic interests and research without undue influence or constraints. Academic freedom is an essential component of self-determination since it allows people to explore and express themselves without fear of censure or persecution. Shared governance can help to advance self-determination. When students, teachers, and administrators work together to make decisions, it gives them a voice in the future of their education and the university as a whole. The promotion of student voices is vitally important for those that are least represented among the groups of students that enter higher education. The values of fairness and self-determination ought to be ingrained in the institutional culture of a democratic university. As a result, all members' rights and interests are recognized and safeguarded.

**“WHEN STUDENTS,
TEACHERS, AND
ADMINISTRATORS WORK
TOGETHER TO MAKE
DECISIONS, IT GIVES THEM
A VOICE IN THE FUTURE OF
THEIR EDUCATION AND THE
UNIVERSITY AS A WHOLE.”**

KNOWLEDGE IS NOT JUST ABOUT ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Knowledge can come from not only academic research but also political struggle. It is a truth that is especially important when referring to the transformative kind, which was coined by Michel Foucault as “subjugated knowledge”. For instance, many bodies of knowledge obscured by history often emerges through the political struggles of peoples. As we see again and again, often the term “research” is closely associated with assimilatory practices within European academia and structures, or those at the top of an established hierarchy. What we see in our day to day in higher education is frequently not what is best for the student body, yet is often what is provided based on the rules and expectations placed on students by outdated or disconnected systems. It can be said to be true - that a major enemy within higher education is the managerial class itself, where the perpetuation of injustices by higher education due to its history has now come to head. The managerial class in higher education, often disconnected from the academic core, has over time been complicit in maintaining an educational

system that was designed to serve imperialist, colonial, and economic interests. This legacy continues to shape the modern university in ways that can be detrimental to students and educators alike. It perpetuates structural inequalities, silences subjugated knowledge, and maintains a status quo that resists meaningful change.

Students have emerged as powerful advocates for transformative change in higher education. They are speaking up, calling for more inclusive curricula, tackling structural injustices, and promoting greater openness and accountability in the decision-making procedures. Students are becoming more active in activism and lobbying, amplifying suppressed knowledge and undermining the ingrained managerial class norms. These voices show us all why there needs to be a genuine incorporation of the student voice in decision making among universities, as this will allow students to begin to address the trauma and perpetuated violences to be more readily addressed.

IT IS A TESTAMENT TO THE ENDURING POWER OF EDUCATION TO CHALLENGE THE STATUS QUO, TO REDEFINE NORMS, AND TO CHAMPION THE VOICES AND EXPERIENCES OF THOSE WHOSE KNOWLEDGE WAS ONCE SUPPRESSED.

IN THIS ONGOING JOURNEY OF CHANGE, IT'S CLEAR THAT THE STUDENT VOICE IS NOT JUST A VALUABLE ASSET; IT IS THE HEARTBEAT OF A HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM THAT ASPIRES TO BE JUST, INCLUSIVE, AND TRANSFORMATIVE.

WHAT WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND IS THAT IN ORDER TO TAKE BACK OUR UNIVERSITY WE MUST DEMOCRATISE THE UNIVERSITY THROUGH THE STUDENT VOICE!

RUNNING FOR OUR LIVES DOWN THE HALLS OF ACADEMIA

FUCK VIOLENCE AND FEAR, AND FUCK ONLY CARING ABOUT MONEY!

Refugee students are ignored by universities because they are not seen as valuable in the majority of universities around the world. Most refugee students need financial assistance to attend university, so universities do not try to assist these students because they do not want to offer scholarships or grants that these students need to attend. Loans are hard to come by for refugee students due to lack of credit, lost vital documents when fleeing, and overall untenable repayment plans. Universities have become more concerned with the bottom line of making money than helping students achieve their educational goals and improve their lives.

To be deemed a refugee one must be able to prove their life is in immediate danger and that they will be subjected to violence if they return home. In the process of applying for refugee status for my family, I have had to tell the story of being shot at by a madman, multiple times to lawyers, advocates, and immigration officials. I also had to provide medical records showing the three broken ribs, ruptured spleen, and ruptured appendix that I received during this attack. I have had to show the thousands of death threats I received and have been forced to debate whether those threats were “legitimate” enough for me to consider my family in danger. I have had to replay thousands of voicemail threats to officials and show the police reports I filed before fleeing.

All this is traumatic on top of dealing with the fact that I had to survive this danger for years before fleeing. Being a student is the one thing that has left me feeling productive and has helped me cope with all the traumas. It has been an opportunity to feel normal and productive for the first time in years. Living in survival mode takes its toll and it is nice to have a place to do things like learn without having to worry about my safety. I know my family has dealt with its fair share of trauma but compared to a lot of refugees we are

“UNIVERSITIES HAVE BECOME MORE CONCERNED WITH THE BOTTOM LINE OF MAKING MONEY THAN HELPING STUDENTS ACHIEVE THEIR EDUCATIONAL GOALS”



News Opinion Sport Culture Lifestyle

The Guardian

This article is more than 1 year old

'It's been a total witch-hunt. It takes its toll': the LGBTQ+ families fleeing red states

Lauren Rodriguez is moving to New Zealand with her son, Gray, amid anti-trans measures in Texas. Photograph: Liz Molesworth/The Guardian

“OFFERING A UNIVERSITY EDUCATION TO REFUGEE STUDENTS IS ESSENTIAL AND CAN BE LIFESAVING FOR THESE STUDENTS.”

incredibly lucky. Applying for refugee status can take anywhere from a few months to years to be approved which leaves refugee students with the unknown if they will be safe here or be deported. This makes it impossible to be able to attend university because their immigration status is considered temporary while awaiting their final approval.

Offering a university education to refugee students is essential and can be lifesaving for these students. The ability to have a hope of a better life for refugee students is key to their survival. Most refugee students have lost hope due to the trauma and horrors they have had to live through before fleeing their homes. Hope is hard to find in refugee camps or in refugee populations because these students have been living in fear and survival mode for many years. The entire process of applying for refugee status is traumatising itself and can force the refugees to relive and retell their traumas to qualify for refugee status. Attending university

can be a beacon of hope for these refugee students. It not only offers them the ability to improve their financial status long term, but it can also keep their minds occupied and help them in dealing with the acculturation process. Having the hope of making their lives better gives refugee students a reason to get up in the morning and helps them with realising life is worth living.

Universities are more worried about making a profit than helping their students gain an education and the possibility of a secure future. Refugee students are struggling to just survive and stay in the country where they have sought refuge. The constant worry of deportation, denial of refugee status, and fear of how you will afford basic needs such as food and housing are all issues that universities could assist with if they cared about refugee students. By offering scholarships, grants, and financial assistance to refugee students, universities could ease some of the barriers for them. Currently University of Auckland offers one scholarship of five thousand dollars for refugee students which does not even cover the cost of one semester. They also have a web page for university students touting help for these specific students, but all the links bring you

to general student assistance pages, so it amounts to good PR for the university.

Universities could also offer discounted on campus housing for these students which would help with stability for them as well as providing some safety. Universities could also ask for donations for items such as basic needs, to help them have less to worry about.

Next, universities also need to offer a unique application approach for refugee students because a lot of these students are unable to apply due to lack of vital documents. It is hard for a refugee student to worry about their birth certificate or academic transcripts when they are fleeing violence, and their lives are in danger. The university instead could accept documents from immigration showing their refugee status or allow these students to take a placement test to evaluate their

“UNIVERSITIES NEED TO OFFER TRAUMA INFORMED HEALTHCARE AND COUNSELLING FOR REFUGEE STUDENTS”

knowledge. The university could also offer financial assistance for these students to help them request these important documents needed to apply. The university could also list their process in an easy-to-understand checklist format to assist refugee students with getting this process completed. When someone is living in survival mode or dealing with trauma it becomes exceedingly difficult to process new information and typically it is hard to remember items while trying to survive. If these students had an easy checklist, they could follow with assistance both financially and support wise they would be more successful with applying and entering university, instead of being discriminated against like they currently are.

Also, universities need to offer trauma informed healthcare and counselling for their refugee students because it can be traumatising for a refugee student to go to the doctors due to violence they have endured. I know when I went to the health clinic on campus it was hard to discuss the physical scars and injuries around the violence I survived. Yet I had to sit there and recount the hell I went through in some detail, so they would prescribe my medications and be aware of injuries and such. The doctor was

**“LIVING IN SURVIVAL MODE TAKES ITS TOLL
AND IT IS NICE TO HAVE A PLACE TO DO
THINGS LIKE LEARN WITHOUT HAVING TO
WORRY ABOUT MY SAFETY”**

Leave the children alone don't push them. Wait until they are a little older?,try not to conform them that's abuse, you may be blinded by your bias, children are easily persuaded, and confused !! and now your side is (out of control) With surgery on children and ect !! 🤔 that's not your right , think about the damage that can be done out helping the wrong way???

TW: Had to run an errand and there was a guy in front of my neighborhood holding a Jesus hates trannies sign. I thought Jesus was a carpenter not a mechanic? Not sure why he'd hate transmissions 🤔 best part was the cop escorting him away when I came back 🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸 hate never wins

nice, but still very dismissive of what I went through and told his nurse that I was “dramatic” when he left the room. He thought the summarised, watered down version of the attacks I suffered were dramatic, when I was doing my best to give the least amount of information possible for the situation. When requesting counselling through the university I was faced with a long wait time but once I finally got to speak to someone, they said they were not trained for this type of trauma and recommended I find a private counsellor. This is hard to do while my refugee application is pending because I must depend on the university provided insurance, which only university doctors take and the cost of paying cash is not an affordable option for most refugee students. If the university offered help for paying for this type of support or employed counsellors who were equipped to help with these issues, it would make the adjustments to our new countries much easier for refugee students.

The universities offer of “support” are almost insulting to refugee students, because they promise support but do not have a clue about the needs of refugee students or students in general. I am technically listed as an international student while

“THE UNIVERSITY’S OFFERS OF ‘SUPPORT’ ARE ALMOST INSULTING... BECAUSE THEY DO NOT HAVE A CLUE ABOUT THE NEEDS OF REFUGEE STUDENTS”

I await the verdict on my refugee application and the offers of support for all students is severely lacking.

Another issue is the lack of support and help with acculturation for refugee students. Most of these students are from completely diverse cultures and may have many issues with adjusting to their new environment. Language barriers are an issue for some students and there are few supports for these students at university. There are no university-offered classes on how to adjust to the culture or society in which they are based. I am extremely lucky to not have the issue of language but even though I speak English and they speak English here; it has still been quite an adjustment due to the differences in meanings and the use of slang. The first time someone said, “sweet as” to me I was confused because I was expecting something

like “sweet as pie” when in Aotearoa “sweet as” is slang for “cool” and is a complete sentence. There are also the issues of adjusting to the different banking processes, different rental requirements, and even learning to drive on the left for some. I know a lot of refugee students have issues with adjusting to their new countries and cultures and it can be hard to trust a new culture and new people after experiencing violence. Many refugee students deal with issues of PTSD, anxiety, depression, and sleep issues. I know that I still deal with nightmares nightly and that I haven’t been willing to adventure out to meet people and do things, because I feel like when I leave the house I have to be on full alert for any risk of an attack, because that is how I have lived the last few years of my life. It’s also difficult to feel okay with being happy and with going out with friends because many of us left friends and family still in danger and we have survivors’ guilt, and it feels wrong to go out and enjoy life, when others you love are suffering. If universities offered adequate counselling, health care, and activities for refugee students this would assist us with becoming comfortable with our new cultures. Even something as simple as a refugee student group would be helpful to build relationships with others who have dealt with similar issues.

OVERALL, FOR A UNIVERSITY TO ACTUALLY SHOW THAT THEY DO CARE ABOUT REFUGEE STUDENTS THERE MUST BE SOME DRASTIC CHANGES MADE IMMEDIATELY TO MEET THEIR NEEDS.

Universities need to offer more financial aid, scholarships, and grants for refugee students in order to make university an affordable option for refugee students. They also need to offer affordable housing options for refugee students, and they should also help with basic needs as well. Universities also need to have a specific and unique process to help refugee students with applying to university, such as covering costs of requesting vital documents needed or placement tests being offered. Universities need to offer complete wrap-around support for refugee students that is more than a PR stunt, they need to offer trauma-informed mental health and healthcare as well as assistance with acculturation to their new home. Universities need to become the beacon of hope for refugee students instead of an impossible dream.

Universities need to put their money where it truly matters and give a damn about their refugee students for once.

“UNIVERSITIES NEED TO PUT THEIR MONEY WHERE IT TRULY MATTERS AND GIVE A DAMN ABOUT THEIR REFUGEE STUDENTS FOR ONCE.”

The background of the entire page is a collage of New Zealand dollar banknotes. Visible denominations include 20, 50, and 100 dollars. The notes are slightly faded and overlapping, creating a textured, monochromatic background.

FOSTERING SCHOLARS, NOT DOLLARS

A CALL FOR REAL EDUCATION

SHADOW OVER SCHOLARSHIP: THE DIMMING BEACON OF DEMOCRATIC THOUGHT

Universities, once celebrated for nurturing democratic ideals and spirited scholarly discourse, did more than equip students in rote memorisation or vocational skill acquisition; however, this nostalgic view often overlooks inherent structural dominances, reminding us that our academic sanctuaries have always been imperfect and warrant a progressive transformation. A shadow looms over the academic halls, one that covertly and persistently threatens to quash the spirited discourse once emblematic of higher education.

Tracing back to the 20th century, higher education was esteemed as catalysts for cultivating civic engagement, expanding the boundaries of innovative thinking, and solidifying the foundations of an informed and participatory democratic society. In the upheaval of the 1980s, as global powers like Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher vigorously championed neoliberal philosophies, Aotearoa has mirrored this shift under the guidance of Finance Minister Roger Douglas. His strategy, known as ‘Rogernomics,’ mirrored the market-

centric ethos of Reagan’s America; reshaping the nation’s landscape through deregulation, state asset privatisation, and diminished governmental economic intervention, extending profound effects into the educational sector among others. The seismic shift globally towards neoliberal ideology represented a turning point in the ethos of higher education, where the principles of market forces and individualism began eroding the previous socially democratic era’s emphasis on education as a public good—an era that albeit provided more governmental support for education, also harboured its own share of inequalities and institutional racism.

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This ideology has led to not merely a mutation in educational philosophies, but a disintegration of the very spirit of educational institutions—transforming students into consumers and faculty into service providers. Universities, originally perceived as critical forums for fostering civic duty, social critique, and public good, are slowly dwindling into mere credential mills, burdened under the weight of corporatization and commodification.

THE PERSONAL STAKE: YOUR FUTURE, OUR DEMOCRACY

The cause for concern is notable: are we nurturing a generation bereft of critical civic consciousness and social responsibility? The student-as-consumer model does not merely herald a transformation in how education is perceived, but enacts a deep-seated redefinition of the student's role within the educational journey. When students are viewed through a consumerist lens, education morphs into a transactional relationship, where knowledge is not shared but sold, and students are not empowered but serviced. This commodification leaches into the social fabric,

weaving a future where the intrinsic value of knowledge is overshadowed by its market price. And why does this matter? Because when education is distilled to a mere transaction, it relinquishes its role as a transformative, empowering, and civic-nurturing endeavour, thereby syphoning the potency of our future civic leadership and public discourse.

It is crucial to acknowledge that this transition is not an abstract or distant phenomenon—it carves into the personal futures of students and educators alike. The removal of critical thinking, the commodification of knowledge, and the positioning of students as mere consumers rather than empowered citizens directly impinges upon our collective future. Furthermore, the framework of neoliberalism perpetuates a survival-

“ARE WE NURTURING A GENERATION BEREFT OF CRITICAL CIVIC CONSCIOUSNESS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY?”

of-the-fittest mentality, inherently suppressing collaborative, critical, and civic-oriented discourse.

When faculty members are stripped of their autonomy, shackled by the constraints of market-driven imperatives, their ability to inspire, provoke, and instigate critical thinking is grievously impeded. It is a derailment that does not merely stymie individual careers but throttles the very essence of educational impact. The stifling of academic freedom and the prioritisation of financially lucrative programs and research not only narrow the horizons of scholarly pursuit but also drain the dynamic, critical, and innovative spirit from educational environments. Once beacons guiding intellectual exploration, universities become mere functionaries in a system that disempowers both educators and their students. The resultant ebbing of creative, critical educational spaces results in generations sculpted not in the image of democratic potential, but rather, moulded by and for the market.

Moreover, when universities, traditionally the mediums of democratic thought, begin to

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prioritise profit over pedagogy and commodification over critique, a silent erosion of democratic capacities ensues. The implications permeate our society, draining vitality from our democratic processes, and inculcating a pervasive myopia where societal good is overshadowed by individual gain. Education is not merely a personal endeavour but a societal investment. When our institutions pivot from nurturing informed, critical, and socially responsible citizens towards mass-producing vocationally-trained individuals attuned primarily to market demands, it depletes our collective capacity to engage in, critique, and shape our democratic future.

REKINDLING THE DEMOCRATIC FLAME

REVIVING DEMOCRACY TOGETHER

The spirit of democracy should not merely survive but flourish within educational paradigms. Together, let's reinvigorate our universities as forums for civic engagement, critical dialogue, and democratic governance. We must, as a collective, interrogate and dissent against the monopoly of market-driven governance, prioritising democratic principles over purely profit-driven endeavours.

GUARDIANS OF THE HUMANITIES

Our unified front must stand resolute in protecting and uplifting the humanities. The humanities embolden us, providing not just knowledge, but wisdom, empathy, and a keen understanding of our societal tapestry. By safeguarding the humanities, we preserve our ability to introspect, critique, and engage meaningfully with the world around us.

CULTIVATING CRITICAL CITIZENSHIP

This movement transcends the boundaries of universities and pervades the societal realm. It is vital to equip individuals with the intellectual and ethical tools to comprehend, critique, and shape the socio-political landscapes they inhabit. A critical citizenry is not a mere aspiration but a necessity in nurturing a society that values empathy, equity, and social justice over exclusionary and profit-centric ideologies.

STOP PROFIT-DRIVEN EDUCATION

Our voices must coalesce into a resounding echo, demanding an end to treating universities as arenas of profit extraction and commodification. It's vital to redirect our journey towards education that values critical thinking, civic responsibility, and the ethical development of individuals over the exploitative demands of neoliberal capitalism.

A PROSPECTIVE GLIMPSE: A FUTURE SCULPTED BY DEMOCRATIC ETHOS

Why does this matter? Because an education unshackled from neoliberal metrics is the bedrock of a society that champions human dignity and collective advancement. This is about safeguarding our moral compass, about nurturing minds capable of empathy, ethical reflection, and justice-oriented action. Embracing these pivotal shifts does more than redefine the contours of higher education; it reconstructs the societal fabric, woven with the threads of a democratic ethos, collective responsibility, and critical consciousness. With these calls to action, we're not just reimagining a framework for our educational institutions, we are reigniting the transformative power of education itself. This is not a mere shift, but a profound awakening. When universities prioritise the transformational over the transactional, it crafts a society that values collective wisdom over individual success, societal advancement over personal ascent. This evolution is not just academic; it is cultural, instilling a sense of duty and a deep-seated commitment to the public good that extends beyond the campus.

It begins with you—with your voice, your vote, your advocacy. Engage with your faculty, the management, the institution as a whole; demand representation in academic governance, and call for accountability in the educational sphere. Champion the cause of affordable, accessible education for all, grounded in critical thinking and civic responsibility. Rally behind educators striving to transcend bureaucratic constraints, and support initiatives that foster academic freedom and innovation.

Think of our advocacy this way — we are cultivators of change for higher education. Our journey does not end with restructuring institutions but begins anew with nurturing the seeds planted by this transformative shift. We're not just educators, students, or administrators—we are gardeners of society, cultivating a bedrock of shared values, ethical reflection, and inclusive prosperity. As we stand on this precipice, looking out onto the horizon of possibility, we must choose to be bold. We must choose to be visionary. Only in our collective strength will we find the audacity to reimagine, rebuild, and rejuvenate not just our educational system, but our shared human experience.



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WHAT IS THIS BOOKLET?

We believe there's a growing disconnect between students and the future of our university. We want to challenge that.

We believe this place can be better. We're calling for a fundamental shift, a rethinking of what our university is and what it can be.

We believe it can be more than just a stepping stone to a well-paying job. It can be a place that truly commits to making a positive contribution to society; a place where ideas, opportunities, and voices flow freely - not just for a privileged few, but for everyone.

This is our manifesto for a better university.