

Harvard welcomes MAGA witch hunt, becomes the hunted

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The leadership of the Democratic Party nationally and especially in Massachusetts—who run the state from the U.S. Congress to its governor to Boston-area mayors and city councils—are championing the Harvard Corporation’s “standing up” to the Trump administration’s headline-grabbing attacks on Harvard. As of this writing, Trump has threatened to take away Harvard’s federal funding, its tax-exempt non-profit status and all student visas.

This threat to take over the Kennedy School of Government and other higher-education bastions of capitalist liberal democracy aims at control of the world’s largest university endowment—over \$53 billion. Harvard also lords over the largest real estate portfolio in Boston, a sprawling network of hospitals, housing and research facilities.

At stake is a quarter of its student body—nearly 7,000 students with visas who pay over \$100,000 (tuition, room and board) per year—plus billions of dollars of federal funding and contracts for hospital, biotech, Big Pharma, military-industrial and higher education for-profit and non-profit corporations, along with tens of thousands of jobs.

How has this historic conflict actually developed between the MAGA White House and the nation’s premiere producer of generations of the neoliberal, global, ruling-class elite?

Harvard’s political lynching of Claudine Gay opened the gate

In an email to Harvard affiliates on April 1, 2025, Harvard President Alan Garber promised that the university “welcomes” and would “comply with” a U.S. Department of Justice investigation into “antisemitism,” targeting pro-Palestinian students, faculty and workers. (@**harvardundergradpsc**) After all, the Trump administration’s definition equating “antisemitism” with criticism of Israel and its policies was first adopted by then-Provost Garber and the Harvard Corporation as new disciplinary code months before Trump’s election.

Garber took over the presidency when billionaire hedge fund CEO and Harvard donor William Ackman, an ardent Zionist, launched a campaign in October 2023 demanding that the Harvard Corporation fire then-President Claudine Gay. This first Black woman president’s disciplining of student leaders of the Harvard Undergraduate Palestine Solidarity Committee (HUPSC) and condemnation of Palestinian resistance to Israel’s genocide was subsequently deemed by hotel magnate Penny Pritzker and other billionaire Trustees to be not Zionist enough. (**workers.org/2024/01/76094**)

On April 2, over 300 students and faculty of the officially unrecognized Harvard Out of Occupied Palestine (HOOP, @harvardoop) protested inside Harvard Yard, which had been locked down by Harvard police to exclude the public. A speaker condemned Garber for “fast walking our university into fascism.” Garber emphasized his agreement with Trump’s demand for a political witch hunt by

immediately suspending HUPSC—which did not sponsor the April 2 protest—for the rest of the year for allegedly using a bullhorn on campus, and threatened the students’ organization with a total ban. (@[harvardundergradpsc](#))

But Garber’s discipline against HUPSC and multiple other moves to silence support for Palestine on campus were not enough to satisfy the White House. The same MAGA forces that sent ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency) goons to kidnap and disappear Boston students like Rümeyşa Öztürk at Tufts University ([workers.org/2025/03/84705](#)) and lock up migrant workers in concentration camps in Louisiana and El Salvador demanded even more campus repression at Harvard. This included turning over lists of pro-Palestine students and faculty and promising to dismantle “all DEI [diversity, equity and inclusion] programs.” (Letter to Garber and Pritzker from Trump administration, April 11, 2025)

Harvard no hero

Harvard fellows and Boston’s liberal ruling elite expressed surprise and outrage at what they consider a threat to their control of Harvard. On April 12, Boston witnessed the official spectacle of a rally at Harvard organized overnight by the City Council of Cambridge. The rally called on the Harvard Corporation to “Stand Up” to Trump’s demands. The protest was followed the next day with the deceptive Boston Globe headline, “Harvard Stands Up to Trump!”

A leader of HUPSC and Harvard Jews for Palestine, Violet T. M. Barron, expressed in a Harvard Crimson op-ed dated April 15, the sentiments of students, faculty and workers who have been facing Harvard’s repression for 18 months.

In her article entitled, “Do Not Applaud Harvard for Doing the Bare Minimum,” Barron set the record straight:

Indeed, in all but name—and before being officially asked to do so—University President Alan M. Garber ’76 has already actualized many of the Trump administration’s wishes for the University.

The article explains: “In less than one month, Harvard has paused an academic partnership with Birzeit University after a months-long smear campaign against the West Bank institution; fired the leadership of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies in apparent response to allegations of imbalanced programming on Palestine; suspended the Religion, Conflict, and Peace Initiative at the Harvard Divinity School amidst accusations of antisemitism; let go of RCPI’s Associate Director, a Palestinian American professor; and, placed the Harvard Undergraduate Palestine Solidarity Committee on probation without clear basis...

It concludes:

Don’t get me wrong: Harvard made the right choice in refusing to agree to the Trump administration’s punitive and discriminatory demands. This does not make the University any less punitive or discriminatory itself.

Union contracts the next ‘DEI’ target

Years before the October 7, 2023, Al Aqsa Flood and the current Israeli slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza, Ackman and a grouping of Ivy League Wall Street billionaires—including Ackman’s spouse, Neri Oxman of MIT, a first lieutenant in the Israeli Air Force—began a public campaign to eliminate

diversity, equity and inclusion programs at Harvard. DEI was a vestige of affirmative action admissions and curriculum won by Black, Latine and Indigenous students during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

Very little remained of these programs following 2023 Supreme Court decisions decimating affirmative action. According to Ed Childs, decades-long leader of the Harvard Union of Dining Service workers (HUDS, UNITE HERE Local 26, retired), “what remains of ‘DEI’ is embodied in union contracts of the more than 16,000 workers at Harvard. And it’s our contracts that the Harvard Corporation is targeting next.

“The dining service workers’ contract includes language that promotes the hiring of Black, Indigenous and migrant workers and workers with CORIs; provides full benefits to LGBTQ workers and upholds trans rights on the job; explicitly defends [migrant] workers with Temporary Protected Status; and protects workers from historically racist, sexist and bigoted bosses.” said Childs.

He stressed:

The unions at Harvard have been told by corporate lawyers entering a new round of contract negotiations that it’s language like this that we’ve fought to win for decades that they aim to eliminate from our labor agreements. Now is the time for the labor movement, the LGBTQ movement, the pro-Palestine and anti-war movements to unite to fight these fascist attacks by Harvard and the Trump administration that both aim to decimate worker rights on campus and across the country.