

HOSTOS UNITED/HOSTOS UNIDO
Hostos Community College
475 Grand Concourse
Bronx, New York 10451

For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE

HOSTOS TAKEOVER GROWING STRONGER

The occupation of a vacant office building at 500 Grand Concourse by Hostos students and faculty is now 2 weeks old and growing stronger.

The takeover of the building, which occurred on the afternoon of Thursday, March 30, was planned to dramatize the lack of space and facilities at Hostos, the most crowded institution of higher learning in the State of New York.

Classes have been taught daily at the 500 Grand Concourse facility. On Monday, some 30 sections met in the building, as did 25 on Tuesday and 45 on Wednesday.

In addition, the Puerto Rican Student Organization has held its annual Puerto Rican Culture Week in the building, drawing audiences as large as 300 for concerts, poetry recitals and lectures by journalists, professors and authors.

Students and faculty participating in the takeover have also organized a day care center which functions daily from 9:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. They have also put the facility's kitchen and cafeteria to good use, serving meals to all those working and participating in the occupation of the building. (A number of "bodegas" and other business establishments have donated food and supplies for the takeover.)

A strict code of conduct has been drawn up to insure the proper behavior of the building's occupants. Alcoholic beverages and the use of marijuana and other drugs have been strictly forbidden; loiterers and hangers-on are invited to immediately leave the building; only individuals who have shown maturity and discipline in the struggle for the building are allowed to stay over night; and an internal security system has been set up to protect the building and its equipment.

While the occupation continues apace, Hostos faculty and students, under the banner of Hostos Unido/Hostos United, are conducting petition and letter-writing campaigns directed at Mayor Edward Koch. A community relations committee of Hostos United has also garnered the support of many South Bronx community leaders and organizations. Among them are: Aspira, the South Bronx Community Corporation, United Bronx Parents, Raza Unida, Councilman Gilberto Gerena-Valentin, Councilman Wendel Foster, local Democratic District Leader Frank Lugovina, Father John Luce of St. Ann's Church, and others.

Hostos United decided on the tactic of the takeover only after a winter-long campaign failed to convince Mayor Koch of the necessity of the building. The Mayor has refused to approve a special issue of Dormitory Authority bonds to fund the renovation of the facility saying that the City University must first publish a master plan for CUNY construction through the year 1990.

MORE

Hostos Takeover, Cont'd.

Hostos United has countered that the project is a renovation and not new construction and that it is of vital importance in order to alleviate drastic overcrowding at Hostos which lacks such basic facilities as a cafeteria, auditorium, lecture halls and a faculty lounge.

In the meantime, Chancellor Robert J. Kibbee has said that the renovation is of the highest priority. In a letter to Mayor Koch (March 10) he wrote: "It seems neither rational nor relevant to take a position that the University must sit dead in the water until the last 'i' has been dotted and the last 't' crossed on a long-range [master] plan."

"Our concern," said Prof. Gerlad Meyer, chairman of the Hostos chapter of the CUNY faculty union, "goes beyond easing the sapce crunch at Hostos, bad as it is. Many of us believe that the Mayor and Controller Harrison Goldin have refused to move on the renovation, not because there is no master plan or because they are not informed of conditions at Hostos, but because they have a hidden agenda for the future of the college. We know, as they must, that an overcrowded college occupying rented facilities, such as Hostos does, is much easier to close or merge with another institution. In short, this is as much a struggle for the continued existence of the college as for facilities which are conducive to teaching and learning."

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