



# Global Nonviolent Action Database

Published on *Global Nonviolent Action Database* (<https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu>)

---

## New York University students campaign for transparency, 2007-2009

October

2007

to: February 20,

2009

**Country:** United States

**Location City/State/Province:** *New York, New York*

**Location Description:** *NYU Campus, Manhattan*

### Goals:

From the Take Back NYU! facebook page:

1. The inclusion of an elected representative from the student body in New York University's (NYU) Board of Trustee meetings, with powers equal to those of the trustees
2. Public release of NYU's annual operating budget, including a full list of university expenditures, salaries, contracting, construction, allocation amongst schools and departments and more, as well as the sources of this funding.
3. Disclosure of NYU's endowment holdings, investment strategy, projected endowment growth, and persons, corporations and firms involved in the investment of the university's endowment funds. Additionally, we demand an endowment oversight body of students, faculty and staff.

## Methods

### Methods in 1st segment:

- 048. Protest meetings › Shortly following the first event, TBNYU hosted another event, called "What is NYU hiding in Abu Dhabi?"
- 048. Protest meetings › TBNYU hosted an event called "What is NYU hiding?"

### Methods in 2nd segment:

### Methods in 3rd segment:

### Methods in 4th segment:

- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention › Presented three demands to NYU administration, requesting a response within one month
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books › Helped produce the NYU Disorientation Guide

### Methods in 5th segment:

### Methods in 6th segment:

- 001. Public speeches

- 022. Protest disrobings › A handful of students took off their clothes in support of demands for administration transparency
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support › Students rallied outside of the Kimmel Student Center in support of the occupiers
- 162. Sit-in

**Notes on Methods:**

It is also mentioned in some of the sources that TBNYU attended town meetings and elected a student senator on their platform, however, there is not much elaboration on these actions and the timing and details are unclear.

## Classifications

**Classification:**

Change

**Cluster:**

Democracy

**Group characterization:**

- Students of New York University

## Leaders, partners, allies, elites

**Leaders:**

Members of Take Back NYU (New York University) (TBNYU), Originally created by members of Students Creating Radical Change

**Partners:**

Not known

**External allies:**

Students from The New School (a nearby college)

**Involvement of social elites:**

Councilman Charles Barron

## Joining/exiting order of social groups

**Groups in 1st Segment:**

**Groups in 2nd Segment:**

**Groups in 3rd Segment:**

**Groups in 4th Segment:**

**Groups in 5th Segment:**

**Groups in 6th Segment:**

- Councilman Charles Barron
- Students from The New School (a nearby college)

**Segment Length:** *Approximately 3 months*

## Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

### **Opponents:**

New York University Administration

### **Nonviolent responses of opponent:**

Not known

### **Campaigner violence:**

Some protesting students clashed with a few police officers

### **Repressive Violence:**

Some police officers clashed with a few protesting students, Administration suspended leaders and negotiators of TBNYU

## Success Outcome

### **Success in achieving specific demands/goals:**

0 points out of 6 points

### **Survival:**

0.5 points out of 1 point

### **Growth:**

3 points out of 3 points

### **Notes on outcomes:**

Despite the persistence and efforts of the group, they ultimately did not meet any of their stated goals. The group no longer exists, as it almost entirely disappeared after the failure of the occupation, thus ending the campaign which could have otherwise continued. The campaign was, however, extremely successful in terms of growth and raising awareness.

---

In 2007, a group of New York University (NYU) students called Students Creating Radical Change decided to campaign for disclosure and transparency. They started forming the group Take Back NYU! (TBNYU) and started in October with an event called "What is NYU Hiding?" They followed it shortly with another event, called "What is NYU Hiding in Abu Dhabi?"

The students spent the 2007-2008 school year building support for their efforts, and collaborated with a number of other student groups to write Take Back NYU!'s demands for the NYU administration. They had three: budget disclosure, endowment disclosure, and the placing of a student on NYU's Board of Trustees.

TBNYU spent the summer gathering more support and endorsements from student groups, and presented their demands to the NYU administration on September 2, 2008. They asked that the administration give a reply within one month, but they never received a response. Around the same time, TBNYU helped produce the "NYU Disorientation Guide 2008" - a satirical look at the campus' policies. Later in the school year, TBNYU hosted another event, called "Have Your School and Eat It Too: an Edible Exploration to Imagine our Ideal University".

On February 18, 2009, TBNYU staged its most direct action - a nonviolent occupation of the Kimmel Student Center. Shortly before 10:00 PM, approximately 70 students gathered in the third floor cafeteria of the student center and barricaded themselves inside with tables and chairs, chanting their list of demands (which had expanded since TBNYU had first presented them to the administration).

The University stated that the students would be allowed to occupy the building for the night, and went so far as to allow the protesters access to restrooms. The University, however, was very clear that the protesters would not be welcome to stay in the building for more than one night.

TBNYU gained quite a bit of support. Students rallied outside the building in support of their efforts, and a number of students pushed their way through the police to get inside the building and join the occupation. Some female students in the rally of support disrobed to represent their demands of administration transparency. TBNYU also gained the attention and support of Councilman Charles Barron, who spoke at the support rally.

However, despite all of the growth of support, the campaign was ultimately unsuccessful. Police forces entered the cafeteria on February 20 and forced the occupiers to leave. 18 of the protesters were suspended from the school and faced disciplinary review. It was reported that these 18 individuals were the negotiators and leaders of the occupation, and supporters of TBNYU claimed that the NYU administration underhandedly told the students that they would be willing to meet for negotiations. According to some of the members of TBNYU, the leaders then left the occupation to go to an office where they were then told that the administration refused to hold any and that they were all suspended.

Following the end of the occupation, TBNYU announced its intent to continue with the campaign, however, no further actions were actually carried out by the group.

## Research Notes

### Sources:

Green, C. "One Reflection on Take Back NYU sit-in." Democratic Solidarity Committee. 2 Mar 2009. Web. Accessed 28 Mar 2011. <<http://dscnyu.blogspot.com/2009/03/one-reflection-on-take-back-nyu-sit-in.html>>

"Take Back NYU!" Black Maps. Web. Accessed 28 Mar 2011. <<http://blackmaps.wordpress.com/2009/02/20/take-back-nyu/>>

"History." Take Back NYU! 19 Oct 2008. Web. Accessed through WayBackMachine 28 Mar 2011. <<http://replay.waybackmachine.org/20090222094452/http://takebacknyu.com/history/>>

"Official Statement from Take Back NYU!" Take Back NYU! 21 Feb 2009. Web. Accessed through WayBackMachine 28 Mar 2011. <<http://replay.waybackmachine.org/20090221093128/http://takebacknyu.com/>>

Nogales, Pam C. "The New School occupation and the direction of student politics: an interview with Atlee McFellin." The Platypus Affiliated Society. 1 Feb 2009. Web. Accessed 28 Mar 2011. <<http://platypus1917.org/2009/02/01/the-new-school-occupation-and-the-direction-of-student-politics-an-interview-with-atlee-mcfellin/>>

"Student Group Takes Over NYU Dining Room, Makes Demands." New York Magazine. 19 Feb 2009. Web. Accessed 28 Mar 2011. <[http://nymag.com/daily/intel/2009/02/group\\_of\\_students\\_takes\\_over\\_n.html](http://nymag.com/daily/intel/2009/02/group_of_students_takes_over_n.html)>

Lysiak, Matthew. "Cops, crowd scuffle outside NYU student protest; 2 arrested." NY Daily News. 19 Feb 2009. Web. Accessed 28 Mar 2011. <[http://articles.nydailynews.com/2009-02-19/local/17916132\\_1\\_nyu-police-brutality-students](http://articles.nydailynews.com/2009-02-19/local/17916132_1_nyu-police-brutality-students)>

Lee, Trymaine. "Students Protest at N.Y.U." New York Times. 18 Feb 2009. Web. Accessed 28 Mar 2011. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/19/nyregion/19nyu.html>>

Moynihan, Colin. "18 students are suspended as protest at N.Y.U. ends." New York Times. 20 Feb 2009. Web. Accessed 28 Mar 2011. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/21/nyregion/21nyu.html>>

Moynihan, Colin. "N.Y.U. Students Continue Occupation to Press Demands." New York Times. 19 Feb 2009. Web. Accessed 28 Mar 2011. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/20/nyregion/20nyu.html?fta=y>>

Birch, Jonah. "The fight to take back NYU." SocialistWorker.org. 20 Feb 2009. Web. Accessed 28 Mar 2011. <<http://socialistworker.org/2009/02/20/take-back-nyu>>

### Additional Notes:

Student documentary on the occupation of the Kimmel Student Center: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-jvSD4crEmg>

Photos of the occupation: <http://nyunews.com/news/2009/sep/12/kimmel/1/>

**Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:**

Ashley Banks, 28/03/2011

**A project of Swarthmore College, including Peace and Conflict Studies, the Peace Collection, and the Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility.**

Copyright Swarthmore College.



Global Nonviolent Action Database is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/) .

Original website design and artwork created by [Daniel Hunter](#).

Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available at <http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu> .

Registered users can [login](#) to the website.

---

**Source URL (retrieved on 10/22/2019 - 17:07):** <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/new-york-university-students-campaign-transparency-2007-2009>

**Links:**

[1] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/pcs-tags/mainly-or-initiated-student-participants>