

Initiated in 2011, *New Demands?* connects accelerating precarity and attacks on labor rights under late capitalism, to historical struggles for workers' rights. Historical slogans and demands for better working and living conditions are reinserted back into public spaces — calling attention to the fact that demands made over 100 years ago for social and economic justice remain urgent and necessary today. The various works that comprise *New Demands?* move back and forth across time, connecting the language and typography of protest slogans deployed by labor, civil rights, and social justice movements from the turn of the twentieth century to the present.

Several of the works in *New Demands?* mobilize the slogans and demands of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) as observed in flyers, broadsheets, posters, placards, newspapers, photographs, and advertisement produced as part of strikes and campaigns waged by the union from approximately 1890 to 1982. The recreation and transformation of archival materials produced by the ILGWU into prints and text-based installations using digital tools and design software attempts to visually reproduce the original typography and design as closely as possible while maintaining the phrasing and language of the time, evidencing temporal shifts between the original events and today,

and highlighting both contiguousness and disjunction between them.

Historically the largest and most important union representing workers in the women's ready-to-wear clothing industry in North America, the ILGWU was instrumental in winning some of the most significant rights for garment workers during the first half of the twentieth century, including the right to unionize and to collective bargaining, the regulated work day and work week, paid overtime and vacations, workplace protections, and benefits. It provided its members with pensions, health care, affordable housing, and training and education programs. By the 1960s, more than half of American garment workers were unionized and earning good wages as a direct result of the ILGWU. The union also fought against racial segregation and for voting, civil, and immigration rights.

Historically and today, unions play a significant role in ameliorating the wages, working conditions, and lives of American workers. In 2019, median weekly earnings for unionized workers were 19% higher than for nonunionized workers, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Union membership also helps narrow the racial wealth gap and diminish racist attitudes among white workers.¹

Yet the share of American workers represented by unions dropped by more than 50% since 1979. During the same period, the share of income going to the wealthiest 10% escalated dramatically. Today, fewer Americans than ever belong to labor unions. The situation is especially dire in the private sector: in 2019, only 6.2% of American private sector workers belonged to unions, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The decline is not because workers don't want to belong to unions; rather, it's because of

aggressive efforts to dismantle unions and impede their organizing efforts. Labor activist Chris Maisano observes that de-unionization in the American private sector began in the 1960s and accelerated rapidly during the 1980s, with an even sharper decline since 2000.² Millions of full-time, well-paid, unionized positions have been eliminated as a result of coordinated, systemic, and sustained assaults on workers' rights orchestrated by corporate executives, conservative free market policy groups like the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), and lawmakers at all levels of government. The exponential growth of the gig economy has also introduced new forms of labor exploitation and precarity. Consequently, rights that unions and unionized workers fought for and won during the first half of the twentieth century have been drastically curtailed or eliminated. And so demands for better living and working conditions dating back to the turn of the twentieth century are still being made today.

Yet while most unionization rates have shrunk dramatically, membership in police unions remains high: police unions have hundreds of thousands of members nationally. Unlike other labor unions, police unions represent workers who are empowered by the state to use deadly force. And police unions collectively bargain for things other unions don't, like the right to job security after committing acts of violence and murder, protection from prosecution, and the sealing and destruction

1 See Meagan Day, "Unions Are Essential for Eliminating Racism," *Jacobin*, July 7, 2020, and Christian E. Weller and David Madland, "Union Membership Narrows the Racial Wealth Gap for Families of Color," Center for American Progress, September 4, 2018.

2 Chris Maisano, "Labor Union Membership Has Just Hit an All-Time Low. We Need to Reverse This Trend," *Jacobin* January 23, 2020. See also Dwyer Gunn, "What Caused the Decline of Unions in America?," *Pacific Standard*, Apr 24, 2018.

of disciplinary records. Unpublished research by labor economists Jamein P. Cunningham, Donna Feir, and Rob Gillezeau cite a correlation between the unionization of police and substantial increases in police killings of Black and brown people in the US. They note that within a decade of unionizing and gaining collective bargaining rights, police officers killed an additional 60 to 70 civilians of all races per year, an increase the researchers attribute to police officers' belief that their unions will protect them from prosecution — which they most often do.³ The researchers are cautious to not blame unions or unionization, but rather, the contracts that police are able to collectively bargain for. Calls are mounting for American labor unions to expel police unions for the racist harms they cause, yet most continue to reject these demands.

New Demands? suggests expanded understandings of "joining" and "union" — one of the most fundamental rights and demands of labor activism — as frameworks for belonging and coming together in group action and mutual aid. Similarly, "union," "collective," and "belonging" are explored as modes of togetherness that extend across struggles for social, racial, and economic justice. At once angry and hopeful, *New Demands?* reaffirms our shared need for community, collective organizing, mutual support and solidarity in the face of increased inequity, exclusion, precarity, and xenophobia.

3 Cunningham, Donna Feir, and Rob Gillezeau, "The Impact of Access to Collective Bargaining Rights on Policing and Civilian Deaths," unpublished, cited in "Police Unions And Police Violence," NPR's *Planet Money*, June 5, 2020. See also Samantha Michaels, "The Infuriating History of Why Police Unions Have So Much Power," *Mother Jones*, September/October 2020, and Flint Taylor, "Blood On Their Hands: The Racist History of Modern Police Unions," *In These Times*, January 14, 2015. Police and private security forces also have a long history of violent union-busting, strike-breaking, and attacks on workers.

PEOPLE

FIRST

Profits

Last!

APPEAL!⁶⁹

TO ALL LADIES' WAIST MAKERS !

While all workers of other trades have succeeded in improving their conditions, increasing their wages, shortening labor hours, and receiving better treatment by their bosses and contractors, but we the Ladies' Waist Makers are still in a miserable position.

We are compelled to toil long hours for very small salaries.

We are those who create so much for others and enjoy nothing. Why? Because we are disorganized and fight our battles singularly.

The way to better our conditions is to **UNITE** and work in harmony. The bosses will treat us severely so long, as we will not have a strong Union to be always ready to defend our interest.

Come, **LADIES' WAIST MAKERS**, to the

MASS MEETING

of our Union

Prominent speakers will address the meeting and explain the importance of a strong Union in this trade.

ADMISSION FREE.

COME AND HELP YOURSELVES

A GENERAL STRIKE IS PROCLAIMED !

In the name of the
Cloakmakers, Skirtmakers, Pressers,
Cutters and Finishers

and in the name of the
International Ladies Garment Workers Union,
all the Workers of the Cloak and Skirt Trade

are **REQUESTED** to leave their work and **JOIN** in the **GENERAL
STRIKE** which is called for **TO-DAY**

and will continue until all manufacturers will agree to a settlement.

Every worker of this trade should leave work with courage and joy
and our victory is assured.

We now have the best opportunity to place our trade on such a standard
that we will receive fast treatment and fair living wages.

A picket committee will be on duty at every shop.

With united forces, the aid of our
union and the labor movement,
we shall achieve a decisive victory !

**ON WITH THE STRIKE!
ON TO VICTORY !**

SHIRT WAIST

MAKERS

WE SHOULD

MAKE THE LAWS

UNDER WHICH WE

WORK AND DIE

When We
STRIKE!
WE WIN!
WHAT WE
WIN
we
KEEP

Open Shop Edition

THE MESSAGE

ISSUED BY THE JOINT BOARD DRESS AND WAISTMAKERS' UNION
IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKERS EMPLOYED IN THE
MANUFACTURE OF DRESSES AND WAISTS

40 HOUR-5 DAY WEEK WON

IN THE

Dress and Waist Industry

No Work on Saturday and Sunday. 10% Increase
In Wages Granted, and Other Important Changes
Introduced In The New Agreement

The organized workers of the dress and waist industry have returned to the shops to work under a 40 hour week and from now on will work only five (5) days a week and have the remaining two days, i. e. Saturday and Sunday for rest and recreation.

In order that the workers shall continue to earn the same amount in the 40 hours as heretofore in the 44 hour week, the new agreement provides for a 10% increase on all minimum scales and upon all garments heretofore settled.

Overtime is limited to 4 hours during the week. Week workers to receive double pay for such overtime and piece workers to receive in addition to their usual earnings the minimum scale for each hour worked.

Each and every union shop must at all times have a shop chairman and price committee for the purpose of settling such prices so that the workers shall earn enough in the busy season to be able to live in comfort and decency throughout the year and to generally take care that the conditions provided in the agreement are lived up to.

All these things have been new gains in addition to the old conditions provided in the previous agreements safeguarding the interests of the workers in Union shops.

It has been a great gain indeed. The organized workers of the Dress and Waist Industry are anxious to have these gains introduced in each and every shop where waists and dresses are manufactured so that all workers in the industry might fully benefit from them.

THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY THIS CAN BE DONE. EACH AND EVERY SHOP MUST BECOME UNIONIZED AND EACH AND EVERY WORKER MUST BECOME A MEMBER OF THE STRONG, POWERFUL AND INFLUENTIAL JOINT BOARD DRESS AND WAISTMAKERS UNION.

We have done our share. We went into a General Strike. We struggled and we sacrificed to make these gains possible. Now we are offering to share them with you, the workers of the OPEN SHOPS. Come and join us and together with us enjoy the fruit of our victory.

A SPECIAL CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN STARTED! DON'T WAIT FOR ANY COMMITTEES, BUT COME DOWN TO THE HEADQUARTERS WHERE COMMITTEES OF THE JOINT BOARD WILL RECEIVE YOU.

SHOPS RESPONDING TO THIS CALL, WILL RECEIVE SPECIAL CONSIDERATION AND WILL BE ABLE TO JOIN THE UNION AT A SPECIAL REDUCED INITIATION FEE. COME AND JOIN!

IN UNION THERE IS STRENGTH

JOINT BOARD DRESS & WAISTMAKERS' UNION

THE MONSTER OF FASCISM
is BEGINNING TO RAISE ITS HEAD
in AMERICA and WE MUST
WAKE UP TO THE DANGER
BEFORE it is TOO LATE
WE MUST WAKE UP
AND UNITE OUR FORCES
WE MUST PROTEST
AGAINST FASCISM
RACIAL PERSECUTION
AND THE SMASHING OF THE
LABOR MOVEMENT

WE
MOURN
OUR
LOSSES

still
STRIKING

for

HUMAN

TREATMENTS

**WE
HAVE**

TO

WIN

WORKERS

MUST HAVE A SAY

in their

WORKING

CONDITIONS

AND

WAGES

CAPITALISM

=

DEATH

**MASSES
OF
PEOPLE
ARE
RISING UP**

**LIVES
AND
DEMANDS
ARE
NON
NEGOTIABLE**

People First Profits Last

Re-creation of a placard used at a rally organized by the International Ladies Garment Workers Union in New York in 1978 (an archival photo of the rally is published in Countersignals #2, p. 64).¹ The rally was organized in support of a campaign to unionize garment workers at J.P. Stevens and Company, then the second-largest textile manufacturing corporation in the country. As textile workers in the northeastern US won higher wages and benefits, manufacturers moved their operations and production facilities to the low-waged, non-unionized South. By 1960, more than three-quarters of American textile manufacturing took place in the southern Piedmont region. J. P. Stevens was one of the first textile firms to relocate to the South, and by the mid-1960s all but seven of its 70 mills were located in the region, employing over 30,000 workers in Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, and the Carolinas. During the 1960s and 1970s the Textile Workers Union of America, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and the ILGWU joined a broad, interracial coalition of civil rights groups, religious leaders, and politicians to wage a sustained unionization campaign against J.P. Stevens and Co. In 1974, workers at its seven Roanoke Rapids, NC plants voted for union representation, a stunning achievement for workers in the South. The company refused to recognize the union until 1980. Soon afterward in 1988, J.P. Stevens and Co. was sold to a trio of major textile competitors and split up among them. J. P. Stevens began in 1813 as a small wool manufacturer in Andover, MA, and — like other American textile mills — grew exponentially as a result of the trans-atlantic slave trade. As W. E. B. Du Bois astutely

observes, industrialization in the textile industry was the direct result of chattel slavery: the unpaid labor of millions of enslaved people of African descent provided the assets that built the textile factories in England and the US.² Historian Ronald Bailey further observes that “the leading textile industrialists were active participants in the slave trade or active in commercial and industrial endeavors that were closely intertwined with the slave[ry] trade.”³

Appeal!

Re-creation of a broadsheet inviting workers in the women’s ready to wear industry to a mass meeting of the ILGWU held on Friday August 2nd 1907, at 206 E. Broadway in Manhattan. Published in English and Yiddish, the broadsheet attests to the large numbers of Jewish immigrant workers in the industry.

A General Strike Is Proclaimed

Re-creation of a broadsheet calling on cloak makers, shirt makers and pressers to join a general strike organized by the ILGWU in Philadelphia on September 8, 1914 at 6pm. Published in English, Italian, and Yiddish, the broadsheet attests to the large numbers of Italian and Jewish immigrant workers in the industry.

Shirt Waist Makers We Should Make the Laws

Re-creation of a textile banner carried by women garment workers in the early 20th century, exact date and city unknown. From an archival photo in the ILGWU collection, and published in Countersignals #2, p. 51.

When We Strike We Win! What We Win We Keep

Re-creation of a placard used at a rally organized by the Joint Board of the ILGWU in New York, as observed in an archival photo in the ILGWU collection. Other placards condemn the abolishment of the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), a cornerstone of New Deal policy and worker protections.

The rally would have been held sometime after May 1935, the date when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the NIRA unconstitutional.

The Message

Re-creation of a 1934 issue of The Message published by ILGWU Local 25 in New York, NY, announcing the newly won 40-hour, 5-day work week. The Dress Joint Board was composed of Locals 89 (Italian Dressmakers), 22, 60 (Dress Pressers) and the Dress Division of Cutters’ Local 10. Beginning with the collective agreement negotiated 10 years later in March 1944, members of Locals 89, 22, and 60 were covered by an industry-wide health and vacation fund that included sick benefits, hospitalization, medical services at the Union Health Center, eye exams, and tuberculosis aid, as well as one week’s paid vacation. Additionally, the Retirement Fund and Health and Welfare Fund of the Dress Joint Board supplemented the health and vacation fund.

The Monster of Fascism Is Beginning to Raise its Head
From a broadsheet produced by ILGWU Local 22 in New York, NY circa the mid-1930s, calling for a city-wide

May Day work stoppage and mass demonstration on 17th street between 5th and 6th avenues. The May Day action called for workers to protest against company unions, “unemployment and starvation,” low wages and high prices, war and preparations for war, and “fascism, racial persecution and the smashing of the labor movement.” Other demands included a 6-hour work day and a 5-day work week, unemployment insurance and social insurance, the right to organize, and a “mighty, militant, and united trade union movement.”

We Mourn Our Losses

Inspired by textile banners inscribed with “Workers Mourn Our Loss,” carried at the funeral march and protest organized by the ILGWU in 1911 after a fire at the Triangle Waist Company in New York killed 146 garment workers, most of them young Jewish and Italian immigrant women (the archival photograph of the march is published in Countersignals #2, pp. 66–67). The owners of the Triangle Waist Company kept the fire exits locked, trapping the workers inside to perish in the blazing inferno. The Triangle Factory Fire helped catalyze widespread support for unionization and better working conditions in the garment industry, and in subsequent decades unions like the ILGWU successfully negotiated substantial gains for garment workers. Yet those who profit from workers’ labor have always sought to maximize their wealth at the expense of their workers. Economic globalization, neoliberal capitalism, and corporate greed

¹ Original source materials produced by the International Ladies Garment Workers’ Union were accessed at the ILGWU collection at the Kheel Center, Cornell University.

² W. E. B. Du Bois, Black Reconstruction in America 1860–1880, Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., New York, 1935, First Edition.

³ “The Other Side of Slavery: Black Labor, Cotton, and Textile Industrialization in Great Britain and the United States,” Agricultural History, Spring, 1994, Vol. 68, pp.35–50.

have systematically and deliberately decimated unions across all sectors of the US economy, and erased hard fought gains made by workers. Almost 110 years after the Tringle Factory Fire, workers in the global apparel industry are overwhelmingly poor people of color and migrants, and garment workers continue to perish in factory fires caused by unsafe working conditions and a lack of legal and workplace safety protections.

Still Striking for Human Treatments
Adapted from the slogan, “We are Striking For Human Treatments” used on placards carried by striking shirt waist workers during what came to be known as The Uprising of 20,000, a 13-week strike organized by the ILGWU from September 1909 to February 1910, in New York. Over 20,000 young women participated in the strike, which gained support among middle class women’s groups like the Women’s Trade Union League. While many of the workers’ demands were not met, the strike galvanized support for the ILGWU and established a precedent for collective action in the women’s ready-to-wear industry. The slogan was also used in a garment workers’ strike organized by the Women’s Trade Union League in Chicago in 1910–1911. Striking workers were violently attacked and brutalized by the Chicago police on the picket lines, and two strikers were killed by police. The word “Still” is added to “Striking For Human Treatments” to draw attention to the fact that for many workers, demands made in 1909–1911 — including the right to unionize, safety protections, living wages, and an end to sexual harassment in the workplace — have yet to be guaranteed or maintained over time.

We Have to Win

From the website of Rideshare Drivers, formed in 2018 by and for rideshare drivers for Uber and Lyft and other platforms to ensure that rideshare drivers can determine their working conditions: “It’s not enough to protest — we have to win. We are a united nations of drivers, here and across the country, and we’ve come together unified by the issues that hurt drivers and our profession: unfair pay, no voice on the job, unjust deactivations.”⁴ Rideshare Drivers United is demanding a driver bill of rights that includes fair pay, transparency, a voice on the job, and community standards.

Workers Must Have A Say in Their Working Conditions and Wages

From the Make LA Sweatshop Free campaign organized by the Los Angeles Garment Worker Center / El Centro de Trabajadores de Costura: “Garment workers must have a say in their working conditions and wages by having the right to negotiate directly with employers and the brands that profit from their work.”⁵ The LA Garment Worker Center organizes low-wage, mainly immigrant women workers in LA’s garment industry — the largest in the country — and has been at the forefront of struggles for change in the industry.

Entire categories of workers like independent contractors, farm workers, and domestic workers are excluded from coverage under the National Labor Relations Act. These occupations tend to employ low-waged workers, many of whom are immigrants and/or undocumented. Consequently, substantial numbers of low-waged workers are legally excluded from union membership and collective bargaining structures under

federal labor law. Worker centers play an important role in mobilizing and assisting non-unionized workers, especially migrant and undocumented workers. Because they are worker-led, worker centers are often more inclusive and democratic than traditional unions.

Capitalism = Death

Inspired by the SILENCE = DEATH poster created in 1986 by Silence = Death Project collective members Avram Finkelstein, Brian Howard, Oliver Johnston, Charles Kreloff, Chris Lione, and Jorge Soccarás. The Silence = Death Project formed to push the LGBTQ community into political action on AIDS. The poster was wheat-pasted around New York city in February 1987, just weeks before the formation of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP). ACT UP used the poster as a central image.⁶

A right wing xenophobic federal government aligned with the religious right, a lack of meaningful national action and policy, and callous denial and victim-blaming characterize the responses of the Reagan and Bush administrations to AIDS, and the Trump regime to Covid-19. Millions of Americans still lack access to health insurance, and the US has worse health outcomes compared to other high-income countries despite spending almost twice as much on health care. The coronavirus pandemic is

4 <https://drivers-united.org/about>.

5 <https://garmentworkercenter.org/make-la-sweatfree/>

6 In 2017, Avram Finkelstein reflected on the political poster, “in essence and intention, the political poster is a public thing. It comes to life in public spaces, and outside them, is academic. [...] The poster comes for you where you live.” Avram Finkelstein, “SILENCE = DEATH: How an Iconic Protest Poster Came Into Being,” [Literary Hub](#) December 1, 2017.

7 Darrick Hamilton, Dedrick Asante-Muhammad, Chuck Collins, and Omar Ocampo, [White Supremacy is the Preexisting Condition: Eight Solutions to Ensure Economic Recovery Reduces the Racial Wealth Divide](#), Institute for Policy Studies, 2020.

exposing the lethal, racialized forces of capitalism and for-profit health care, and Covid-19 has been especially deadly for Black, Indigenous, and Latinx communities: BIPOC people are disproportionately uninsured or underinsured, and are more likely to be essential workers and hold low-waged jobs with no benefits or ability to telecommute. 61% percent of Latinx households and 44% of Black households experienced a job or wage loss due to the pandemic, compared to 38% of white households.⁷ According to president and CEO of the Institute for Women’s Policy Research, C. Nicole Mason, women of color have been hit the hardest by the pandemic’s economic fallout.⁸ Covid-19 has also exacerbated the racial wealth gap: More than \$6.5 trillion in household wealth vanished during the first three months of 2020, disproportionately hitting Black, Latinx, and Native households the hardest.⁹ As Darrick Hamilton, Dedrick Asante-Muhammad, Chuck Collins, and Omar Ocampo assert, “White supremacy is the pre-existing condition that’s made this pandemic deadlier for people of color.”¹⁰ In contrast, the wealth of America’s 643 billionaires soared by an average of 29% since the start of the pandemic, increasing by \$845 billion since March 18th when lockdowns began across the US.¹¹ And the 34 wealthiest billionaires in the US saw their wealth increase by \$282 billion

8 “Who is this economy hurting the most? Moms and women of color according to women’s research CEO,” [Represented](#) CNN, September 19, 2020.

9 Hamilton et. al., as above.

10 Hamilton et. al., as above.

11 Chuck Collins, Omar Ocampo, and Sophia Paslaski, [Billionaire Bonanza 2020: Wealth Windfalls, Tumbling Taxes, and Pandemic Profiteers](#), Institute for Policy Studies, 2020.

— a jump of 9.5% — in just 23 days between March 18 and April 10, 2020.¹² As Black Lives Matter co-founder Patrice Cullors asserts, “The only way to gain the kinds of often-generational wealth that the 1% has been able to gain is through controlling the populations it relied on to make its wealth.”¹³

Masses Of People Are Rising Up From Martin Luther King, Jr.’s I’ve Been to the Mountaintop speech delivered to striking sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee on April 3, 1968.¹⁴ King was assassinated the following night. **Masses of People Are Rising Up** uses the MARTIN font created by designer Tré Seals, founder of Studio Seals and creator of the Vocal Type Co (vocaltype.co). Seals explains that MARTIN “is a non-violent typeface inspired by the remnants of the Memphis Sanitation Strike of 1968.”¹⁵ Memphis garbage collectors Echol Cole and Robert Walker were crushed to death by a malfunctioning truck on February 1, 1968. On February 12, 1,300 Black men from the Memphis Department of Public Works went on strike to demand recognition of their union, decent wages, better safety standards, and an end to the city’s pattern of neglect and abuse of its Black employees. Tens of thousands of people supported the striking workers. Police used mace and tear gas against nonviolent demonstrators, and the mayor of Memphis brought in 4,000 National Guard troops. The Memphis City Council agreed to recognize the union and guaranteed a better wage for sanitation workers on April 16, 1968, but the union had to threaten another strike to pressure the city to respect its commitments.¹⁶

Labor unions have never been able to gain any kind of significant traction in the South, where white supremacy

and a desire to stop white and Black workers from organizing together have fueled anti-union laws and continued hostility to unions.¹⁷ Today the four states with the lowest unionization rates are all in the South (Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, North Carolina). More than 50 years after the Memphis Sanitation Strike, persistent labor market discrimination and segregation continue to force Black workers into fewer and less advantageous employment opportunities than their white counterparts. A history of white supremacy in mortgage market discrimination means that Black Americans are also significantly less likely to be homeowners: Black Americans have a homeownership rate of just 44%, compared to a white homeownership rate over 70%. 37% of Black families and 33% of Latinx families have zero or negative wealth, compared to just 15.5 percent of white families. In 2016, the median wealth for black and Hispanic families was \$17,600 and \$20,700, respectively, compared with white families’ median wealth of \$171,000.¹⁸

Lives And Demands Are Non-Negotiable

From **WE REFUSE**, a statement of refusal by Black Futures at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. On July 6, 2020, a group of Black faculty at SAIC released a letter and series of recommendations to SAIC’s President, Provost, and Board of Governors demanding accountability “for SAIC’s unfulfilled commitments to anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion with immediate steps to provide resources & funding to dismantle structural racism.”¹⁹ All but one of SAIC’s VPs are white. SAIC’s entire senior administration (president, provost, academic deans) are also all white. **WE REFUSE** was published on August 7, 2020 after

senior administration failed to meet the group’s 30-day deadline to implement their first set of recommendations to dismantle structural racism at SAIC.

The letter reads in part:

Because Black people are still disproportionately dying from COVID-19.
 Because Black people are still disproportionately surveilled, arrested, tortured, murdered and imprisoned by the state.
 Because Black people who are disproportionately incarcerated are still being exposed to COVID-19 in jails and prisons.
 Because we are outraged that Black trans women are murdered everyday.
 Because we are outraged that Black girls and women are raped, murdered and missing.
 Because Black students, Black staff, and Black faculty are inextricably linked to these atrocities happening to and around us.
 Because Black essential workers are dying or bearing the brunt of reckless, professionally immature leaders who refuse to value Black lives over the economics of reopening.
 Because of these inequities, SAIC exists.
All Black lives matter.
Black Lives have always mattered even when historically white institutions and perpetually white institutional leadership are having trouble with this fact. It may be that the time has come for more people to hear the sound of Black Lives Matter, but we expect our institution to listen.
Our lives and our demands are non-negotiable.
Our lives. Our demands.
These are non-negotiable.
We do not accept.²⁰

¹² Collins, Ocampo, and Paslaski, as above.

¹³ Patrisse Cullors, Darnell L. Moore and Alicia Garza, “The black people killed by police are just one piece of a larger structural problem,” *The Guardian*, June 12, 2015.

¹⁴ The full text is available at <<https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/ive-been-mountaintop>>.

¹⁵ <https://www.vocaltype.co/history-of/martin>.

¹⁶ See <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/memphis-sanitation-workers-strike>

¹⁷ See Harold Meyerson, “How the American South Drives the Low-Wage Economy,” *The American Prospect*, July 6, 2015, and Meagan Day, “Welcome to Operation Dixie, the most ambitious unionization attempt in the U.S.,” *Timeline*, May 8, 2018.

¹⁸ On racial wealth inequality see Angela Hanks, Danyelle Solomon, and Christian E. Weller, “Systematic Inequality: How America’s Structural Racism Helped Create the Black-White Wealth Gap”, Center for American Progress, February 21, 2018, and Hamilton et. al., cited above.

¹⁹ <https://saicmovingforward.github.io/letter/>.

²⁰ The full text is available at <<https://saicmovingforward.github.io/letter/the-refusal.html#refusal>>

New Demands, Countersignals is dedicated to my grandmother, Ann Vinebaum (née Aranoff), 1911–2007 — garment worker, seamstress, feminist, role model.