

## Student activists write guide to university

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by [Vanessa Liu](#) and [Anna Sanders](#)

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The words of Take Back NYU are back in the Kimmel Center.

No, the members of the activist group aren't barricading themselves in the student center again; they're trying to better inform the NYU student body through writing with their newest publication, the 2009 "[NYU Disorientation Guide](#)."

"We live in an era of illusions," say the editors of the guide, a 28-page document assembled by members of Take Back NYU and Students Creating Radical Change. The guide, which will be distributed in the Kimmel Center this week, offers commentary on NYU student government and the NYU Board of Trustees; it also includes a timeline of events before and after TBNYU's 40-hour occupation of Kimmel.

During the February occupation, dozens of student protesters barricaded themselves inside the Kimmel Marketplace with a list of demands, including tuition stabilization, full disclosure of NYU's budget and endowment, and a fair labor contract for all university employees. Since its formation in 2007, TBNYU has pushed for more accountability from the university.

CAS senior Drew Phillips, a TBNYU member and one of the guide's editors, believes students who read the guide will be better educated about the university.

"We want them to have a critical outlook on NYU," he said. "It's left on students to take what they learn in classes and research to question the school."

Phillips, who was temporarily suspended after the occupation, said he looks back fondly on the protest.

"It woke people up," he said. "It forced the issue upon them. It created an energy that wasn't there before — or it was, but it was quiet and dormant."

An anonymously written article in the guide, titled "Why Occupy?", attempts to justify the Kimmel occupation.

"NYU is not trying to listen to you," it states, and according to the guide, it is this notion of a closed-off university that catalyzes occupation.

The writer of the article goes on to say, "Did we make mistakes? Of course we did ... One thing we can all agree on, though, is that this is not the last you'll [see] from restless students at NYU."

NYU spokesman James Devitt said he sees little value in the guide.

"The legitimacy Take Back NYU has on this campus became quite clear in February in the way it conducted itself," Devitt said. "It has no legitimate interest in any real dialogue with the university."

He added that NYU welcomes "honest, robust, civilized dialogue on any issue," specifically citing coffeehouse talks and University Senate meetings.

But Phillips disagrees.

"The university has no want or desire for discourse," he said. "We have to do what we have to do to be heard."

Gallatin senior and a guide editor Nick Steinke believes it's important for students to speak out against the NYU

administration.

"Despite the wall of opposition that the administration puts up, anyone who wants to create change can continue a long tradition of protesting," Steinke said. "You might not make a lot of gain right in this moment, but it contributes to a much larger historical legacy."

Disorientation Guide editors said they were inspired by a similar guide titled "NYU Inc." that was published in 1971. A copy of this was given to TBNYU by NYU politics professor Bertell Ollman, one of the "radical faculty members" the 2009 guide recognizes.

Ollman has taught at NYU since 1967 and supports TBNYU's goals.

"I support, in principle, all attempts to make universities more democratic," said Ollman, whose research focuses on Marxist theory.

TBNYU has "been an important part of your education, as distinct from your schooling," Ollman said.

However, student sentiment regarding TBNYU has not been totally positive, and some view the guide as propaganda.

"It does not better inform because it's only preaching to the choir," Tisch sophomore Robert Szanto said. "It's kind of like an overripe banana: On the outside, it looks harmless and nutritious, but once you get past the peel, you realize just how full of shit it actually is."