

Statement from Michael Pelias

Candidate for Secretary of the LIUFF

I am a candidate for the position of Secretary of the LIUFF for several reasons.

First, a campaign must be initiated to take back, to reclaim the university for the students and the faculty. I intend to help put education back in the hands of the educators and will engage in relentless activity against a course offering and cancellation policy that is pedagogically unsound and terribly unfair to both students and faculty alike. The current state of affairs is not only unacceptable, but untenable, and I will fight for the rights of educators to be educators, not cogs in the algorithmic machine this administration has deployed to the detriment of the many.

Second, our adjunct members (nearly 42% of our dues-paying membership) need officer representation. To me, this is the first step in a very necessary *rapprochement* between the full-time and part-time faculty. The anger among adjuncts is palpable, anger at the significant losses in the contract the membership ratified last year, anger at the fact that the faculty rejected the proposal for a guaranteed officer position, anger at the ways we have been made to feel that we matter less. Many are asking why they should pay dues to a union that failed to represent them, and some who still have classes to teach are nonetheless seeking employment at schools where they feel valued by their full-time colleagues—a real loss to the university. Symbolically, then, my candidacy demonstrates a willingness to find common cause against the incessant dismantling of the educational institution we have loved and fought for, and for which some of us have taken great risks.

Finally, I hope to help reshape the LIUFF into an imaginative force in academic labor. This means putting a stop to campaigns of disinformation and fear in order to become strong enough to fight against a board of trustees more interested in bond ratings and real estate holdings than in the life of the mind and an imaginative and exciting liberal education in the arts and sciences.

Most of you know my record with the LIUFF, my 25 years as an active member of the Executive Committee, and my vocal presence in three strikes and a lockout. You know that I have consistently fought for all LIUFF members, pushing as hard for gains for full-time faculty as I have for the advancement of part-time faculty.

But you may not know that I have a scholarly interest in academic labor and academic unionism. I have not only organized panels on labor struggles for LIUFF faculty, bringing to campus some of the top scholars working today, but I and other cohorts have organized panels at the Left Forum and have given talks at Pratt, CUNY Grad center, Hofstra and Tulane University.

And you may not remember that some years ago, I with other concerned brothers and sisters built a coalition of academic labor in New York City that brought together eight university faculty unions to discuss bargaining strategies and common ground. Recent events here have made some in the New York labor community wonder if the LIUFF is still viable. If elected, I will devote my energies to rebuilding bridges to these locals and reconstituting this coalition to build our outside strength within the labor movement.

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But it's not just other unions whose support we need. As an officer of the LIUFF I am committed to building a campaign with progressive students to initiate a new movement that will coordinate action plans and educational meetings, so that we begin to show **our strength now** as we prepare for the 2021 negotiations.

As Secretary of the LIUFF, I intend to communicate with the general membership on a monthly basis in regard to substantive issues discussed in the Executive Committee, reports from the various steering committees and maintain a healthy awareness and analysis of developments and policy changes that the administration may implement. It is time we have a more democratic and open mode of communication that will keep the membership informed.

I humbly ask for your vote and promise my resourceful and committed energies and years of seasoned experience will not be wasted. Thank you for listening and for thinking carefully about the future of the LIUFF as we prepare to fight a common enemy.