The United Front Against Displacement is deeply disturbed to hear about the "Co-Designing Smart Cities" course which Columbia University is running in conjunction with the historically corrupt and incompetent Eric Adams Mayoral Administration. In a typically arrogant fashion, Columbia imagines that they have a free hand to remake Harlem and the city in their own image. The course, while claiming (in typical corporate speak) to partner with "community stakeholders," in fact has no real plans to engage with the broad masses of people in Harlem, especially not NYCHA residents. Columbia has historically been a major driver of gentrification and displacement in Harlem, including through their recent collusion with the government to illegally use eminent domain for land grabs in West Harlem. The people of Harlem are deeply disturbed to hear about this course, and correctly see it as the latest in a long series of Columbia's unrelenting assaults on the communities of Harlem. It seems that Columbia University will not be content until it has entirely devoured Harlem, destroyed its rich history and culture, and regurgitated a hollow corporate wasteland in which the elite can comfortably distract themselves with various forms of luxury consumption.

In a disturbing and dystopian euphemism, the course description notes that smart cities assist in "increases in crime management." Behind the veneer of this sleek wordplay is the reality that such policies massively expand surveillance, police brutality, and mass incarceration. To those familiar with the history of gentrification, this will come as no surprise, as expanded policing has historically been essential to displacing populations deemed "undesirable" by the wealthy power elite who run institutions like Columbia University. It is well known that so-called "smart cities" are initiatives to expand surveillance and policing to unprecedented degrees, including especially through the use of AI and machine learning technologies to track people's every movement *at all times*. The Electronic Frontier Foundation has noted that the "smart city" data collection efforts of many cities already violate "multiple privacy protections in existing law." In a 2020 article, US News quoted Vincent Mosco, a smart city expert, who noted that "Smart cities are, above all, surveillance cities that enable close monitoring and management of large populations." In China, there has been popular outcry in recent years about the Chinese Government's unprecedented use of smart cities to surveil the population, and how this technology violates basic human rights. However, many in the US are not aware how elite universities like Columbia are on the cutting edge of deploying this repressive technology here in the United States.

Perhaps aware of the growing public outcry over the expansion of mass surveillance in this country, the course description notes "Without public trust and confidence in smart cities, they will not succeed." But the question is succeed for whom, and succeed at what? Despite empty platitudes about a "human centered approach," the course clearly is part of Columbia's long-standing policy of aggressive expansion in Harlem. One would have to be incredibly naive to honestly claim that Columbia's efforts to transform the neighborhood of Harlem into a "smart city" is anything but maleficent. Sadly, those who make such claims are not generally naive, but deeply cynical and committed to furthering Columbia's fundamental agenda of expanding corporate power.

We demand that Columbia University immediately cancel the class and issue an unequivocal apology to the people of Harlem for creating such a nefarious course. We encourage all the students currently enrolled in the course to drop it as soon as they can.

-The United Front Against Displacement