

The Debt Collective demands more

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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We learned last week that the Department of Education is taking [steps to provide a measure of debt relief](#) for students victimized by [the whole Corinthian Colleges debacle](#). That's ostensibly a good thing, but it comes with a good deal of red tape—which means not everyone will get relief quickly, or at all. From [the Debt Collective's strongly worded statement](#):

If Education Secretary Arne Duncan was truly “committed to making sure students receive every penny of relief they are entitled to under law” he would sign the “[Order for Discharge of Federal Student Loan Debts](#)” the Debt Collective sent him [last week](#), immediately and **automatically** discharging Corinthian students' debts. Students are entitled to receive full relief under law. The legal and most painless possible process for students is no process—they deserve an automatic discharge of their debts.

This is not mere idealistic screaming about the perfect when someone's trying to offer you the good. The Debt Collective has been hard at work on smart organizing and [policy advocacy](#) efforts for a while now, all while maintaining the principled position that [they don't owe a dime to fraudulent lenders](#). And they're being heard, without being co-opted or watered down. That's good activism.

For more background, read [Amy Frykholm's interview with debt resistance organizer Tom Gokey](#). Among other things, he talks about how this work has roots in the Occupy movement of a couple years back. You know, the one everyone was writing dismissive think pieces about, saying it was useless because it didn't have a hierarchical leadership structure and a one-sheet of demands.

But like many messy social movements before, Occupy served as an incubator. The occupations themselves soon lost steam, and the 99 percent are still getting screwed. Yet Occupy continues to bear fruit. Let's remember this next time around.