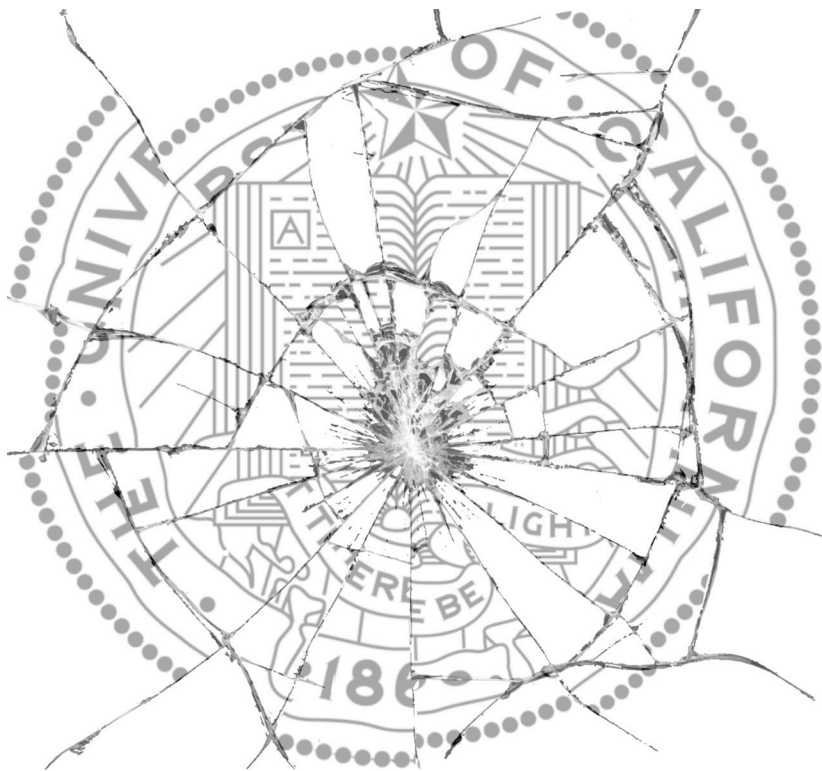




# **WE ARE NOT THE UNION**

dispatches from disgruntled workers  
and students across the UC



University of California seal, smashed

“We Are Not the Union” is an anthology of writings critical of the UC and the UAW management, organized and compiled by Abolish the UC.

Typset in **AKIRA EXPANDED** and Adobe Garamond Pro

**Cover:** Graffiti on the building of the University of California Office of the President (UCOP), reading “Fuck the UC”. This appeared after the initial riots in Oakland after the murder of George Floyd.

Formatted  
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*Preceding Struggles  
in the  
Current Sequence*



# COLA4ALL: Statement of clarification and distinguishment between the COLA wildcat

December 9, 2019

On Sunday, December 8, 2019 at the Digital Media Auditorium COLA4all announced its solidarity with a cost of living adjustment for graduates, hereafter, called COLA . In front of the digitally and physically present graduate body COLA4all announced its commitment to expand the fight beyond simply a cost of living adjustment for graduate students to include an adjustment for undergraduates, undocumented students, disabled students, queer and trans students, and service workers on this campus. We come to the university aware that UC Santa Cruz is not alone in contributing to the ongoing gaps in wages, demanding the acknowledgement that the university serves as a site of germination for the neoliberal policies that create such conditions. COLA4all seeks to create awareness of the ongoing displacement and attempts to erase native people and native students and, of black students, of students of color, undocumented students, disabled students, on this campus. We recognize the impact the university has and has had in all of our lives and we are taking it upon ourselves to make sure that this space be committed to our survival. We want people to understand that this shit is bigger than us. It is for this reason that COLA4all has continuously proposed direct action endeavors that build community. These extreme working conditions are not separate from issues of struggle outside of this university. These struggles are intertwined. This is a global problem.

On Monday, December 9, 2019 we began our series of demonstrations through the action #ThisIsNotAHungerStrike, where a fellow COLA4all member and graduate student worked while not eating, as usual. At this event, we wanted to demonstrate our solidarity by sharing the stage with COLA and undergraduate organizations, who were able to speak on their different but enmeshed struggles and community work within the university.

We gather in support of graduate students on a wildcat grading strike. We gather in support of the previous strike efforts of workers around this campus who are still without a contract. We are here to support lecturers who are currently at the negotiation table. We stand with undocumented students whose demands for accountability and economic support from the administration are still not met. We are here for disabled students who face the reality and financial strain of this campus' inaccessibility every day. We are here in support of undergraduates, who are also underpaid, overworked and placed in unforgiving debt. We see you, and we are building our strength together. As members of

the university, we cannot do this alone.

Santa Cruz County is in a housing crisis propelled by gentrification and ongoing rise in rent prices. We cannot ignore the ICE raids on our communities. This crisis affects us all and the university knows this. We all need a cost of living adjustment.

The university cannot keep bringing us here only to push us out by not offering us the wages we need. We demand a university-wide cost of living adjustment.

A healthy community will support a healthy university. But the university's refusal to offer more comprehensive financial support harms us all. We need a university-wide cost of living adjustment.

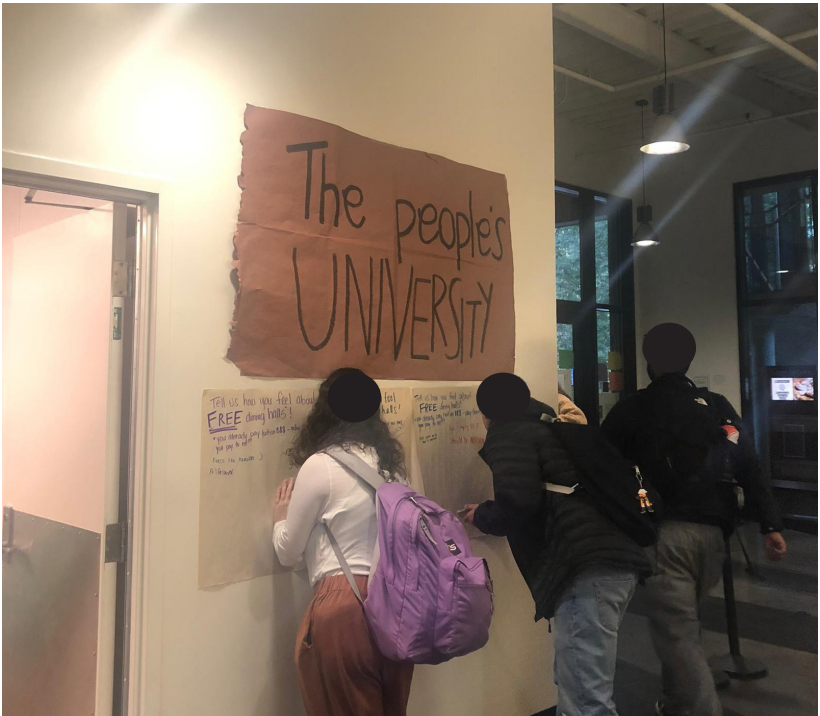
But we are starting where we are, where we can. In doing so we recognize that the impact the university has in all of our lives and demanding that it be committed to our survival.

We recognize the impact this situation has had in our lives and we are taking it upon ourselves to make sure that this space be committed to our survival. These extreme working conditions are not separate from issues of struggle outside of this university.





UCSC wildcat dining hall occupation by COLA4ALL



"The people's university" - from the liberated dining commons at UCSC

# Statement from Undocumented Students at UCSC

January 22, 2020

The UC Regents are useless to a university that is for the people. The UC Regents are criminals whose greed has made education inaccessible for most and steered education into being focused only on growing the military of the most violent and blood-thirsty empire on the planet. We do not need the UC Regents. At UC Santa Cruz, the efforts of grad students, workers, and undergraduate students who have been in solidarity through and through have demonstrated that we, as a body of students and workers able to understand what kind of university we need, no longer need the UC Regents. Therefore today we come here not to ask anything from the thieves and power hungry people that sit guarded by an overwhelming police force, afraid of the anger that their crimes create, but rather we come to let the regents know, your time in power is quickly coming to an end.

The love and community built through the actions of workers and students working in conjunction has awoken in us the realization that we are, in our solidarity and care for one another, more powerful than any and all of the regents combined. That our compassion, understanding and dedication to one another make the university a place where accessible knowledge aimed at the prosperity of our communities can really come into being. We do not need to appeal to administration for the resources to make the university a place where we can survive. The university without its students and without its workers cannot operate. We will no longer be dictated or threatened by the administrative puppets who are too lazy to even pretend like they care, who serve no purpose other than ensuring that the university continues its exploitative business as usual.

As undocumented students at UC Santa Cruz, we are highly aware of the ways in which the institution contributes to upholding and creating the systems and oppressive forces that perpetuate the imposition of our so-called "illegality." However, we denounce this illegality today by firmly questioning the status of a university that shamelessly sits upon and profits from stolen land. We believe we have no use for a university of this nature and that just like the borders imposed by white settler nation states, this kind of university should too be obliterated. We will no longer tolerate the uncaring faces of administrations mostly composed of white men and women sleeping soundly in the comfort of their all too high salaries. We will no longer stand the continuous efforts of the university to silence us when we face acts of violence, anti-immigrant sentiment, sexual assault and white supremacy on and off campus. And we stand with all of those students and workers who inspire us to say that the police and ICE as enforcers of these acts of violence have no place in a university that is

for the people.

We are inspired by the sheer courage and determination of those who we stand in solidarity with. We are inspired by the students of BSU who fearlessly sought their demands be met with one of the most uplifting actions in recent UCSC history. We are inspired by the small group of graduate students who decided enough was enough and whose dedication to solidarity and community led them to seek the improvement of living conditions for others beyond themselves. We are inspired by the folx who know what solidarity looks like, folx who will feed each other, who will stand up for one another, who will breathe life into one another when the university threatens to suffocate them. We are inspired by you and as such, we continue with our collective struggle to make the university a place where black and brown students can thrive. To make the university a place where workers who are overworked, who are disrespected, who are single parents, who are undocumented, who are the living breathing life that makes the university function can be treated with the respect and care that they deserve. As undocumented students living under the constant weight of an imposed illegality that tells us that we do not exist, we are inspired by you to forcefully shed this limitation and insist that in fact, we are very much alive and growing and we are unapologetically unafraid of pushing for our needs and the needs of all those folx who we stand in sincere solidarity with, so that we can make the university a place of learning from one another, a place of growing together, a place of resistance and long-lasting change.

Once upon a time as an undergrad, I told Janet Napolitano that even before coming onto campus to speak to undocumented students as the new UC President, she had already succeeded in dividing us. There were those of us who thought we should work with her. There were those of us who could not stand the thought of working with the right-hand henchman of the Deporter in Chief. She took on the rest of the meeting by explicitly telling a student she did not feel she needed to apologize for her actions as the secretary of the department in charge of detaining and deporting our families. When students asked her for more funding opportunities for students who have no access to federal aid and are unauthorized to work she heartlessly replied that she had left her checkbook at home. The lesson of that meeting was learnt. Whatever side of the argument we sit on, the overarching fact is that these powerful perpetrators of white colonial violence do not have a conscience. They have hurt us continuously for the past 500 years. We do not need to appeal to them any longer. We stand in solidarity with all those students and workers who know there is a better kind of university to be created and we only need each other, to care and feel for one another, to be able to accomplish it.



"DHS + ICE Off Campus" - from UCSC wildcat



Entrance of the UC Santa Cruz campus during the wildcat

# Abolish the UC: A Provocation

July 2020

The signal fires from the third precinct in Minneapolis are clear: *the end of this world is coming*. The University of California will have no place in it. The modern university is woven into a system of settler colonialism, racial capitalism, anti-Blackness, and state violence. As the current Black-led anticolonial wave gestures toward the implosion of colonial-capitalist civilization, the University must come to terms with its own negation.

California is the fifth largest economy in the world, and the University of California is the third-largest employer in the state. The UC system was not only sedimented on the stolen lands of the Ohlone, Nisenan, Patwin, Tongva, Chumash, Kumeyaay, Acjachemen, Miwok, Cahuilla, Luiseño, and Serrano; it generated its early operating capital via the land-grab process afforded by the Morrill Act. In their investigative piece, “Land-grab universities: Expropriated Indigenous land is the foundation of the land-grant university system,” Robert Lee and Tristan Ahtone reveal that:

*The University of California located all of its grant among these stolen lands. To capitalize on its 150,000 acres, the university ran a real estate operation that sold plots on installment plans, generating a lucrative combination of principal and interest payments. In the late 19th century, income from the fund — traceable to the lands of the Miwok, Yokuts, Gabrieleño, Maidu, Pomo and many more — covered as much as a third of the University of California’s annual operating expenses.<sup>1</sup>*

The endowment funds generated by the University of California’s wholesale theft and speculation of Indigenous lands amounted to over \$19 million, as represented in 2020 USD. As Dene scholar Glen Coulthard argues, “settler-colonialism is territorially acquisitive in perpetuity”.<sup>2</sup> For the UC system, this “primitive accumulation” — the outright dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands — is constitutive of both its real estate investments (the UC is also the largest landlord in California) and the initial operating capital that seeded its historical and ongoing accumulation and dispossession.

In “Abolitionist University Studies: An Invitation”, Abigail Boggs, Eli Meyerhoff, Nick Mitchell, and Zach Schwartz-Weinstein critique the university as an institution that makes itself legible through shifting regimes of accumulation. Inspired by the work and analysis of abolitionist Ruth Wilson Gilmore (e.g.,

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1 Lee, Robert and Tristan Ahtone. 2020. “Land-Grab Universities: Expropriated Indigenous land is the foundation of the land-grant university system.” *High Country News*. March 30, 2020. <https://www.hcn.org/issues/52.4/indigenous-affairs-education-land-grab-universities>

2 Coulthard, Glen. 2014. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. University of Minnesota Press. 152.

*Golden Gulag*), they argue that historical cycles of global capital accumulation have continuously reconstituted the university as a malleable site to secure and mobilize surpluses of finance capital, land, labor, and state capacity.<sup>3</sup> Thus, what we see critiqued today as the “neoliberal university” is merely the most recent materialization of austerity and privatization, underwritten by Indigenous dispossession, settler coloniality, anti-Blackness, border imperialism, and racial capitalism. The University is mutually constituted through these social relations of colonial and imperial violence. It is a stabilizing force within the system of global accumulation. The full scale violence of white settler capital in the United States, and California specifically, would be unintelligible without it.

The UC cannot be saved, nor should it be reformed. As Audre Lorde tells us, “the masters’ tools will never dismantle the masters’ house.” Abolition is the only option.

**Abolish the UC** is a formation of BIPOC, queer, and first-generation graduate student workers and our accomplices, drawn together by shared visions and antagonisms. The University wasn’t made for us, nor is it the locus of our desires. Some of us have been fired and cast aside by the administration, while others wrestle with the discomfort of our own complicity and the understanding that we’ll soon face a future of debt with little hope of employment anyway. We’ve used this space as an opportunity to talk with one another and to tell each other how we got here: how we arrived at abolition; what we mean when we say it; and importantly, why it matters, especially for our communities. We have come together with stories to tell and with lessons learned. We know more are forthcoming, but we want to mark this moment with our words, because we are now consciously reimagining a world beyond the University.

We are here for many reasons, arriving from just as many different paths. We’ve come here from places of frustration, despair, hope, love, and inspiration. Exhausted by the patronizing language of so-called allies and the tokenization of our identities and struggles, we’ve found refuge among comradeship and community.

For first-gen and poor students of color in particular, the university conjures up feelings of cognitive dissonance. Commonly viewed as a site of refuge for those on the underside of capitalist society, the university banks (literally) on its myth of erudition and progress. Yet once they arrive, students are forced to conform to the folly of professionalism and the performance of class-belonging that are as discomfiting as they are false. Our feelings of uneasiness and anxiety are dismissed as maladjustment, to be remedied by acclamations and more conformity. This is our *sentipensar*, our holistic way of thinking with feelings

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3 Boggs, Abigail, Eli Meyerhoff, Nick Mitchell, and Zach Schwartz-Weinstein. 2019. “Abolitionist University Studies: An Invitation.” *Abolition University—studying within/against/ beyond the university*. [https://abolition.university/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Abolitionist-University-Studies\\_-An-Invitation-Release-1-version.pdf](https://abolition.university/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Abolitionist-University-Studies_-An-Invitation-Release-1-version.pdf)

bestowed on us by our ancestors. It is our way of recognizing that something is wrong, that we are conflicted — caught between the hopes and dreams of our community and the violent nature of the university we encounter once we arrive.

As we build towards strong and viable alternatives, we will count on those on the inside, the saboteurs and subversives. Until we have our alternatives, we will rely on accomplices and guides in the undercommons, while we conspire and protect one another. The University cannot be recovered because, as revolutionary Assata Shakur reminds us, “no one is going to give you the education you need to overthrow them. No one is going to teach you your true history, teach you your true heroes, if they know that knowledge will help set you free.”

Abolition is a political tradition — rooted in the tactics, ideas, and efforts to end slavery, colonialism, patriarchy and the nation-state. Abolition is a framework that asks us to radically reimagine institutions such as the UC, in light of the entity’s complicity with genocide, slavery and the military and prison industrial complexes. Resisting neoliberalism, dismantling capitalism, and class struggle at large transform within this abolitionist framework. Thinking and moving deeper and beyond, abolition asks us to make these intersectional, complex connections and to operate from a politic that renders oppressive systems obsolete by building radical and community-grounded alternatives. One example of this is the abolitionist work to close prisons and detention centers while building restorative systems of community care and transformative justice in their place. For the UC, this would mean dismantling the increasingly privatized, corporatized and militarized university — an institution that is itself already built on the foundational violence of settler colonialism, genocide, and slavery — while also creating new ways of knowing and educating each other. We follow the path of our abolitionist ancestors such as Harriet Tubman, WEB DuBois, and Frantz Fanon, as well as (r)evolutionary elders and teachers such as Angela Davis, Ruthie Gilmore, and Dean Spade. Historical movements such as the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) also guide this work, especially at the UC, as they envisioned and won a Third World College in 1969. As an ongoing struggle, we continue to be guided by the TWLF’s principles of self-determination, solidarity, and the creation of an education directly relevant to the needs of Black, Indigenous and POC communities.

However, more than a political vision of a world without prisons or policing, abolition is a project (or series of projects) of generative negation of the world as it exists, and of its racialized and gendered violences. Drawn from the Black Radical Tradition, abolition’s genealogy comes from hundreds of years of anti-colonial struggles against conquest, white supremacy, and racial capitalism. It exceeds the utility of the “political,” and forces us to grapple with the implication that abolition really might mean *abolishing everything*. In the face of this, what is a vision?

We propose to start with a feeling, a visceral one. A feeling of yearning to be *free from*. Of practicing freedom *in spite of*. Of finding freedom in each other. Of failing ourselves and each other often, and living in our imperfection. Of acknowledging what is incommensurable within and between our visions of freedom. Of lighting (metaphorical) fires and letting them spread without knowing if the world(s) we desire will be found in the ashes. Of anarchic practices of freedom that render unintelligible the “well-meaning” non-profit types who gatekeep our struggles and our dreams. Of these anti-political antagonisms against racialized policing and the State that escape the narrow language and politics of “organizing,” and the lofty “radical” academic theorizations of freedom.

To “Abolish the UC” goes beyond the reform-minded proposals to transform the UC into a worker-student coop, and beyond the now-ubiquitous calls from within student movements to “democratize” the University. *Democratize what? And for whom?* We realize that there is nothing to be gained from appealing to an ideal. As a social relation, the University is a site for the reproduction of the structural violences of settler colonialism and racial capitalism. The same institution exploits our labor, and forces students and workers into ever greater levels of precarity. Much like the institution of policing, it cannot be reformed, democratized, or “saved.” It is absolutely inseparable from state violence and capital accumulation, and serves to reproduce The World — the one dependent on the labor of the people whom it will not hesitate to teargas, fire upon, surveil, charge, and expel should they protest their conditions or refuse to work. We are not here to render the incommensurable commensurate. We are not interested in securing the futurity of the “public” and “democratic” university — whether as an institution, as a formation, as a structure, or a constellation of social and more-than-human relations. We will not resign “abolition” to the metaphorical. *Abolition is not a metaphor.*

Coalescing through the wave of labor and student organizing that kicked off within and beyond the UC system in 2019, we share common frustrations with the approaches, visions, and whiteness of the mainstream student movement. To “Abolish the UC” means resisting interpellation by white radicals who can’t hope to grasp the content (or even the form) of our desires. It means pushing back against the reformism of those “middle managers” of the struggle — liberals, social-democrats, and “socialists” — who retain an idealist investment in the University and their positions within it. And it means a steadfast antagonism to all forms of hierarchy, coercion, and control: to prisons, borders, property, and policing. Stopping short of imagining a world beyond the University — beyond the institutionalization of knowledge formation and praxis — is to resign ourselves to the logics of racial capitalism, accumulation, dispossession, settler colonialism, and anti-Blackness. We reject the limits of the University; we reject the University itself. Instead, we ask, *what exists beyond its horizons?*



We are interested in models of organizing, strategies, and tactics that refuse recuperation into the University's mechanisms of self-valorization. What strategies can we imagine that subvert and destabilize the structural relations on which this institution depends, rather than concretize them via the rhetoric of the "public university" or "democratizing the university"? What are strategies that instead center expropriation of resources that both systemically challenge accumulation while also ensuring the ability to support and center the communities most targeted by its violence?

There is no salvation for an institution invested in dispossession, deportation, and immiseration. The UC has destroyed communities that came before us and continues to enact violence on the people and communities to whom we are accountable. We've been left with no other option. This is why we say: **"Abolish the UC!"**

While we inhabit various levels of engagement and complicity with the University and its violences, we view our various positionalities as a means to expropriate resources and institutional access to serve the larger project of abolition. Academia is dangerously recuperative, so we aspire to remain forever (if imperfectly and incompletely) unintelligible and antagonistic to those who would have us compromise our desires for *something else*. **We're here to cause a fuckin ruckus.**

While we engage deeply with various ideas and theories, we do not aspire to form another banal academic journal for armchair radicals. *We do not want to be legible to the University. We want to destroy its gaze.* Our goal is to spark something different across the physical (and virtual) spaces of the colonial-capitalist University, widening and expanding the cracks in its foundation, and using its ruins as kindling for insurrectionary fires. Don't get it twisted: **this is a declaration of war.**

***Out of the seminars and into the streets!***

Love, rage, and solidarity always,

'Abolish the UC!'



*The signal fires from the third precinct in Minneapolis are clear: the end of this world is coming. The University of California will have no place in it.*

Abolish the UC agitprop poster from 2020, during the George Floyd Rebellion



Graffiti on the front of the UCOP building, following a protest through downtown Oakland

*Reflections from  
the Unfolding of  
the 2022 Strike*



# Against Strike Management

November 14, 2022

**Know your enemies on the picket line.** Fuck the University of California, the administration, the police, and the scabs. But also fuck the UAW union bureaucrats. They are here to manage unrest.

They are cowards hiding behind the rhetoric of ‘worker power’ while behind closed doors they work with the administration to stifle militancy and figure out how to rebrand major concessions as historic victories.

They fear retaliation almost as much as they fear proletarian struggle beyond their control. Powerless, they remain trapped between the threat of retribution from on high and the rumblings of proletarian revolt from below.

You, however, are not limited to their reticent and resigned methods. Keep the spirit of the wildcat alive. Now is the time to take action around all the things that piss you off and to do so in the ways you want, with your friends, comrades, and affinities.

**Strike, occupy, blockade, expropriate. More than anything: escalate.**

# There Is Nothing Special About What We Do

November 14, 2022

While the union bureaucrats try to appeal to liberal sensibilities, communists and anarchists should be cautious of the division of 'intellectual' and 'manual' labor. Support for this strike need not lapse into an avowal of this specifically capitalist organization and fragmentation of life. A cursory review of the sympathetic press makes this problem quite evident.

The issue is not how 'integral' is the labor of research, teaching, or grading to the university. The labor of janitors, food service workers, sanitation, construction, health care, landscaping and maintenance is no less critical to the reproduction of the university system. Likewise, the university would not exist were it not for dispossession of the land's original inhabitants, the gentrification of campus hinterlands, the violent policing of these borders and racially segregated regions, and the extraction of rents from its campus housing. Valorizing 'intellectual' labor as 'integral' not only erases the contributions of these other forms of exploitation and dispossession to the anodyne political economy of the university, it reaffirms the university as a sphere in which 'fairness', 'justice', autonomy, or liberation can be achieved. It is not. Its prosaic routines are the routines of capital. Its horizon is the horizon of capital.

**The point is this:** the UC is not fundamentally a system of higher education with a mandate for the public good. It is the largest landlord in California with some of the highest rents in the state. It is a sink for speculative capital's R&D investments. It is an asset manager with portfolios topping \$150 billion. It is an institutional mechanism to absorb and conceal the existence of a highly racialized and gendered surplus population - it hides this structural unemployment. As such, it offers a ready-made population of debtors subordinated to their future labor, but with no hope for a future. **Its essential function is the reproduction of the mutually antagonistic but mutually dependent relation between capital and labor.**

When viewed from the totality of social relations that the university itself reproduces, the strike reveals a different sort of practical critique. The issue is not 'fair wages' for the so-called 'integral' intellectual labor of the academic workforce, but that any of us are compelled to sell our labor-power at all, and that 'we' do so without equal footing, prestige, or support. **If there are any promising developments for struggle, they must be within and against the UC, against the university, against the separation of 'intellectual' and 'manual' labor, and against the capital-labor relation.**

# On the UAW Strike 2022: Some Thoughts from Comrades in So-called Santa Cruz

November 17, 2022

The corrosiveness of the university as a longstanding (settler) colonial-capitalist institution is hardly solved by the union and trade unionist strategy. Graduate students have been organizing for half a century and their condition has only gotten worse. **Sing-alongs and dancing to some corny-ass music won't get shit done.**

We are located at one of the most geographically unique campuses with only two-ways in and two-ways out and we are spending our time watching Brink's money trucks move in-and-out continuing to allow the free flow of capital that sustains the university. Along with the obvious example of capital being able to move through the campus with no issue, we have witnessed Costco semi-trucks, construction trucks, workers in "solidarity" that are bound by "no-strike" clauses in their contracts, dozens of tour buses full of prospective bond portfolios—we mean students—and of course the hundreds of scabs that come in the form of professors, administrators, staff, students, etc. who cross our picket line with no hesitation and no repercussion. All it takes is a simple "honk" and picketers cheer while the scabbing continues.

It seems that some fellow "strikers" are content with following the UAW's call to not engage in any unruly behavior or stir up any commotion by engaging in direct-actions because it "takes a lot of work to organize" or still fall on the excuse that it has been done "hundreds of times already." But we are here for all that. **We want all the fucking smoke with the university and their scabby cronies.** On the picket, day by day, we've seen UAW reps and their followers discourage and even actively police people calling for direct action and the taking of the streets, demonstrating that the union has become just another way that the university polices people. **The UAW wants people to be content with a simple pay raise, but know that the university's walls are dripping in blood.**

In 2020, we said "Fuck COLA, we want revenge!" and expropriated dining halls in order to feed ourselves when the university never gave a fuck if we ate or not. We stood side-by-side with our undocumented, Black, Queer, Trans, Indigenous comrades when grad students only gave a fuck about their lousy raise. We built coalitions with other communities in struggle both on and off campus, just to end up at the mercy of the UAW's ULP strike. Fuck all that! It was on this bullshit campus that we were able to inspire others to take a stand and take what's theirs throughout this bullshit state, yet here we are watching

some corny ass sing-alongs about how “UC is terrified” while the university thrives in the tameness of the UAW strike. **The UC is neither terrified nor worried about us because capital keeps on flowing thanks to the “soft” picket line upheld by UAW.** “If we don’t get it, SHUT IT DOWN” is a hollow chant, when the TWO entrances of UCSC—we repeat only TWO—remain open and keep the university prospering with business as usual. **We need militancy and oppositionality to activate the spirit of the wildcat to expand this struggle to different realms, instead of just continuing to ask for crumbs.** Let’s keep our commitments with our head held high and **foster the only possible relationship with the university: a criminal one!**



UC Police at the entrance of UC Santa Cruz, during the wildcat strike blockade of the campus



# Strike Means Strike: Report Back from the UC Davis Barricades

November 20, 2022

What became a week-long blockade of the Memorial Union bus terminal started off as just an idea to do a banner drop.

One afternoon the weekend of the strike, our affinity group decided to make a radical banner for what we assumed (correctly) would be a mostly anti-militant strike. Although we did not have a clear cut plan, we knew we wanted to gesture toward ideas of attack and action, and inspired by phrases like “Queer Means Attack,” we decided on the slogan “**Strike Means Strike.**” Finding a long piece of fabric and some paint was all that was needed to make the banner, and we finished it in just one afternoon, with most of that time spent letting it dry.

It was not until we got to the picket line the next day that our plans changed. When we arrived, we realized that the picketers were marching on and around the street, but were not blocking it. We decided then that instead of doing a banner drop, we would hold the street that the picketers had failed to shut down. After unfurling the banner and deploying some A-frames with anti-police messaging (defunding campus police is one of the UAW’s demands), we were immediately threatened by UAW strike captains in yellow vests. They yelled about how this “wasn’t civil disobedience,” and how they “didn’t have the training for that yet.” We were harassed and they threatened to cut our banner, but we met them only with stern silence, not letting them move us back. **They do not know how to respond to our silence, and we know that there is no use in debating them.**

**The union isolated us, moving the official picket away from our location and leaving us alone and exposed to potential danger from traffic.** We kept us safe. Scabs tried repeatedly to break through our line with their cars, at some points nearly running us over, but we stood with each other and kept each other safe. Comrades brought bikes over to reinforce the line, someone brought their car over, and someone even brought over a sound system to keep morale up through radical music. The road block had shut down access to the MU bus terminal for the entire day.

Our presence was established, and by the second day, our blockade grew while the picket line shrank. Grad students disillusioned with their union’s leadership came to us to help support our efforts. The yellow vests quickly came to remove anyone trying to affiliate with us. Despite this, on the second day, the union responsible for providing food at the picket line, UPTE, moved their grill onto the street behind us in solidarity. We turned the street

into a radical community space with chalking, music, and dancing. Some professors even joined their students in the sectioned off part of the street.

By the third day, our tactics were forced to change. The UAW, refusing to even be near us, coalesced their picket lines at another location. **Left entirely alone, we decided to build a barricade in order to create a physical barrier against potential vehicle threats.** We used an area of the street with a barrier already built in, an island with a sign on it, and we worked to build up and defend the other two spots. We moved heavy, steel, exercise equipment onto one side of the street, on which we fastened our banner, and on the other side, we set up rows of A-frames, bikes, and upside down trash cans. If a car got too close to our weaker side, the side without the big steel barricade, we'd need to move our bodies there as an additional deterrent.

By the fourth and final day (so far) of the blockade, we had learned that **mass and cover were the most important considerations when constructing a barricade.** We moved the big piece of athletic equipment again, covering it with a mesh in order to provide some level of visual cover. On the other side we moved another large piece of metal that bikes had been attached to earlier in the week and hitched a banner onto that. By the end of the day, we had also moved literal goalposts as well as a picnic table to reinforce that side. The barricade was so effective that we were able to leave a skeleton crew at that location, freeing up another crew to move across campus and shut down the other bus terminal using just their bikes.



“Communism + Anarchy” banner at the barricades at UC Davis

The fifth day of the strike, even though no blockade was constructed, the bus system never went past the Memorial Union bus terminal because of their fear that we could return and block it at any moment.

## **We learned many things through this experience:**

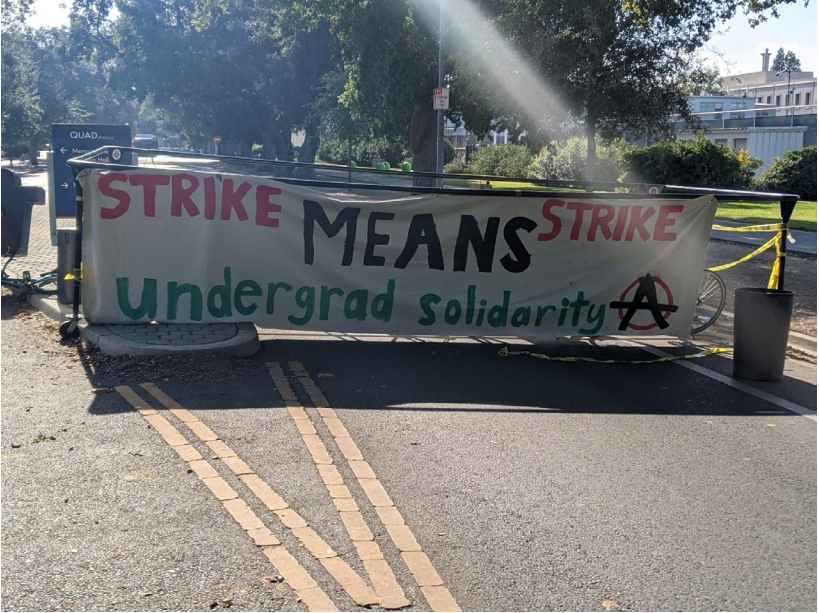
- **Build it, and they will come.** Most of this action was spontaneous, and many of the people that we grew to know on the barricade were initially strangers to us. People are fed up with the union's inability to fight. Every day, people would come to us asking us how they could help. Make friends through these spaces, and attack with them.
- **The importance of visual cover.** Visual cover isn't just important for making your barricade look imposing to cars, it can also help protect your identity. People love to film everything they can. We had umbrellas, but they frankly weren't enough a lot of the time. Large banners can be lifted to hide people if they're carried, or if they're on a barricade people can duck behind it to cover their faces.
- **Certainty of Steel.** The heavier and more intimidating an object, the better it is for the barricade. The less confident someone is they can break through a barricade without damaging their car, the better. That said, if you can't find large objects, stack lots of bikes next to each other. Flip over empty trash cans so people don't know they're empty. Cover things up so people don't know what's there. If you decide to blockade with a car, cover up license plates and identifiable markers with newspapers and tape.
- **Flow like water.** You do not need to repeat the same thing over and over again, and we would advise against it. Change your tactics over time. Attack different targets. See their choke points and take them over. Do not expose yourself more than necessary. Do not feel afraid to retreat if you need to, but do so in a safe controlled way. We chose a location that is impossible to kettle.

This coming Monday (11/21), we plan to revive the barricades at Davis and we hope to see more barricades erected at the other UC campuses. It only takes 8-10 people and some bicycles to shut down a whole block. Look for the most vulnerable choke points on your campus and strike. **Roll out the bikes, stand out in the road, begin to fill in the barricade with anything that can be brought out into the streets, and let no vehicle pass.**

*To the choke points!  
Strike means Strike!*



Barricade supported with football blocking sleds



Blockade and banner of main bus terminal and parking garage UC Davis

# The Wildcat is Dead, Long Live the Wildcat! A communique from “Santa Cruz”

November 21, 2022

The end of this past week brought with it the clear message that the students of UCSC, especially undergraduate students, are done fucking around with the current “soft-picket” tactics, that since Monday have allowed the UC to go on producing profit at the cost of student and workers lives. On Friday, the undergraduate energy, which started with a march from Quarry plaza, brought the East entrance of the university to a halt and gave those present a taste of the rage that people expressed in 2019-20 and that ignited the spark of revolt across all UC campuses. **Undergraduates are bringing the energy and have the desire to fight for more. Their labor gets exploited by the union leadership. They are the ones keeping the space alive.** They led the occupation of the main entrance, and their expressed rage proves that they will continue disruptions.

As the march neared the campus entrance and picket lawn, it was clear that the union leadership intended to dampen the spirit of the wildcat that animated the march. They tried to force people onto the lawn for another day of business as usual. Nonetheless, the energy stayed strong and students continued inching from the entrance of the campus onto the main road, eager to demonstrate the truth of the chant: “whose streets? Our Streets!”

It was clear that many of the union leadership had planned for the march to stay behind the intersection lines, which calls back to Cynthia Larive’s warning in 2019-20 that “students would only be protected if they remained within the bounds of the university.” Protected from whom? From the over \$300K a day worth of KKKops that the university brought onto the campus picket line three years ago. As the march on Friday slowly but surely moved into the intersection, **people were excited to once again say “Fuck the UC,” to an institution that everyday continues profiting from the exploitation and suffering of the students and workers who run it.**

The Union and the UC will continue working together to discredit and repress the rage and action of students who are sick of the same old bullshit, who are tired of watching UC admin and UC Regents fill their pockets with the debt that students and workers must then carry, and **done with the entire settler colonial and capitalist system that sustains the UC.** Friday was a clear indication that the pandemic has only heightened the need for these kind of militant actions that put fear into the hearts of the UC and call attention to the

fucked up tactics employed by unions like the UAW. **They care more about their “image” and their whack ass singular demand than they do about actually causing disruption—saying “fuck the UC”. They would rather maintain their rapport with the police than act upon the hollow chant “cops off campus” we have heard at the picket line.**

Yet, **the spirit of the wildcat** is active in sites such as UC Davis, where comrades have continued to uphold a barricade that not only physically creates a barrier in the free flow of capital but also marks a stark line in the sand. On the one hand, it exposes the cowardly counterinsurgent tactics of UAW Strike Captains. On the other, it demonstrates the principled actions that can expand the struggle beyond a raise for graduate students. The counterinsurgency tactics of the Strike Captains to prevent the spirit of the wildcat to spread by discouraging participation of upholding the barricade and promoting the merry-go-round of monotonous baseless chants underscores the importance to stay organized and committed to staying dangerous.

**The spirit of the wildcat** is also present in UC Santa Barbara where comrades have continued dropping banners that read “Long Live the Wildcat!”, “Land Back”, “Fuck Cops”, and have extended solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle against white settler colonial violence. Transterritorial solidarity networks are critical for those of us committed to communities in struggle. Those of us who are concerned with the violences that racial-patriarchal capitalism imposes on a day-to-day basis on racialized and criminalized communities salute the militancy of comrades at UCSB.

Comrades, if you find yourselves feeling isolated and disappointed in what is occurring in your site of struggle due to the counterinsurgent tactics of UAW strike captains, **remember that you are not alone.** They will tell us that we can only express our desire for crumbs and only hold an official UAW “Un-fair Labor Practice” sign, **but we remain ungovernable as anti-capitalists, anti-racist, anti-colonial, anti-sexists, and committed to communities in struggle.** We know that the university bureaucrats will work with UCPD and Student Conduct/Judicial officers to target “leaders” and prosecute them with asinine charges. We have to remember to stay dangerous by moving smart and to stay two steps ahead of the repressive machine that works to divide us. **Let’s find ourselves among the faces in the crowd and continue to expand this beyond merely asking for crumbs.**

**Long Live the Wildcat!**

# Abolish the UC! From the UCSB Dining Commons Liberation<sup>1</sup>

November 22, 2022

## *Who are we?*

We are an **autonomous collective** of students fighting to transform the conditions of the university as we know it. We are demanding an education that centers our lives, not profit for our bosses and their military & corporate buddies. Rather than pay the university at every turn - from your food to your shelter, your books to your lectures, all funded by student debt - we invite you to think of an alternative structure, one where knowledge is free and for our common interest.

**This dining Commons belongs to you.**

**This university belongs to you.**

## *Why are we here?*

Our abolitionist message is that we want an entirely new and different structure. We want to free the resources that should be ours in the first place. **Swipe-free, tuition-free, police-free**, we are not joking about a free university. By liberating a dining hall, we pay direct homage to the Black Panthers' Free Breakfast Program, and student protestors in 2020 who saw a Cost of Living Adjustment as necessary not just for graduate student workers, but for all. We want to end food insecurity, rent burden, and worker exploitation. In doing so, we must dismantle the Indigenous dispossession, settler colonialism, anti-Blackness, imperialism, racial capitalism, and neoliberalism that underwrites the UC's prosperity.

## *What is our relationship to the current strike?*

UC academic workers are currently engaged in the largest university-based strike in US history. Their demands are simple:

- a: Cost of living adjustment,**
- b. adequate access to housing,**
- c: safe working environment.**

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1            Much of the text used in this zine has been copied from the insightful work of many of our abolitionist comrades. Read their work to learn more! "Abolish the University of California: A (Dis)Orientation Guide"; "Abolitionist Group Makes Dining Hall Free at UC Davis"; "Boggs, Meyerhoff, Mitchell and Schwartz Weinstein, "Abolitionist University Studies: An Invitation"; "Moten and Harney, "The University: Last Words"

The UC has, unsurprisingly, proven itself incapable of meeting these basic demands, even in the face of thousands of teaching assistants, tutors, readers, and researchers withholding their labor.

**We are in solidarity with these academic workers' demand for a Cost of Living adjustment**, and for their community safety demands that include the call to defund the university police”

### *Why do we hate the UC?*

The modern university, and the UC with it, is founded upon and underwritten by Indigenous dispossession, settler colonialism, anti-Blackness, imperialism, racial capitalism, and neoliberalism.

**It would not exist** were it not for the theft of the lands of the Ohlone, Nisenan, Patwin, Tongva, Chumash, Kumeyaay, Acjachemen, Miwok, Cahuilla, Luiseño, and Serrano peoples, nor the sale of other Indigenous lands in the land-grab (“land grant”) process afforded by the Morrill Act.

**It would not exist** without the investment from the military-industrial complex, manifest in decisions such as the UC’s agreement to manage and operate the Los Alamos National Laboratory, where the atomic bomb was created.

The University promises that the degree it confers will bring social mobility, when for many the only certainty is the accumulation of an often unpayable debt. While many others profit - the student loan industry, the college sports complex, the pharmaceutical industry, and the corporate service providers to whom services are outsourced - others, such as academic student employees or contingent faculty, contend with unlivable wages and lack of job security. The university is, then, a “dirty business and a state apparatus,” it is a “credential granting front for finance capitalism and a machine for stratification” (Moten and Harney). It reproduces and enables the fundamental inequalities that we experience under neoliberal capitalism.

*The university never gave a fuck about us.* That much is as clear as ever. The question is: **do you?**

### *What do we mean by “Abolish the UC”?*

Abolition is a political tradition - rooted in the tactics, ideas, and efforts to end slavery, colonialism, patriarchy and the nation state. Abolition is a framework that asks us to radically reimagine institutions such as the UC, in light of the entity’s complicity with genocide, slavery, and the military and prison industrial complexes.



What would it take to build a place of learning that does not rely upon BIPOC oppression and the extraction of value from you at every turn?

### **Let's start with a free meal**

*What do I do now?*

#### **Ditch Class**

Every class that continues to be taught while thousands of teaching assistants withhold their labor is an attempt to break their strike. Help TAs shut down the university by ditching your classes, leaving lecture halls and classrooms even emptier than they already are.

#### **Make friends**

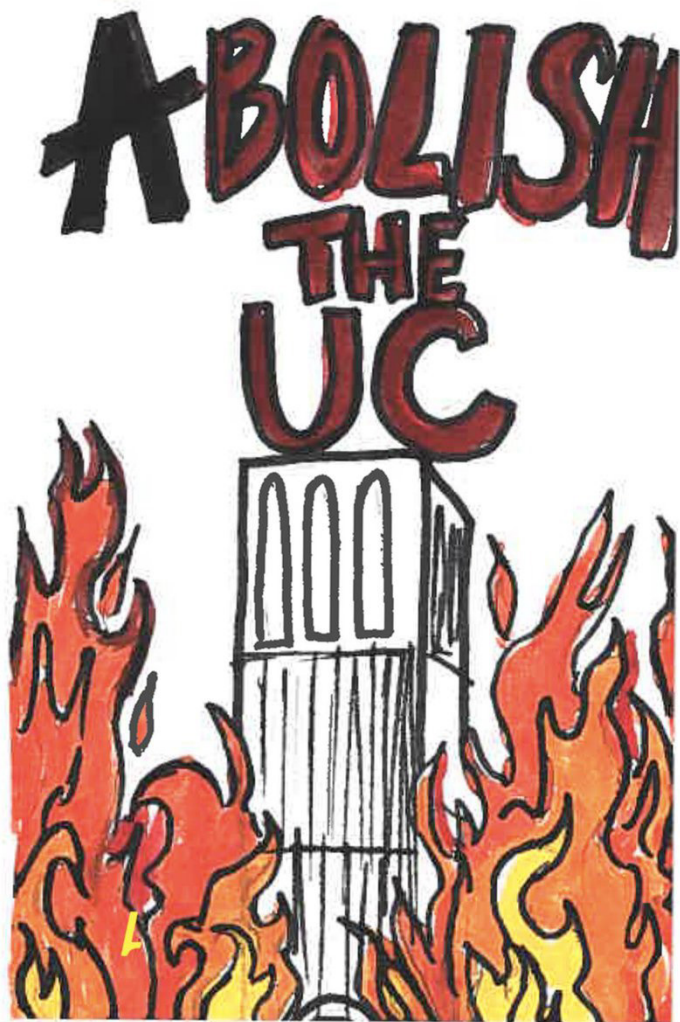
Join the picket line and make friends. Get to know your community and the power and resources that you hold in collectivity. Talk about the strike and abolition, learn and dream about radical action, and build a better world together.

#### **Spread the strike**

The current strike is a crack in the UC system, offering us a glimpse into its deep structural inequality. Spread the strike, split open the system, and abolish the UC!



“All Smiles, No Swipes” - UC Santa Barbara dining hall liberation



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Artwork from Abolish UCSB zine distributed at dining occupation



Artwork from Abolish UCSB zine distributed at dining occupation



Artwork from Abolish UCSB zine distributed at dining occupation

# Dining Commons - Feed the People - A message from a free Latitude dining commons<sup>1</sup>

November 22, 2022

This dining commons belongs to you (it's right in the name: *commons*, something held in common by a community). This university belongs to you. For as long as it lasts, it belongs to everyone. It runs on the labor, research & study of students, workers, & staff. Bureaucratic administrators have one function: to exploit that labor & research. They exist to underpay workers, treat students as clients & customers, & build a wall between the campus & the community that they also rip off as landlords. This exploitation is such an unpopular idea that they need an armed wing to make it work or everyone would laugh at them. That's the cops. Today we do this act of common-making in solidarity with everyone who is food insecure, rent-burdened, & everyone whose research & labor is exploited including those striking for a better contract. We are in solidarity with their demand for a COLA & their community safety demands that include the call to defund the university police. Have a meal; it's yours



"Everything for Everyone" - from the UC Davis liberation of the dining commons



UC Davis Chancellor's mansion, 'redecorated'



Entrance to UC Davis, redecorated

# Wildcats Take Care Of Each Other

## Report back from the UCSB picket

November 23, 2022

All smiles, no swipes.

Free the dining halls. Free the resources that should be **ours** in the first place. The UC manufactures poverty and crisis for workers **AND** students. If the UC aims to create a public education, then *why are students forced to choose between attending class or working part-time just to get by?* **To our undergraduate comrades**, we feel your solidarity and recognize that our struggles are intertwined.

Let's reimagine what public education could be. Living wage? **Sure thing.** Cops? **We don't need them.** Free food? **Of course.**

Dear strikers,

Every day we spend on the picket, we confront the crisis and poverty that the UC creates for workers. As graduate students, we have demanded a **cost of living adjustment (COLA)** that would bring us out of rent burden, since many of us pay half or more of our salary in rent. This was the failure of the 2018 contract, and led to the monumental wildcat strikes of 2019. The UC's response to our demands has been beyond insufficient. Despite their promises, **the university has failed to provide adequate housing for both undergraduate and graduate students** while admitting more and more students every year. The result is a saturated housing market with ever-increasing rents, stagnant wages that fail to keep up with inflation, and the exploitation of graduate workers. We cannot let these demands fall short again,

Given these circumstances, it's discouraging to find that our **bargaining team has dropped the COLA demand** with a narrow majority **AGAIN**. If this is indeed the strongest strike in the history of higher education, why are we conceding when **our movement is only growing stronger?** The fact is, **WE HAVEN'T EVEN WITHHELD GRADES YET**. Faculty solidarity grows by the day. Undergraduates are joining the picket line. We have the **most leverage** we've had in years **right now!** The university has not felt the full force of the strike. We need to keep our momentum growing and be prepared to continue our strike indefinitely until we reach a favorable settlement.

In the meantime, we should be conscious of the potential pressure on UAW staff members coming from UAW leadership to cut short the strike in order to save on costs as it happened in Columbia. As Rank and File members of this union we must pressure not only the UC but also our UAW representatives to **NOT give up the fight for a COLA**. The resolution of the ongoing ULP is

**NOT** an achievement if it does not guarantee us a **LIVING WAGE** that recognizes housing as part of workers' rights.

**We're 48,000 workers strong, but only if we stay united.**

So, **comrades,**

**Know your enemies, find your people.**

The radical potential of the **largest academic worker strike** in U.S. history dies in the hands of UAW bureaucrats and we are reminded that no amount of striking will save an institution built on **land theft, carceral logics, and worker exploitation**. As UAW concedes on critical points, including a COLA, and our own colleagues peace police the picket, marches, and even our chants, the spirit of the **WILDCAT** lives with us. Across campus, sparks ignite and catch like wildfire. While our union fails us, the UC exploits us, and our colleagues police us, we are reminded that fire is life. **Find your people, light the spark, protect it together.**

**The cops won't save us. The bureaucrats won't save us. We save each other.**



"No Cops, No Borders, No Chancellors" - from the UCSB picket





! Everything 4 @  
@ everyone  
Nothing 4 us!

Artwork from Abolish UCSB zine distributed at dining occupation

# ¡DIGNA RABIA! Views from Below and to the Left: Notes from UCSB

November 23, 2022

To the disenchanting UC graduate students,

To the fugitive mapaches assembling lines of revolt,

The barricade at UC Davis was the first ¡ya basta! of the so-called “unconcerted” activity of the “ULP” strike. And many of us heard it from the trincheras at UC Santa Barbara, as the chatters of the picket line began to fear such actions. In the last week, we have witnessed from afar (or in our own geography) the taking to the streets, the liberation of dining commons to feed students, and the anger toward the UAW bargaining team conceding language on COLA. These radical activities and their flowering have prompted us all to an invitation: ditch class, make friends, and spread the strike! These autonomous actions are an emergence of not only dissent but a call for graduate students to realize the labor “movement” they are now entangled in as strikers need to escalate and become part of abolitionist horizons, and some have called it anarchy and communism. Others might call it decolonization. For those provoked by such words, you might say “another university is possible.” To whichever expression calls to you, there is no room for respectability. We are in struggle for our lives as student-workers. The spontaneous or organized militancy for joy, food, community, and action is the sign of a dignified rage for a dignified life. The UC recognizes neither but to silence its existence with concessions, cultural centers, DEI initiatives, and cohorts of POC students who become rent-burdened and drop out sooner or later. It shouldn’t be a surprise that the most marginalized are demanding COLA and taking the means of the strike into their own hands.

None of this is new. The UAW-authorized strike opened the doors to a history of struggle, where the wildcats of 2019-20 came out of the shadows to agitate us all into not accepting anything less than our lives. New generations and cohorts of disgruntled graduate students are chanting from the margins: “cops off campus,” “land back,” “no cops, no borders, no chancellors,” as the words ring against the symbolic shouting of the yellow-vest managed picket lines. The paternalism of UAW organizers demands the subservience of undergraduates who desire to be in solidarity. The patronizing of the UAW organizers is nothing less than management and control of agitation. What is a strike if we are not striking back in full force? What is a strike at the UC if we won’t hold the line for the bare minimum of a COLA? For the UAW to tremble at the sight of autonomous action is to fear the people whose struggle is for life. We have nothing to lose but our grades.

The Zapatistas (an insurgent group of Maya rebels) from autonomous municipalities in Chiapas, México call this capitalist world-system *la finca global*. This global plantation is permanent war. This war is researched, funded, and sustained by the war-machine we call the UC. The university as we know it must be abolished: for it is the rational and material infrastructure for the destruction of Earth, of human life, and of animal and plant existence. From its shell, we might locate the hope for a place of knowledge-in-common against destruction. And if it does not exist, we will build it together. From all corners of the UC system, there exists collectives, organizations, and individuals planning Earthseed. They are building another world in the cracks of the university. They are the ones distributing free zines. They are the ones preparing food for strikers. They are the ones hosting workshops. They are the ones building barricades. They are the ones liberating dining commons. They are the ones yelling with all their heart: “no COLA, no contract!” The sounds and actions of autonomous activities are felt in the soul of our discontent. The wildcat in us all can topple the UC war-machine in the spirit of abolitionist world-making!

We all heard it loud and clear from the dining commons on Tuesday from autonomous collectives: ***Everything for everyone! Nothing for us! The university belongs to you!***

Multiply, proliferate, and flower autonomous direct-action! These are the radical encounters where graduate students, undergraduates, workers, and subversive professors re-imagine the university: a people’s university for all—without degrees, without debt, without hunger, without rent. And in that time, we feel the friendship, joy, and conviviality of our being-together-in-common, however temporary.

Compañerxs: do not lose hope! Fuck concessions! Hold the line! Rebellion is life; submission is death! Build a network of friends! Tear down the walls of capital! Abolish the UC!

We all felt the fear of the wildcat then and now from the union bureaucrats and local organizers. We yell from the banners dropping: Become unreasonable! Become non-negotiable! And to the bureaucrats, union organizers, and yellow-vests reading this: fear the dignified rage of the people!

Let it ring on the picket line—from the margins, the barricades, and the liberated commons:

***¡Alerta! ¡Alerta! ¡Alerta que camina! ¡La lucha por la vida es la lucha colectiva!***

# Everything is a Metaphor: When a Picket Becomes a Spectacle

November 30, 2022

Taking to the streets with hundreds of people can be a transformative thing. But to what ends?

*“Shut it Down!”* indeed.

With the sheer magnitude of self-aggrandizing rhetoric emanating from UAW bureaucrats, official social media accounts, and the endless email updates framing significant concessions as ‘wins,’ all gears seemed primed for ending the strike as quickly as possible with a mediocre contract. In this climate, everything is a metaphor, a spectacular copy of a copy of a copy that might have meant something once, if only symbolically.

Monday’s “The Strike Continues” rally in Oakland was a grand exercise in patting ourselves on the back for...the simple act of being there. Mobilize! Right? In the early afternoon, over 1000 people gathered in Snow Park, the bulk of the crowd was graduate workers from UCB, with smaller contingents traveling from UCSF and UCD. Various supporters from other local unions and ‘community groups’ were also in attendance. Below the sea of identical, blue and white UAW ULP Strike placards (designed to look as boring as possible), the atmosphere was energetic and celebratory.

The rally was just as you might expect: largely inaudible and parroting feel-good, non-controversial talking points. Typical of the majority of graduate workers who see their labor as unique and special, much of the focus seemed to be on wanting to return to their oh-so-important vocations in teaching and research. “We shouldn’t have to be here!” chastised those who seek to return the warm embrace of the University and its promise of class mobility. If only the UC came to the bargaining table in good faith, we would happily return back to our assigned roles in our beloved institution of colonial-capitalist accumulation.

*“What do we want? A Fair Contract!”*

Large segments of the crowd seemed to delight in these “rah rah rah” speeches and fiery slogans from the curated speaker lineup of union leadership and selected graduate workers. Also invited to express their support and share in the spectacle were local labor ‘leaders,’ including the Oakland Education Association’s Keith Brown, and Oakland’s police-friendly ‘progressive’ mayor-elect Sheng Thao. All were welcome to partake in this carnival of self-congratulation.

Typical of our esteemed leadership's penchant for top-down management and mediated dissent, the crowd was instructed to follow their truck and many were handed a union-approved list of non-threatening chants. "*We're gonna go over there and get really loud!*". As the march snaked down Harrison, our yellow-vested saviors and dedicated brigades of bicycle warriors made sure to keep us safe from actually disrupting much of anything.

Turning the corner down 12th street down to Franklin, the crowd began to swarm into the intersection, briefly blocking traffic. As UAW leadership worked diligently to set up for the next rally in front of UCOP, the crowd boomed:

***"If we don't get it, Shut it Down!"***

After about ten minutes of vigorous chanting, we were instructed to leave the intersection to listen to the (again inaudible) speakers placating the crowd with symbolic platitudes. The perimeter was secure. Approximately one half of the 1100 block of Franklin Avenue was "shut down"... for, all in all, about twenty-five minutes. Emboldened by the fiery metaphors, the march miraculously--and 'safely'--blocked both sides of Harrison on the short march back to Snow Park. After yet another short rally, the now-drained crowd began to drift away, heading back to their overcrowded and overpriced housing units in rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods across the Bay Area and beyond.

***"One day longer, one day stronger!" "We'll be back!"***

I'm not here to litigate the motivations of attendees. Or talk shit just for the sake of talking shit. I'm aware that some find these things meaningful if only collectively as catharsis. But I have questions as to what the fuck we're actually fighting for. Because if all you want is a "fair work environment" and a better paycheck, then say that.

As I write this, UAW 2865 is in bargaining, and the UC will potentially bring a wage proposal to the table. And the postdocs and academic researchers have already reached a tentative agreement. Despite the constant cries of "shutting it down," whatever substandard agreement is reached will likely be celebrated as winning a "COLA." And maybe that's just what this whole thing has been about. Behind the lip-service paid to the "optional" "social justice" demands, lies a majority that seeks little more than to regain access to the professional career trajectories they were promised. The tenured faculty, adjunct lecturers, and highly paid industry scientists of tomorrow taking back their rightful place.

So sure. Call me a cynic. Or a hater. But I'm tired of being gaslit into unquestioning support for whatever the fuck *this* is. As much as their cronies protest that this is not a "wildcat strike" or a "2020 style riot," those of us that dwell in the cracks of the University, *from below and to the left*, have deeper com-

mitments, illegible to those who read *The Wretched of the Earth* as a metaphor rather than a threat.

A moment of brightness: unknown comrades taped up a banner “No COLA, No Contract,” and “UCOPs Off Campus,” in front of the UCOP building, replete with imagery of a molotov cocktail emblazoned with “COLA.” A metaphor not so easily recuperated. Echoes of #Cola4all and deeper and more expansive abolitionist and anti-colonial horizons might persist beneath the surface of this spectacle after all! As our comrades at UCD and UCSB have shown us, the spirit of the wildcat lives on; *our only task, then, is to act.*

So, before this brief moment of possibility has been eclipsed, let’s push things along as far as we can, with the homies we trust. Beyond empty metaphors and symbolism, *let’s really shut this whole fuckin thing down, together.* Or, at the very least, steal, sabotage, and take care of each other in ways that disrupt the colonial land-grant, real estate corporation, that is the UC.



“No Cola, No Contract” - from the front of UCOP building

# Re-emergence and Eclipse of the Proletariat

by disaffected communists

December 1, 2022

## **‘We’ are not the union**

The union bureaucrats are patting themselves on the back. As the UC strike is followed by a strike of part-time faculty at the New School and strike authorization vote of 99% from graduate workers at Temple University, the leadership of UAW 2865, UAW 5810, and SRU-UAW have been indicating that they believe this strike to be the crown jewel of the current ‘strike wave’ of late 2022. In recent weeks, over 100 Starbucks locations have gone on strike as part of the #RedCupRebellion of Starbucks Workers United, workers at Peet’s Coffee locations have initiated a unionization drive, and Kaiser Permanente reached a tentative agreement with California Nurses Association that provides stronger protections for nurses and patients, narrowly averting a strike by more than 21,000 nurses. The looming threat of a national railway strike just in time for holiday season has nudged both the White House and Congress into panic mode, as both wings of the Party of Capital (including beloved democratic socialists) work to avert catastrophe and ‘save the economy’. This ‘new strike wave’, already heralded as one of the most significant in US history, appears to be firmly anchored in the non-manufacturing sector—e.g., food service, healthcare, education, transportation. Thus, the mandate to ‘build worker power’ coming on high from union leadership seems to be a clarion call with a firm foundation in reality.

We want to examine the matter more closely. While it may be easy to intoxicate ourselves with the elixir of ‘working class power’ when spending day in and day out on the picket line, it is not the panacea that the union sells it as. At the risk of hyperbole, we might even suggest that, when handled by a union bureaucracy, ‘worker power’ is a snake oil. We need only consider the last several years of struggle in the United States for this problem to crystallize before our eyes.

First, a note on some terminology. By ‘workers’ movement’ we mean essentially the ‘labor movement.’ We distinguish this from the proletariat, which is not reducible to the working class or organized labor. Proletarians are, simply put, the dispossessed: those without unmediated access to means of subsistence or means of production. Many proletarians are forced to sell their labor-power for a wage in order to meet basic conditions of survival. Others are not so (un) lucky. Thus, not all proletarians are ‘working class’ in the narrow sense of the

term. The proletariat is a far more motley and uneven composition in which the only shared condition is dispossession. For this reason, proletarian struggle is not and has never been limited to the labor movement. The restructuring of the capital-labor relation over the last half century has important implications for the form that struggle takes. We will consider that in more depth briefly.

What has been more impressive than the recent modest uptick in strike activity is the recent spike in the tendency to leave the ‘workforce’ entirely. This trend, which has its roots in the 2008 financial crisis, exploded into a generalized refusal to work under pandemic conditions. The so-called ‘Great Refusal’, alongside firms’ attempts to ramp up production across disrupted supply chains, appears as a ‘tight labor market’ and helps to capacitate workplace strikes by giving workers better bargaining positions. This helps to explain, for example, recent historic unionization in the service sector. Beneath this unionization drive, however, lies the growing gap between the under- and unemployed—a growing surplus population—and the ‘working class’ organizations (unions, the DSA, Jacobin editors, the Progressive Caucus of the Democratic Party) that claim to represent a resurgent labor movement and, through them, the proletariat as a whole.

## Strike and counter-strike

A pessimist might argue that the attention and laudability attributed to ‘strike waves’ is imbued with the substance of counterinsurgency in the wake of the George Floyd Rebellion. This, after all, was a *far more* historically significant wave of social unrest, the form and content of which pointed *away* from work and its affirmation and toward direct conflict with the state and expropriation of the means of survival. It was also *racialized*. It was this early character of the rebellion as a fluid, dispersed conflict over the terms of survival and social reproduction—brought about by the breakdown in the relationship between the reproduction of capital and the reproduction of the proletariat, aggravated by the pandemic, and set off by the racialized policing of the crisis—that made it difficult to manage for the brokers and arbiters of ‘working class’ identity. They of course did manage to insert themselves—in the streets, in city council meetings, in progressive caucuses—and in the course of a year historic black-led proletarian revolt had been eclipsed by the ‘return of labor’, the election of the ‘most pro-union president of our lifetimes’, and the subsequent ‘strike waves’, much parroted by union administrators and labor journalists as the most significant since the 1940s peak.

This apparent passage, from ‘disorganized’ rioting, mass looting, expropriation, criminality, and clashes with the state, provoked by the racialized dejection, disaffection, and desertion *from* the workplace, to a resurgent, emboldened, united, and respectable formal labor movement, disguises the far more general *decline* of the strike, of unions, and workers organizations as such. While, in



the course of a few years, the recent ‘strike waves’ have come to represent the tactical and strategic summit of the workers movement, they do so against the background of a half-century long downturn in strike activity, unionization, and ‘worker power’.<sup>1</sup> The general decline in the rate of profit by the mid 1960s, the oil crises, currency shocks, and stagflation of the 1970s—in short, the end of capital’s Long Boom—and the subsequent decades of economic stagnation and punctuated speculative bubbles brought about significant restructuring in the composition of capital, the capital-labor relation, and the allocation of capital and labor among different sectors of the economy. The result was the decoupling of capitalist production from proletarian reproduction: the shedding of labor from organized and highly-capitalized manufacturing sectors, the expansion of employment in ‘services’ and non-manufacturing, increased racialized and gendered fragmentation and exploitation of labor, and the growth of ‘redundant’ populations—resulting in the increased informalization and criminalization of proletarian life. In the collapse of the ‘workers movement’, initiated when these tendencies began to characterize the US economy as a whole, a wave of racialized unrest seized those regions abandoned by capital (and, by extension, ‘labor’). This character of social conflict has only been intensified in the most recent cycles of struggle.

## **The curtain has drawn closed on the era of the union**

This dance between the ‘formal’ working class and the messiness of real proletarian existence is nothing new. So let us detour into a very abbreviated history of the classical workers movement in the United States and investigate its limits in the present moment. Regarding the racialization of class conflict, the historical record of the US labor movement—unions especially—is not great, to say the least. Black workers, both in the lead up to the Civil War and during and after the struggle over Reconstruction, were routinely constructed by white workers and their organizations as an abject threat to class solidarity. Idleness and latent criminality were the tropes mobilized to exclude black proletarians from the workers’ movement. During the first half of the 20th century, as the American Federation of Labor (AFL) defeated the Knights of Labor as the representative of the American ‘working class,’ later absorbing the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) to become the AFL-CIO, white animosity and antiblack violence (‘race riots’) were routine features in the constitution of the labor movement. During the Great Depression, both the “New Deal” (Biden’s and Bernie’s alleged inspiration for their new era of American labor) and the Popular Front strategy of the Comintern infamously compromised black agrarian workers, dispossessing them from southern agriculture for decades before they could be (partially) absorbed by the industrial recovery of World War II and the post-war economic expansion. The resulting waves of migration

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1 For the best historical analysis of this trend, see Jason Smith, “‘Striketober’ and Labor’s Long Downturn”: <https://brooklynrail.org/2021/12/field-notes/Striketober-and-Labors-Long-Downturn>

into both northern and southern manufacturing belts led to growing industrial militancy among black workers,<sup>2</sup> despite their being relegated by unions to the lowest skilled positions, if they were able to join industrial unions at all. These positions were the first to be automated, as waves of deindustrialization hit black proletarians first and hardest, leading to the growth of what autoworker and UAW member (and critic) James Boggs called the ‘black underclass’.<sup>3</sup>

Around this same time, following an earnestly massive strike wave in 1945–1946 as a glut of workers returned to stagnant industries in the immediate aftermath of WWII, congress passed the Taft–Hartley Act with bipartisan support. The ostensible representatives of the working class signed anti-communist pledges and began purges of real or suspected members of the Communist Party (if they had not already done so—the AFL was notoriously anti-communist). These twin features—anti-blackness and anti-communism—conditioned the so-called ‘Golden Age’ of US capitalism (i.e., the Long Boom) and the golden age of US labor movement (union membership peaked in 1955, the year that the AFL and CIO merged).

The remainder of the story might be more familiar, as policing and incarceration were offered as the only ‘solutions’ to a crisis of growing black unemployment, dispossession, unrest, and rebellion. ‘Criminality’ entered the popular lexicon. Labor organizations, experiencing declining membership and revenue as deindustrialization, deskilling, and labor shedding caught up with the remainder of the workforce, strengthened their appeal to the ‘wages of whiteness.’ Baited into the debate between ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ poor lest they bear the weight of anti-union reaction, they turned on the ‘black underclass’ whose exclusion from the labor force they had themselves facilitated. The reaction, of course, still came. Unionization rates precipitously fell. Racialized incarceration precipitously climbed.

The historical inheritance can be found today: while the professional leftists praise the new labor movement they simultaneously decry ‘crime waves,’ including the uptick of decentralized mass lootings<sup>4</sup> across the United States in the lead up to Black Friday 2021.<sup>5</sup> This attempt to distinguish labor from the ‘criminal’ elements of the proletariat reveals the gap between the growing surplus population and the unionizing workforce as a racialized exclusion—the construction of a ‘virtuous’ labor movement is only possible through the banishment and dejection of the ‘black underclass.’ The ‘service sector’—the only sector of the economy to experience any meaningful employment growth

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2 See, for example, the history of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM): <https://libcom.org/article/drum-vanguard-black-revolution>

3 James Boggs, *The American Revolution: Pages from a Negro Worker's Notebook*.

4 This is in reference to a series of tweets in late 2021 from the ‘antifascist’ journalist Chad Loder, which have since been removed and their account suspended, in which they praise ‘Striketober’, on the one hand, and condemn crime and looting on the other.

5 It should be noted that much of this occurred throughout California, with its extremely high cost of living.

since the Great Recession—is disproportionately racialized and feminized.<sup>6</sup> It also remains the center of recent unionization efforts. Yet, by valorizing only ‘formal’ worker organization and treating the ‘working class’ as a moral rather than objective category, this level of concrete differentiation and class experience is thrown aside and erased in the pursuit of building a unified ‘working class’ identity that is mediated only by acting through the ‘appropriate’ channels of struggle. Though union bureaucrats and professional leftists might be too careful and trained in DEI to explicitly deploy racial animus (can’t lose those journalism contracts and paid positions), they still appeal to a ‘class unity’ that in actual practice is achieved through racialization and heteropatriarchy, contrasting and opposing it to ‘criminality,’ anarchy, and destitution and thereby breathing new life into the ideological conflict between ‘undeserving’ and ‘deserving’ poor.

## **The shadow of the ivory tower**

In the education sector, where the only real function of academic labor is the reproduction of the relation between capital and labor, it is true that strikes occupy a strategic position in the social division of labor. This is perhaps more the case in public sector K-12 education than in a prestigious and selective ‘public Ivy’ research institution like the University of California, but as the university in general has become more of a central instrument in the production and regulation of an indebted and precariously employed relative surplus population, major strikes in ‘higher education’ cannot and should not be dismissed.

Given the university’s integration into its surrounding political economy and geography, as hubs for research and development in STEM fields, as major landlords and employers, and as buoys to demand for the growing service sector, the lustrous facade of campus life is never far from the displaced and dejected, from the crumbling infrastructure of the hinterlands to the logistical networks of major sea, air, and rail ports to the healthcare hubs of every major city. The professionalized life of the university casts a long shadow in the form of the proletariat. Seething animosity is never that far. On the campus itself, student life has become more restive, especially since the 2008 crisis has meant rising tuition and debt and declining prospects for stable employment. The descending ceiling has met an unyielding floor. It is for this reason that, over the course of the last several decades, ‘leftist’ organizing has retreated to college campuses from historical centers in manufacturing and extractive regions. This organizing has generally reflected the sequence of struggle of which it is a part.<sup>7</sup> Viewed in this light, it is not surprising that in 2020 uprisings blossomed adjacent to nearly every University of California campus and in college towns large

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6 See Smith.

7 E.g., the 2009-2010 university occupations provoked by tuition hikes and austerity that preceded the Occupy movement, the Disarm campus police campaigns in the wake of the Ferguson Rebellion, or most recently the Defund and Cops Off Campus campaigns following the murder of George Floyd and the riots of 2020.

and small. But it is these very same conditions, which form the basis for the resurgent left seen across the spectrum of student life, that constitute the limit of campus organizing and the poverty of student life in general. Student life is *not* a microcosm or distillation of all the contradictions of the colonial-capitalist hellworld, but largely removed and insulated from its misery and violence.<sup>8</sup> The 'left' that has re-emerged on campuses in recent years is as a result largely out-of-touch and highly attenuated. It is vulnerable to recuperation.

## **Make the example overflow from the university**

This is how and why we find ourselves skeptical, not of the strike itself, but of its management by both union officials and rank-and-file leftists and socialists who uncritically adopt the narrative of 'worker power' and 'worker-student solidarity', without any clear material content. The task, rather, is to understand the conditions of possibility and the limits of this strike. For the rank and file, it is clear that the longer it lasts and the more expansive its results, the greater the economic impact will be on the UC and thus the greater the bargaining leverage. But for us, as disaffected communists, to spread the strike and to generalize its disruption in the daily functions of the university is to interrupt not only the reproduction of the university as an institution, with its ledgers, deadlines, budgets, and balance sheets, but the reproduction of this particular social division of labor and of the capital-relation itself.<sup>9</sup>

The task then is to generalize the strike, first by troubling how it is tactically constituted, and then by expanding the effect of the 'strike' itself through activities that might appear external and opposed to it. Here, we must ask: what is a strike? How does it intervene in the reproduction of capital and what other means can be used to extend these effects beyond the formal picket line? How does the composition of capital and labor present itself at the university in our present moment and how does this inform the tactics at our disposal? How does this shift with the trajectory and development of the strike over time, day by day, week by week? The simple and short answer is, in the abstract, to block the flow of value and expropriate at every possible turn. The practical answer is,

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8 This of course is not to deny the fragmentation and segregation of workers and students or the differential effects of dispossession and exploitation that occur on and off campus, but rather to redirect critique towards the political aspirations of a Left that would deny these realities in the form of a 'united front' or 'big tent', which is the general form of leftist organization in the United States and on college campuses in particular. It is this kind of leftist organization that appears more concerned with managing the boundaries of its own edgy political identity—whether radical, socialist, anarchist, antifascist—and arbitrating the acceptable behavior of its membership than it does with understanding the terrain of social conflict, let alone spreading or participating in it.

9 This was precisely the objective of the worker-student action committees that emerged during the revolts of May 1968 in Paris: the overflow of insurrection from the university into everyday life. The formation of the worker-student action committees notably coincided with the spread of wildcat strikes. See Roger Gregoire and Fredy Perlman, *Worker-Student Action Committees, France May '68*: <https://libcom.org/article/worker-student-action-committees-france-may-68-roger-gregoire-and-fredy-perlman>

in the concrete, a more difficult one for you and your friends to decide among yourselves and bring into material reality. To strike means strike; that is a cipher to be wrestled with on the ground, in the unfolding of struggle itself.

It is our wager that the UAW's tactical paternalism is not at all oriented towards these objectives, but best suited for a return to normalcy, a quick victory for a union in the throes of internal strife, whose administration and bargaining members are fully integrated into the capital-labor relation. They thus have little but disdain and fear for the rank and file, and for a proletariat that wants out of this hellscape of existence, rather than a more 'fair' share of the revenues that the hellscape reaps. Once we accept this tension and conflict of interests, we can begin to develop strategic and tactical trajectories adequate to the task.

So, when you hear the strike bosses on the picket line disavow 'unsanctioned' activities, criticizing them as 'divisive', 'anarchic', 'ineffective', 'dangerous', or 'distracting', keep this history and context in mind. It is not unions as institutions that have led us to our present capacities, but militant rebellion both inside and outside the formal work relation. The union claims that this strike represents a historic opportunity for struggle; if so, that possibility will only be realized when our tactical, strategic, and organizational forms break free from the union's official line and revolt spreads like fire from campus to campus. ***It is not too much to demand nothing and take everything.***

# Antiworking Conditions: Strike Means Fuck the Police

by anonymous abolitionists

December 5, 2022

It has been a week of concessions.<sup>1</sup> After the UAW2865 bargaining team made a series of preemptive capitulations in order to appear “reasonable,” the UC responded by presenting a historically bad offer, including wages so low they may even represent a pay cut at some campuses. The outrage on the part of the rank and file was immediate and energetic, with groups on each campus and across the state gearing up for a “no” vote on what promises to be a catastrophically bad contract. With so much of the focus on wages and cost of living, however, other issues have been pushed to the wayside. Most notably, the question of campus policing – a symbolic demand never actually taken seriously by union leadership – has virtually disappeared from the conversation among all but the most ‘militant’ rank and file.

There is no question that the union leadership is actively hostile to the prospect of defunding campus police. On campus after campus we hear reports of yellow-vested UAW strike captains telling Black workers that chanting “cops off campus” is too divisive (UCLA), giving campus police a schedule of all their supposedly radical actions and allowing police to lead marches and facilitate “shutting down” a traffic circle (UCI), and rerouting their entire day’s planned activities to avoid being seen near a Cops Off Campus table (UCD). In the struggle against the police, it is clear what side the UAW is on; meanwhile, the self-appointed leaders of the rank and file have largely declined to take a side in favor of a more ‘realistic’ and ‘inclusive’ strategy. The extent to which the demands around policing has been ignored by the mainstream rank and file was nowhere more evident than in the Meeting on Bargaining Developments on December 3. Hosted by the dissenting members of the bargaining team, this meeting was meant to inform members about the recent concessions and strategize for a potential no vote. However, when participants tried to bring up policing as a core workplace issue, they were repeatedly shut down, ignored, or treated as a distraction from those ostensibly universal, ‘real issues.’<sup>2</sup>

Against the outright hostility of the union and the telling silence of the rank and file, we argue that **policing is a fundamental workplace issue**. This is

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1 This was originally published on Monday, December 5, 2022, following a week of controversial bargaining concessions on the part of the UAW.

2 UC Equity (<https://www.ucequity.org>) provides another example of this type of erasure. Despite their strong support for disability justice (another matter often ignored in conversations about the strike), at the time this essay was written their site made no mention of either race or policing, glaring oversights from a group claiming to fight for “equity.”

true in the simplest sense: the presence of police on (and off) campus is a threat to the safety of racialized students, workers, and community members. The police are white-supremacist violence personified; their very presence makes any workplace a hostile work environment. As one recent communique from UCLA put it: “What’s a wage increase when Black students are 19 times more likely to be stopped and harassed by UCPD? There is no ‘fair contract’ without Disability Justice and Cops off Campus. We want a COLA but there is no ‘Cost of Living Adjustment’ if people’s basic personhood is not recognized.”<sup>3</sup> Perhaps some picketers realize this when they yell, “Cops off campus / COLA in my bank account”—thus suturing these two demands in a single chant, even as the bargaining team does the same by effectively dropping them both from the bargaining table. Graduate workers are not an undifferentiated, unified group, and neglecting the real differences in people’s experiences only reproduces the conditions that create and maintain that differentiation.

But we would take this one step further. **Police are not only a workplace condition, they are a necessary condition for the existence of the workplace itself.** Police exist to enforce the capital labor relation. Where the silent compulsions of economics are insufficient to maintain that relation, the police step in to do so by force. This function of policing is maybe most evident when the cops are called in to break strikes or protests, forcing workers back to work and ensuring the smooth circulation of capital; we have not forgotten the \$300,000 per day spent to police the COLA strikes at UC Santa Cruz.<sup>4</sup> But the police’s role as the guardians of capital manifests in nearly everything they do. They exist to protect private property and thus maintain the dispossession that defines the proletarian condition and forces proles to work for a wage in order to live. And perhaps most importantly, they discipline those racialized and gendered populations who are expelled from the workforce and whose exclusion constitutes the world of work: the lumpen and the surplus. **Just as campus police separate the borders of campus from its outsides, so does policing delineate the workplace and uphold it.**

In “Re-emergence and Eclipse of the Proletariat,” the authors argue that unions take part in this process of racialized exclusion by constructing a virtuous workers movement in opposition to ‘criminality,’ disorganization, and unproductivity.<sup>5</sup> This tendency is clear in the UAW leadership’s attempts to police its own members and to dismiss any militant actions as the result of ‘outside agitators’

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3 COLA4ALL Newsletter, Nov. 29. <https://twitter.com/uclarnf/status/1597630389710860288>

4 Gurley, “California Police Used Military Surveillance Tech at Grad Student Strike,” *Vice*, May 15, 2020, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/7kppna/california-police-used-military-surveillance-tech-at-grad-student-strike>. UCPD’s response to the Occupy protests is also instructive. UCPD officers brutalized Occupy protesters at UC Berkeley in 2011, and then a few days later pepper-sprayed protesters at UC Davis. See Asimov and Berton, “UC campus police move in on student protesters,” *SFGate*, Nov. 9, 2011, <https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/UC-campus-police-move-in-on-student-protesters-2323667.php>;

5 disaffected communists, “Re-emergence and Eclipse of the Proletariat.” <https://cryptopad.fr/file/#/2/file/ZCjeDTN67HEQi0i87Z9c9Y6W/>

set on ‘hijacking’ a peaceful movement. When a group of autonomous UCSB students took over a dining commons, UAW yellow-vesters beat high-level administrators and UCPD (who did not show up) to arrive first on the scene, if only to investigate this “contingent of troublemakers” and clarify that the liberation was not a union-sanctioned activity. As evidenced by the internal communications of union bureaucrats, ‘Cops off Campus’ exists as a boogey-man-like phantasmagoria that threatens to undermine the legitimacy and legality of respectable strike actions. But can we not also see this same tendency in a rank and file movement that is more focused on winning over scabs and moderates than it is in listening to their BIPOC coworkers and opposing the police? Or when dissenting members of the bargaining team valorize withholding grading labor as the only effective means of struggle and explicitly reject occupations, blockades, sabotage, and other forms of escalation?

The limits we name here are not merely the result of bad representation or the vagaries of union elections, but are part and parcel of the labor movement itself. Unions as institutions exist to mediate the capital labor relation - their existence assumes and depends on the continuation of that relation rather than its disruption. It is only by recognizing this limit that we can fully grasp the kernel of truth hidden within the claim that struggles against policing are somehow opposed to struggles over wages or working conditions. For, **if the police are the enforcers of the capital labor relation, then their demise must also necessarily be the demise of that relation.** It is only where strikes spill over their boundaries, when they expand from a limited contest over wages to a struggle over the conditions of living, from a workplace dispute to a disruption of the workplace and of work itself, that they push beyond their own limits and become part of the real movement that abolishes the present state of things.



Graffiti at UCPD building following a protest on the ten-year anniversary of the UC Davis pepper spray incident



# Transterritorial Attack on UC and Food Insecurity: A Communiqué from the Liberated Dining Halls of so-called Santa Cruz

December 7, 2022

**The colonial capitalist university will never win.** Union sell-outs and scabs will never win.

Here at so-called Santa Cruz, we declare and express our solidarity to all communities in struggle. Today, along with comrades across so-called California, we are engaging in a transterritorial attack on UC incorporated and what they call food insecurity, a condition created by their capitalist greed. **These spaces, like the dining commons, are spaces we understand as battlegrounds of the ongoing war against subsistence, where proles take up the war against capital by expropriating dining halls and feeding one another.**

The logic of capital underpinning the UC allows UC admin & their cronies to create and enforce the divisive narrative that we are stealing from one another when we liberate dining halls. This is the logic of capital that depends on the creation of an individualistic world. The world of individualism teaches us and obligates us to be on top of everyone else, to have more than everyone else, to hurt and use each other in the search for the false capitalist promises of “progress and development.” This creates inequalities, injustices, and violences that we experience in our everyday lives, that become incorporated into our day to day as the “new normal.”

The civilizational crisis that we live in, however, opens the door to the construction of a challenge to this false normality, through the practice of refusal, of abnormality, which must be based on values of direct-democracy, mutual aid, self-management, gender equity, respect for Mother Earth, and autonomy. Practices of horizontalism, decentralization, mutual support, and self-management survive here and now, there and tomorrow, not only as a legacy of a remote past, but as a project for a liberating future. We claim these as our weapons in the capitalist war against subsistence. Utopia is here, right under our noses, but we simply have not been able to see that which we were never taught to see. Let us expand our minds and open our hearts to the power of community, autonomy, and mutual care. **The time is now or never to turn the tides in the war against subsistence that capitalist modernity brings to our front door.**

The COVID-19 pandemic, the latest of the crises engendered by capitalism, interrupted the last dining hall liberation here at UCSC. But this crisis only served to highlight and worsen the conditions upon which communities seek to ensure their existence, bringing to the forefront all the ways in which capitalist institutions only further profit from the continued struggle for survival that we must all undertake. The last of the dining hall liberations, then, was not an end to this struggle, but rather a moment of rupture that today demonstrates that we are now, more than ever, embroiled in the fight for justice against the UC and **hungry for the end of capital. The machine that is the UC, one of the significant nodes in the integrated world of capital, must be abolished**, as it will never, ever provide care or sustenance for our communities.

**Today we say then, it is time to take matters into our own hands and bite the hand that beats you, because when we feed each other, everybody eats!**

**Fuck the UC! KKKops Off Mother Earth!**

# Communiqué from Students at UC Santa Cruz Liberated Dining Commons

December 7, 2022

Today we participated in a transterritorial attack against the UC by liberating the College 9 / John R. Lewis dining hall. Comrades from so-called Davis, Los Angeles, Riverside, and Santa Barbara read the writing on the blood dripping walls: it was time to attack together!

Our action started off strong as we blocked off the swiper counter with our favorite phrase “NO SWIPES, ALL SMILES.” Students started coming in to the dining hall excited to be getting a free meal and saying FUCK THE UC. Many of them recognize the many ways the UC fucks them over. Some students decided to join in the action, moved by the idea that all it really takes is us to feed each other in order to strike a blow to the UC. Whatsmore, **student-workers and diners welcomed the action with excitement and energy, becoming inspired by what they saw as a strong attack against the UC’s bottomline.** Dining hall workers expressed solidarity. They recognize that students pay too much to eat there for food that they assured us is subpar.

Shortly before the end of our action, the UCSC Dean of Students, Garret Naiman, arrived at the dining hall with the intent of giving us “informed consent about possible disciplinary actions.” But determined not to let him start his usual admin banter, we let Naiman know that his 200K a year salary is what makes it impossible for students to live here. Not to mention the fact that the Chancellor, Cynthia Larive, rakes in \$500,000 dollars per year. The reminder of “informed consent” of possible Student Conduct violations for the “obstruction of university activities” by Naiman underscores that not all KKKops wear badges, some of them rock fauxhawks and dunks.

Naiman was joined by other admin cronies like Amanda Gullings, previously a cop for SCPD, who during one Halloween, collaborated with other KKKOPS to dress up as “convicts” in jumpsuits and braided hairstyles. Today, she is a kkkop for UCSC, who shows up to actions trying to surveil and intimidate. She’s a clear example of the ways in which the UC hires kkkops to keep their revenue and profits safe, and a reason why we say **KKKOPS off not just the campus, but off Mother Earth.**

We ended our action as we came to realize that the admin had banned the staff from replenishing any of the food and that this was their plan to interrupt our action. The largest dining hall on the campus was forced to suspend produc-

tion by order of the administration. **They would rather nobody eat than let students eat for free.** This form of institutional violence is a direct assault on life and on the commons, which we understand as the “war against subsistence.”

We’ve said it before and we will say it again: “corny ass sing-a-longs” won’t get us the goods. We can not fall for the lie that every direct-action under the sun has been exhausted and that the only way we’ll bring the UC to its knees is by simply “withholding our labor over time”. **Being out on strike is the bare minimum, not the far horizon.** We have witnessed the latest smoke and mirror tactics from the UAW across our territories. From appealing to the sensibilities and consciousness of elected officials at the “capitol,” to fake ass “sit-ins,” and other hollow “escalatory tactics”—the UC is not worried about any of this shitshow. What the UC is worried about is expropriation. They are worried we will take what we want, instead of ‘demanding’ that they redistribute any of it more ‘fairly’ or ‘equitably’. They are worried about blockages in the flow of their revenue.

This is why “free food for everyone” truly terrifies the UC. **It exposes the logic of capital and attacks it simultaneously.** We must generalize these tendencies to bring this institution to its knees. **That begins, but does not end, with withholding labor.**



“Abolish the UC!!”, “UC Starves Students”, “No Swipes All Smiles”: several signs at UC Santa Cruz during the dining hall liberation.

# LIBERATED DINING HALL



# COME EAT!

"Liberated Dining Hall: Come Eat!": a graphic made for the UCSC dining hall liberation

# Swipe Free, Tuition Free, Cop Free University<sup>1</sup>

December 7, 2022

***THIS DINING HALL BELONGS TO YOU!  
THIS UNIVERSITY BELONGS TO YOU!***

Today, we as an autonomous collective are liberating this dining hall so that food insecure students (and all students!) may eat for free. The UC system manufactures poverty and crisis for both workers AND students, but today we are reclaiming the resources that are ours; resources we shouldn't have to pay to access in the first place. ***Food insecurity is violence.***

We do this act of common-making in solidarity with everyone who is food insecure, rent-burdened, & everyone whose research & labor is exploited, including those striking for a better contract. However, our abolitionist message goes beyond this strike; we want an entirely new and different structure. We want a swipe-free, tuition-free, police-free university.

For as long as it lasts, it belongs to everyone. By liberating a dining hall, we pay direct homage to the Black Panthers' Free Breakfast Program and student protestors in 2020 who saw a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) as necessary not only for graduate student workers, but for all. We want to end food insecurity, rent burden, and worker exploitation. In doing so, we must dismantle the Indigenous dispossession, settler colonialism, anti-Blackness, imperialism, racial capitalism, and neoliberalism that underwrites the UC's prosperity. If the UC aims to create a public education, then why are students forced to choose between attending class or working part-time just to get by? To our undergraduate comrades, we feel your solidarity and recognize that our struggles are intertwined.

Let's reimagine what public education could be, ***starting with free lunch.***

## ***ABOLITION! & the University***

As stated by UCSB's Abolish the UC zine, "abolition is a political tradition rooted in the tactics, ideas, and efforts to end slavery." As slavery evolved into the police and prison industrial complex, abolition has become the effort to end all forms of antiblackness and carcerality. More recently, Ruth Wilson Gilmore taught us that in order for abolition to happen we must change everything. We must change the society and world-cultures, institutions, politics etc .. - in which carcerality and prisons happen. The university is

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1 from zine "Swipe Free, Tuition Free, Cop Free University" distributed at UC Riverside

# FOOD INSECURITY IS VIOLENCE

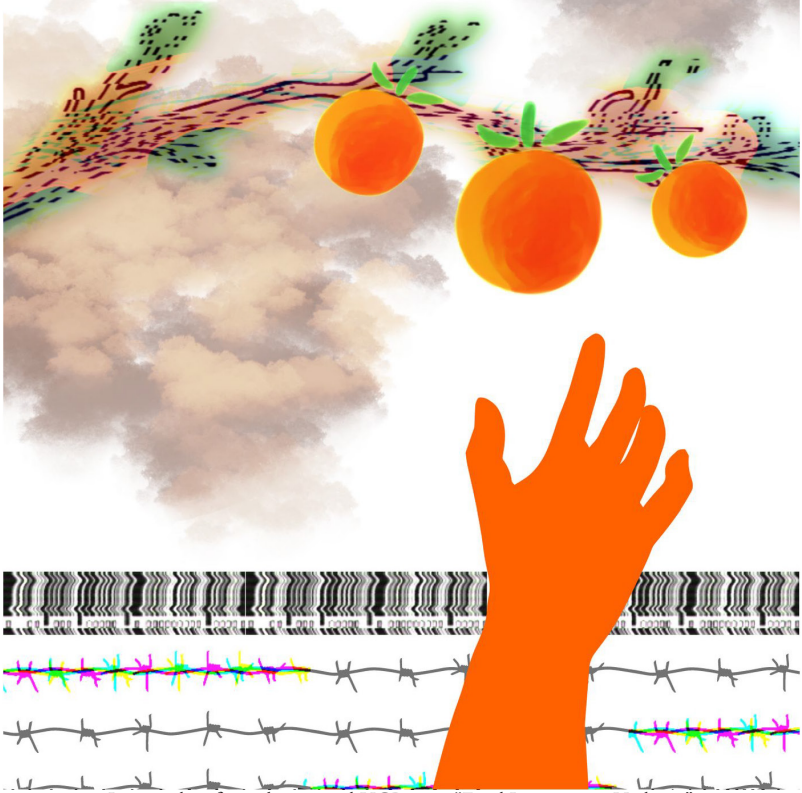


Image taken from the original UCR zine, "Food Insecurity is Violence"

implicated in this history, and must change (at the very least) as we move toward abolition.

Universities were created through the plantation system and settler colonialism. Universities such as Harvard and Cambridge raked fortunes from plantations and the slave trade (Wilder, 2013, 2). **It was traders of enslaved people and owners of enslaved people who often founded and structured universities** (Wilder, 2013, 3). The university's goal was to institutionalize the plantation system and racial sciences, and teach people how to transform people, earth, nature and agriculture into property for capitalism (Craig Steen Wilder). This goal instilled antiblack antagonisms into knowledge production and academic life.

**Today we continue to see the legacy of this history.** Carcerality, settler colonialism and racial capitalism animates the university through its neoliberalist structure, its connections to U.S. military and prisons, the employment of university police, and its punitive and antiblack culture. The fight for a living wage is a small battle in the larger transformation of the university, one that effectively ends the university's relationship with carceral, anti black practices. While today we fight for COLA, our future holds a fight for the complete transformation of the university.

### ***LAND BACK!***

Modern universities, including the UC system, have been founded upon Indigenous dispossession, settler-colonialism, anti-blackness, imperialism, racial capitalism, neoliberalism, and countless other forms of material and social violence.

UC Riverside exists as a consequence of the theft and violence on **Cahuilla, Tongva, unceded Serrano, Mojave and Chemehuevi** lands, as well as other lands that were seized through the Morrill Act "land grant."

UC Riverside would also not exist without investment from the military-industrial complex, manifest in decisions such as the UC's agreement to manage and operate the **Los Alamos National Laboratory** where the atomic bomb was created. The UC's military involvements, including nuclear warfare and partnerships with the Department of Defense, have, uncoincidentally, majorly contributed to the scarring and pollution of Indigenous lands, and to the fracturing of our relationships with people deemed "foreign" and "other."

Our autonomous collective is one of many that wants to bring an end to these centuries-long injustices that have caused us so much pain, **disconnecting us from ourselves, from each other, and from the land we coexist with.** Abolishing the university as we know it is one step we can take toward land and environmental justice, which is entangled with justice for indigenous and



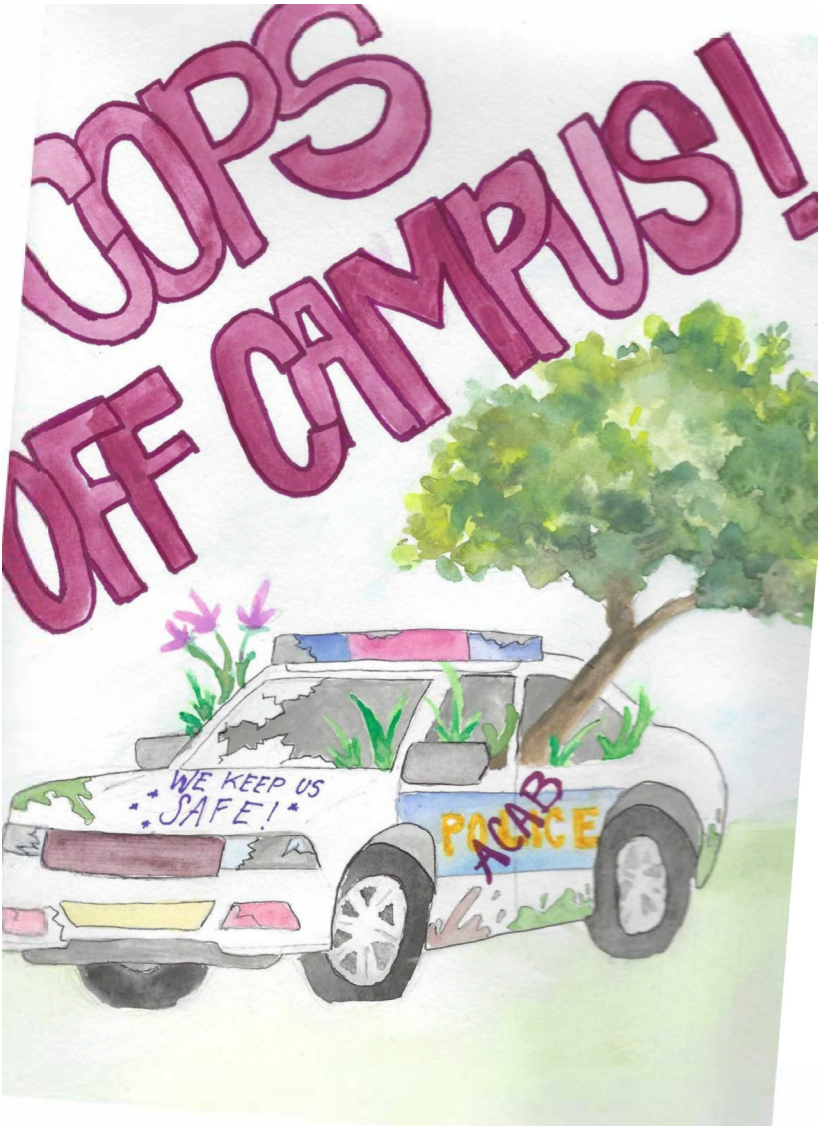


Image taken from original UCR zine. "Cops Off Campus!", with a graffiti-covered police car with a tree growing through it.

otherwise racialized and oppressed peoples.

### *WHAT CAN WE DO TOGETHER?*

Our commitment to liberating this dining hall is part of a larger movement toward justice and equity in university spaces, and in the world. We recognize the impact this situation has had on our lives and we are taking it upon ourselves to make sure that this space is committed to our survival. Our oppressive working conditions are not separate from struggles outside of this university.

**“We take care of each other”** is one of the guiding principles of the abolitionist vision we have in mind. The cops don’t care for us, they endanger us. The university doesn’t take care of us, it exploits us, and renders us all the more vulnerable. We take care of us. But in order to take care of one another, we must know one another. Building relationships between undergraduate and graduate students allows us to build collective power and show the university that we stand together against its exploitation. Building relationships is also an abolitionist praxis, as abolition encourages us to leave behind the individualistic thinking that capitalism demands. Many graduate workers work with undergraduate students in the classroom, in labs, and in discussion sessions—and those of us who are currently striking recognize that we are missing opportunities to build and foster relationships with undergraduate students. But when graduate workers (and all workers) are paid a living wage and are not faced with rent-burden and food insecurity, we all benefit. The time that graduate students spend making ends meet could be spent on their research and teaching. When graduate students and undergraduate students recognize each other, and support each other in our struggles, we show the university that we will not accept the violence they commit against us.

**Together, we are stronger.**

Join the picket and make friends. Get to know your community and the power and resources that you hold in collectivity. Talk about the strike and abolition, learn and dream about radical action, and build a better world together.

### *THANK YOU*

To UCR’s kindhearted undergraduates, student workers, and staff members.

To our transterritorial comrades.

To radicals who have the courage to dream, practice and enact a different world.

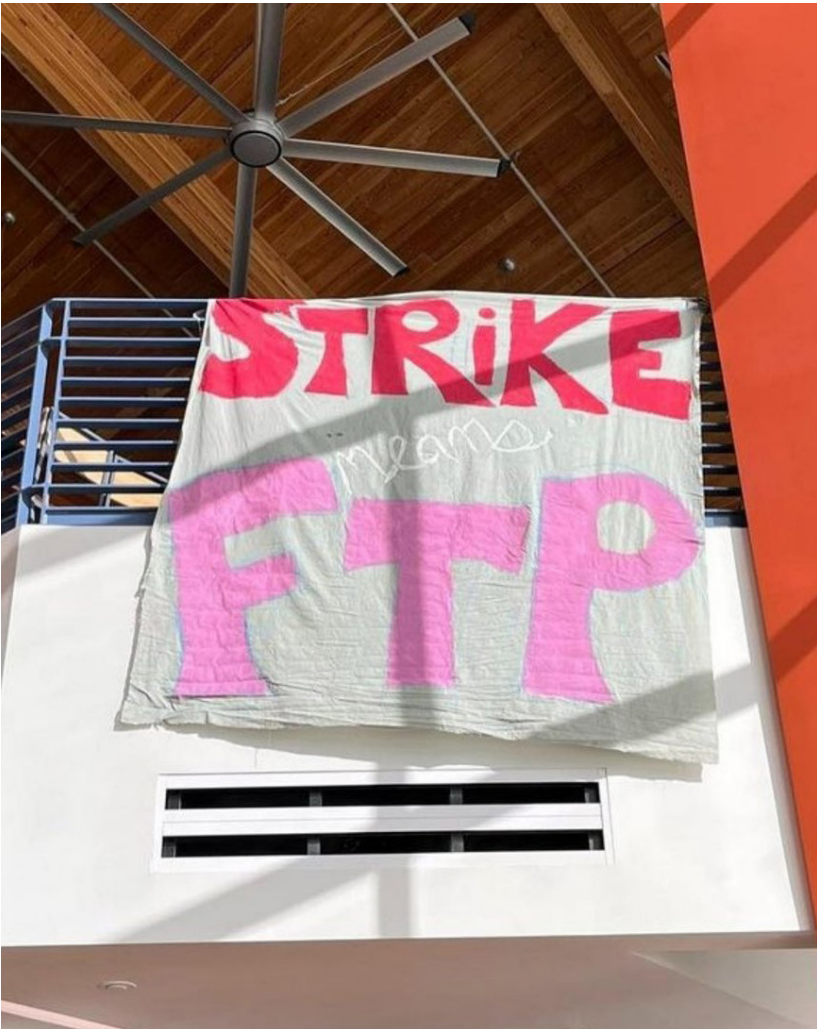
# Why Free Food 4 All When We Fight We Win<sup>1</sup>

December 7, 2022

Because we are all together even if we don't know it. The UC "system" is a system for isolation. When you can't make rent you worry alone. When you have to work extra it's just you who has to show up. Your student loans are "personal debt." When you are hungry you are hungry alone. Except you're not. We're not. We have the power to end rent burden, food insecurity, tuition, fear. When we fight, we fight together. When we win, we win together.

That's why today's food liberation is coordinated across campuses: two, three, many dining commons! We recognize this as a front line in the ongoing struggle for a free university. We engage in a transterritorial attack on unfreedom, on isolation, on the colonial-capitalist practices of the university: a collective attack on hunger in solidarity with everyone struggling against food insecurity, especially the rank and file workers currently on strike for pay that matches cost of living.

Cost of living —is this not itself a horrific phrase, the language of everyday misery? It is something we confront together: across the table, across the campus, across the UC system. We are together today with our friends in every open dining commons. For the moment we are hungry only for freedom. When we fight, we fight together. When we win, we win together.



“Strike Means FTP”: A banner dropped at Latitude Dining Commons at UC Davis.

# No Business: Strike the UC!

by UCSD rank-and-file

**December 10, 2022**

Every striking academic worker should be able to answer two questions:

- 1) *What are you striking for?*
- 2) *Under what conditions will you stop striking?*

## **ON STRIKE: FROM BUSINESS AS USUAL TO NO BUSINESS**

At base, a strike is withholding labor. But, a strike is a modest action. Labor action alone is never enough to win a strike. A big picket means nothing if it doesn't do anything; or, rather, it only means something insofar as it prevents things from being done. To win this strike, we must go beyond labor stoppage, beyond kind words from politicians or union bureaucrats, and pierce through the illusion that the University as an institution gives a shit about us. A worker's dignity will never be a reasonable demand to the boss. No facts, arguments, or polite sentiments will alter this antagonism.

This moment, the largest academic worker strike in history, needs to be more than performative and 'reasonable.' It should be a demonstration of what is to come. By refusing to work, by reclaiming labor power from the bosses, and by rebelling against the modus operandi of the UC, this strike shakes the foundation of the neoliberal university. Its momentum cannot stop at a contract. Do not settle for less. We must resist, and through struggle build a community predicated on care and respect, rather than the continued accumulation of land, labor, and profit.

## **THE UC IS THE LANDLORD**

While \$54k for a 50% appointment is a substantial improvement over current conditions, we also need to consider how rent increases seemingly without bound. As of 2022, the median rent in San Diego County for a one bedroom apartment is \$3,000/month. In that case, the monthly income we need to escape rent burden would be closer to \$9k/month—bringing us to \$108k/year, exactly double our \$54k demand.

The UC is a landlord and real estate speculator. Many of us may be lifted out of rent burden if our pay was raised to \$54k/year today, but we need to keep in mind that the UC continues to hike rent and buy more and more property throughout SD (with eyes on Chula Vista). This drives rent up throughout the

region as other landlords respond in kind. The UC is an engine of gentrification, displacement, and dispossession.

## **RANK-AND-FILE, MAINTAIN THE STRIKE**

Across sectors and industries, the UAW has a history of trying to resolve contracts as quickly as possible. This often leads to bargaining teams (BTs) calling off strikes and settling on mediocre contracts against the needs and desires of the rank-and-file. Of course, our BTs have put in numerous hours of organizing and bargaining and that is commendable. However, like any elected officials, our BTs will only do as much as their rank-and-file push them to.

From the beginning of this contract renegotiation cycle, rank-and-file organizers pushed for open bargaining sessions so that all members could attend and be a part of the process that determines our working conditions for years to come. The weekend before the strike commenced, members of the BTs held “closed door” sessions (“sidebars”) with administrators from the UC Office of the President. The rank-and-file desire for transparency and open engagement in the bargaining process was dismissed and maligned—a portent of what was to come.

A concerning trend of demobilization has continued into the strike, as concessions at the table are made without popular input, as picketers are tone-policed, and as organic direct action is stifled under the guise of remaining ‘respectable.’ At a point when our power is at its greatest and only growing, why have the meetings been closed? Why are we unable to coordinate and act on our own political volition, without bureaucratic approval? And, most importantly, why do we continue to let this happen?

## **TOWARD A GENERALIZED REBELLION**

We deserve the best contract we can get. However, the conditions that made the strike necessary—such as price gouging, labor exploitation and untenable expectations, racist, sexist, and ableist discrimination, and the upward concentration of wealth—will not end even with a perfect collective bargaining agreement. Consider:

*After a new contract, will the university still occupy stolen Indigenous land?  
Will it continue to reproduce white supremacy?*

*After a new contract, will the university still be a key element of the military industrial complex? Will it continue to develop technology to police borders?*

*After a new contract, will there still be cops on campus?*

*After a new contract, will there still be bosses running the university?*

These are just a few examples that don't even get to debt, anti-Blackness, incarceration, or climate catastrophe, but this should make clear how the exploitation of land and labor cannot be extinguished through a contract alone. Ultimately, unions and labor law are a part of the infrastructure of capital and the state—an exclusive reliance on them only leads to the management and reproduction of our domination.

Withholding our labor, then, is simultaneously about refusing to live under the everyday expectations of ongoing exploitation, and developing our collective capacity to take control of our time, bodies, and lives. We must spread the strike until it reaches every inch of the university, until there are only those on strike and those running as far away as they can.

Right now, this strike has two things the UC fears most: mobilization and motivation. Do not concede to the University's threats or union leadership's whims. Do not go to work. Do not settle. Vote NO on bad contracts. Only we decide when to stop.

Let's envision this *strike as universal disruption*. Let's go beyond 'no business as usual.' We say: '*no business, full stop*.' When we say shut it down, we mean it. *Shut this motherfucker down.*

*Be the seed that takes this machine down.* We take care of each other, and we've got a world to win.

# No University at the End of the World: On the Anti-Blackness of the University and the Union

by mack

December 12, 2022

You know this already, but it still must be said aloud: **Student Researchers United (SRU) and United Auto Workers — which are the unions representing TAs, Student Researchers, and Postdoc students throughout the University of California system — are anti-black.** These unions are anti-black for many reasons; but for now, we'll be focusing on the lack of urgency with which they've treated the demand for Cops Off Campus and the necessity of continuing to articulate this demand despite the pessimism we may feel about its viability at the bargaining table. SRU and UAW proposed a "Community Safety" article as part of the current negotiations over a new contract for academic workers, which ostensibly addresses defunding/abolishing UCPD. However, its extremely vague language about defunding and lack of concrete data, timelines, or accountability measures to ensure a meaningful downsizing/defunding of UCPD may take place makes it extremely lackluster and unserious.

The unseriousness, disregard, and even disdain with which UAW/SRU leadership have treated the Cops Off Campus demand has trickled down to union leaders at individual campuses who have policed Black student workers that have screamed it on the picket lines. Despite this ostensibly being one of the Union's demands, Black students calling for the defunding and abolition of UCPD were silenced and told that they would no longer be allowed to lead that chant because it was "divisive and made people feel uncomfortable". This instance is but one of many throughout my time on the virtual and in-person picket line where I've observed the anti-black discomfort, disdain, and disregard that union leaders and members have expressed with regard to the Cops Off Campus demand. For example, according to UC Davis Cops Off Campus organizers, picket-line leaders have policed and been antagonistic towards Cops Off Campus organizers and even gone so far as redirecting marches and moving the sites of picket lines to avoid them. These events are symptomatic of a larger disdain and disregard by union leadership for its Black members and its lack of desire to meaningfully bargain with the UC over defunding UCPD. These events also represent the union's unwillingness to hear the demands of its Black workers and fight for them in earnest.

The disdain and disregard with which Union leadership has treated the Cops Off Campus demand at the bargaining table clearly demonstrates the antago-



nism that exists between the Union and its Black workers/members. Whereas an antagonism exists between Union members/workers and our University bosses, there also exists an antagonism between the Union and the Black worker. Inasmuch as the UAW/SRU leadership fails to treat the demands for Cops Off Campus with urgency at the bargaining table, they collude with the anti-black University in ensuring the continuity of anti-black, carceral policies and practices at the University that harm and enact violence upon Black students such as campus policing. As Black workers, it is important that we don't lose sight of this and that we understand the necessity of positioning ourselves both *in* and *against* the Unions as long as it colludes with the University to ensure that anti-blackcampus policing continues to exist at the UC...

To be clear, this is not a stance of anti-unionism. But inasmuch as SRU and UAW directly or indirectly collude with the University in upholding anti-black violence, in this current moment Black workers must strategically position ourselves — both *in* and *against* — in such a way as to win our demands. This means positioning ourselves as antagonists to the University by withholding our labor and shutting down business as usual, and seeking to bring the University to its knees, while also positioning ourselves as antagonists to University *and* Union leadership by using our collective power to **DEMAND** that the union leadership take seriously the call for Cops Off Campus and an end to anti-black campus policing practices. To be clear, given the intransigence of anti-blackness in the modern world, we do not have much, if any, hope that the UAW, the UC, or any other academic institutions will meaningfully consider taking steps to mitigate anti-black violence by defunding and/or abolishing their UCPD without something that amounts to a total revolution and transformation of civil society. Yet, despite the pessimism that we have about this demand being met, it is imperative that we continue to articulate it and scream it at the top of our lungs, for it is the doorway through which we may pass that can lead us toward the creation of another kind of university.

## FUCK UCPD

For the safety and well-being of all campus community members, and Black campus community members especially, the SRU and UAW bargaining teams must be more emphatic about the demand for Cops Off Campus and the necessity of disarming, demilitarizing, defunding, and abolishing UCPD and related forms of carceral control at the university. Frequently administrators claim that UCPD is necessary for ensuring campus safety. This invocation of police as necessary for ensuring public safety illustrates the antagonism that exists between the UCPD and Black student workers and should push us to ask a set of questions: Who do police keep safe? Who do police surveil, profile, harass, and brutalize to guarantee “public safety”? How do we change this dynamic?

Insights offered to us by the Afropessimist school of thought help us answer

these questions. Afropessimism's central claim is that as a consequence of the totalizing nature of chattel slavery and the centrality of anti-blackness in shaping the modern world, Blackness has come to embody and be associated with Slaveness. In the U.S., following the legal emancipation of slaves in 1865, the modernization of the conflation of Blackness and slaveness has manifested as a conflation of Blackness and criminality, enabling the continuation of slavery and its carceral logic that continues to shape the contours of Black life. Because of how anti-black Negrophobia shapes how Black people and Blackness has come to be imagined in the collective (un)conscious, Black people are understood to be always already criminal, and thus the natural result is that Black people experience the brunt of the violence doled out by the carceral state and its agents.

This means that when we talk about who's worthy of protection and what they need to be protected from, this language is cloaked in anti-black euphemisms that appeal to colorblind sentiments of fairness and justice. But no matter how it is phrased, folks are seeking protection from the imagined Black boogeyman criminal who supposedly threatens public safety. Inasmuch as this relationship between Blackness and criminality creates the conditions for the over-policing of Black students, there is what kihana ross calls an "impossibility of a protective relationship between police as a structure and Black students as people".<sup>1</sup> As long as Blackness is paradigmatically associated with slaveness, criminality, and deviance in the collective (un)conscious, Black people will continue to be the disproportionate recipients of police violence and this is particularly true on college campuses.

There has **NEVER** been a point in the history of this country where Black people's relationship to the policing institution has been one **NOT** constituted by violence. Policing is an institution that has antiblack roots traceable to chattel slavery and the larger colonialist project on continental Africa. As a modern instance of this legacy, campus policing grew as a response to the desegregation of college campuses and the growth of student activism that led to the creation of ethnic studies departments and other programs meant to support students of color. As soon as Black students appeared on the scene at Historically White Institutions, police have been used to profile, criminalize, surveil, and harm Black students whose beingness challenges and/or contradicts the Eurocentric hegemonic social and academic norms prevalent at Historically White institutions. It is difficult, if not impossible, to pinpoint when, where, and how there has been a protective relationship between Black people and the police, especially on college campuses. The conflation of Blackness and Slaveness, or Blackness and criminality and deviance, creates the onto-epistemological conditions for the bodies of Black students on college campuses to always already be read as dishonored, disruptive, deviant, thus requiring formal and informal

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1 kihana miraya ross, "Funneling Our Children From Classrooms to Cages Ends Now": <https://level.medium.com/funneling-our-children-from-classrooms-to-cages-ends-now-1b22669c9dd7>

methods of surveillance and policing in order to ensure maximum control.

During the 2020-2021 school year, a group of undergraduates at UCLA formed the NOUCPD coalition to work towards the disarming, defunding, dismantling, and the abolition of the campus' UCPD. An analysis of UCPD's crime data done by NOUCPD and Million Dollar Hoods found that Black residents of Westwood are 19x<sup>2</sup> more likely than white residents to be stopped by UCPD for so-called "suspicious activity"<sup>3</sup>. This analysis also found that while Black people in Westwood make up 2% of the population, we account for 29% of stops for "suspicious activity" and 31% of all arrests.<sup>4</sup> In 2022, Black Westwood residents make up for 37% of all arrests, despite being only 2% of the population.<sup>5</sup> Beyond the quantitative data, there are countless anecdotal stories about anti-black profiling, harassment, and use of force by UCPD targeted at Black campus community members, many of which are not reported and logged into police logs and reports which results in a misrepresentation of the extent of police violence on campus.

UCPD's own crime data betrays the justification for its existence. UCPD does little to protect the campus community from violence and much more to proliferate violence and harm on Black students and other campus community members. The data shows that we do not need such a large police force, that we do not need armed goons patrolling the streets, and ultimately, the data suggests that we need to abolish campus policing in totality. 88% of all UCPD arrests in 2022 were for individuals who were not affiliated with UCLA, meaning that they were likely Black folks who lived in the area or visited the so-called public university and were racially profiled. A 2018 analysis conducted by UCLA's Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies and Luskin's Inequality and Democracy Institute found that 85% of UCPD stops don't result in "Criminal Law Follow Up" and that only 9% of stops result in arrests.<sup>6</sup> They also found that only 9% of stops were in response to what they labeled as Force/Threat, while 31% were in response to property-related matters and 26% to disturbance/trespassing. This means that over 90% of stops were related to nonviolent events! The UC Office of the President also has data that shows that in 2022, only 4% of UCPD's statewide calls for service were for reported crimes. The top reported crimes were Petty Theft, Intrusion Alarm, "Malicious Mischief", "Annoying Phone Calls", and "Unauthorized Subjects". Only 2% of

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2 Instagram post, "Abolishing the UCPD". <https://www.instagram.com/p/CEvQmsaAC-QV/?igshid=ZDFmNTE4Nzc%3D>

3 Daily Bruin, "Demographics of UCPD stops and arrests". <https://stack.dailybruin.com/2018/01/29/demographics-of-ucpd-stops-and-arrests/>

4 NOUCPD, Policing UCLA: UCLA PD Arrests (2013-2018)<https://www.dropbox.com/s/2ruvr7al62eyksa/Policing%20UCLA%20-%20No%20UCPD%20Coalition%20Report.pdf?dl=0>

5 UCOB, "Community Safety: Crimes". <https://universityofcalifornia.edu/about-us/information-center/ucpd-crimes>

6 Alejandra A Martinez, Paavo Monkkonen, Noah D. Zatz, Jennifer M. Chacón, "Mapping Yesterday's Police Activity at UCLA": <https://escholarship.org/content/qt4jm4t63k/qt4jm4t63k.pdf?t=qs161f&v=lg>

its statewide calls for service pertained to crimes involving violence, while 10% of its recorded crimes were for violent offenses such as Assault or Sex Offenses.

The first and most obvious takeaway from this data is that Westwood is effectively a modern-day sundown town where being Black makes you nearly 20x more likely to be stopped by UCPD. The UCPD engages in blatant racial profiling and quite literally works to police the border of who does and does not belong at the university. The fact that 88% of UCPD arrests at UCLA are for individuals who are not affiliated with the university suggests racial profiling efforts to “protect” the campus community from imagined or real outsiders. This undermines the so-called mission of the public university to be open to the public. Furthermore, the so-called crimes that UCPD responds to and supposedly protects us from are problems that can be addressed by individuals who are not armed and have the license to kill. The imagined threats to public safety that supposedly justify the existence of UCPD simply do not exist. There is no justification for spending \$150M statewide to address problems such as these on our campuses. UCPD is ineffectual in preventing these so-called crimes and can only respond to them. Given the prevalence of racial disproportionality in UCPD’s stops and arrests data, it is clear that one primary purpose of UCPD is to keep the university safe from its Black inhabitants. Black students’ need for safety was and always is overshadowed by the UC’s hunger for engaging in anti-black, counterinsurgent carceral state violence to reproduce the university and its borders of who does and doesn’t belong in so-called “elite” institutions.

When administrators suggest that we simply need to reform police or re-examine their role, what they’re really saying is “let’s reexamine how much anti-blackness is permissible on this campus”. According to these administrators, UCPD functions to “promote public safety”, which is administrator-speak for protecting the interests of capital at and near the university as well as policing the border of who does and who does not belong on campus and in the surrounding community. Inasmuch as data continues to show the gross overrepresentation of Black students in UCPD stops and arrest data, the University communicates to Black students what we already know: that its policing practices are anti-black and that Black students and that other Black campus community members do not belong in the campus community. We are imagined and policed as a community of not-quite-students, as not-quite-faculty, as not-quite-staff.

Whether it be through the disdain and disregard for Black students exhibited through the lack of institutional support we receive or through the incessant micro and macro aggressions we face daily as we navigate these campuses, non-black students, faculty, and staff police Black campus community members’ way of thinking, speaking, and moving about the University through overt and tacit messages that communicate to us that we are perpetual outsiders at the University. UCPD polices the borders of belonging and campus community by constantly surveilling, harassing, and profiling us. The informal policing

at the hands of our so-called peers and advisors and the formal policing at the hands of UCPD work to perpetually position Black folks in, around, and against the university as outsiders who are unworthy of belonging at so-called world-class institutions such as UCLA or UC Berkeley.

### **Toward an Abolitionist University and the End of the World**

The University as it exists will always be anti-black. If we don't simply want *less* anti-blackness or *fewer* Black campus community members being harassed by police, and we want a *total* end to it, then we must build an abolitionist university. Our demand for #CopsOffCampus and the abolition of the UCPD does not exist in a vacuum and is intertwined with the larger struggle of abolishing the University of California and our marching toward the "end of the world". If we desire to build a new world grounded in an anarchistic, abolitionist ethic, we can start by abolishing the UC and creating space for a new kind of university, if we can even call it that anymore; one with no cops, no chancellors, no hierarchy, no gatekeeping of knowledge, no hoarding of resources, no exclusions.

The demand for Cops Off Campus can be the first step towards abolishing the "University" and reimagining how schools function and serve their students, faculty, staff, and other community members. UCPD budgets could be reallocated towards improving mental health services, creating partnerships with community abolitionist drug and alcohol addiction treatment programs and organizations, free food programs and subsidized housing for food and housing insecure students, and scholarship programs for Black students and funding for resource centers so that they may be fully staffed and have actual resources to support Black students. Cops Off Campus isn't just about getting Cops Off Campus, but it's also Cops Off Campus and COLA4ALL (including undergraduates and all university staff), Cops Off Campus and free public education, including colleges and universities, Cops Off Campus and Disability Justice, Cops Off Campus and Open Admissions, Cops Off Campus and Free Meal Plans for all students and free food for all community members, Cops Off Campus and No Prisons and No Chancellors and No Bosses and No Borders and and and and. Cops Off Campus isn't just about getting Cops Off Campus but it is also a demand that bespeaks a desire to work towards building an abolitionist university and ultimately, the end of the world.

To be clear, a "better University" should not be our final goal. As stated before, the "University" will always be anti-black and exist to legitimize and reproduce the anti-black, imperialist, racial capitalist, cisheteropatriarchal civil society. We must pursue an abolitionist university. However, it won't be possible or even permissible to achieve a truly abolitionist university until we end the world created by imperialism, colonialism, racial capitalism, anti-blackness, and cisheteropatriarchy. Thus, the struggle to build an abolitionist university is part of our larger struggle to achieve, in the words of Fred Moten, the "absolute

turning of this motherfucker out”<sup>7</sup>: the overthrow of racial capitalism, settler colonialism, imperialism, cisheteropatriarchy, and all forms of oppression that restrict and are antagonistic to one’s humanity and autonomy. In calling for an abolitionist university, the term “university” is only used as a placeholder for whatever kind of educational institution(s) we collectively decide to build once we reach the other side of the end of the world. To create a truly abolitionist university, this current world must end, and so must the University.

My understanding of an abolitionist university is not that of a final goal or destination, but rather an orientation to the university as it exists and to whatever form of education comes after its demise. That is, the abolitionist university is not simply about the redistribution of university resources in a more equitable or non-carceral way, but rather an ongoing commitment to and process of transforming the social, economic, and political functions of the university in such a way that it is no longer the “University” and so that we may create educational spaces that allow room for the cultivation of Black freedom dreams and Black liberation. This understanding of an abolitionist university is grounded in education scholar David Stovall takes its call from David Stovall’s call for school abolition, which “seeks to eliminate the order, compliance and dehumanization that happens in [school] buildings while allowing for the capacity to imagine and enact a radical imaginary”.<sup>8</sup>

An abolitionist university would abolish all forms of carcerality that exist within contemporary educational institutions, especially those that exist to achieve hierarchization and perpetuate exclusion; affirm and center our ancestral ways of knowing and being that precede this world created by colonialism and imperialism; equip us with the tools and training necessary to pursue our dream vocations and desired life paths; empower us by providing us with the language and tools to develop a critical consciousness about the world we inhabit; prepare us for the oncoming inevitable ecological apocalypse; give us the tools we need to collectively and individually address and reduce harm without reproducing it; equip us with the socioemotional skills to lead happy, healthy, fulling lives; and so, so much more. Ultimately, an abolitionist university would abide by abolitionist principles that seek to meaningfully address and reduce harm, eradicate all forms of carcerality, and that ensure that everyone — students, faculty, staff, and other community members — has their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs nourished.

In calling for the abolition of UCPD and for an abolitionist university, it is imperative that we follow Dr. David Stovall’s charge to demand the impossible. In other words, we must demand programs, policies, and practices that are inconceivable to exist in the world *as we know it* in order to meet our collective

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7 Fred Moten, “Blackness and Nothingness (Mysticism in the Flesh)”: <https://american-horrorstoriesite.files.wordpress.com/2017/08/fred-moten-blackness-and-nothingness.pdf>

8 David Stovall, “Are We Ready for ‘School’ Abolition?: Thoughts and Practices of Radical Imaginary in Education”, 51: <https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1130&context=taboo>

needs and create the conditions for the masses of Black folks to go beyond surviving and begin thriving. It is only by doing this that we will be able to reach the “end of the world” and achieve the goal of abolition outlined by organizers such as Mariame Kaba, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Joy James, Derricka Purnell, Dylan Rodriguez, and so many more. Just because we aren’t entirely sure of what lies on the other side of the horizon does not mean that abolition is not a goal worth working towards. By demanding the impossible, we acknowledge that another world and another university are possible.

**FUCK UCPD.**

**COPS OFF CAMPUS.**

**ABOLISH UCPD.**

**ABOLISH PRISONS.**

# Food for All: Report Back on the 12/7/22 Glasgow Dining Hall Liberation

December 14, 2022

*Writing from Cabuilla, Tongva, Serrano, Luiseño, Chemehuevi, & Mojave lands*

One week ago, our autonomous collective briefly liberated UC Riverside's Glasgow Dining Hall so food insecure community members could enjoy a free lunch. We were only able to provide a small group of undergraduates with free lunches and zines.

Money and resources were not the issue — artificial scarcity and the maintenance of exclusive systems was. **The food in the dining hall was already paid for by undergraduates' overpriced meal-plans and prepared in excess.** Counter to what the evasive and misleading messaging on dining services' "Sustainability" webpage might suggest, Glasgow typically prepares an excess of food which they throw out at the close of each business day. Despite this, and despite the support many undergraduates expressed for the dining hall liberation, a dining hall manager immediately called armed campus police officers on us.

The police quickly blocked the intersection they thought we would retreat through, revealing their investment, and by extension, the dining hall's investment, in carcerality and arrests over communication and community. As we see it, **the university and its police would rather subject community members to arrest, violence and precarity than allow any of us to eat for free.**

This extends beyond our action and is mirrored in **students being fired from their jobs at Glasgow for eating food that would have otherwise been thrown away, and in the very fact that UCR has a projected 62.5% of students who are food insecure** (from UCR's own data). This is 20.5% higher than the average food insecurity rate across the UC system. The UC manufactures poverty by extracting wealth and resources from the communities that sustain it.

**UC Riverside advertises itself as the most diverse campus** of the 9 undergraduate-serving UCs in order to recruit students from local community colleges, all **while hyper-policing and repressing the impoverished students and students of color (overlapping categories) who attend this university.**



This is no coincidence.

It's noteworthy that CNAS Dean Kathryn Uhrich, a UCR administrator, recently directed her department to call campus police on UAW graduate student protestors. The University is committed to policing community members who advocate for a better quality of life — especially low-income students of color.

The dining hall manager who called the cops on us told us there was a “right way” to do this and that we should have directly contacted Glasgow management to discuss the implementation of a weekly, free lunch day. This was clearly all talk, and most likely an attempt to keep us there until the police arrived.

We followed up with them directly about this no swipe lunch on the same day, but one week later, we've yet to receive a response. We'll be surprised if we ever receive a substantial one, but that's no matter. In taking them up on this “offer” we intended to highlight the university's empty rhetoric and broken promises.

**We do not agree that the “right way” to return the dining commons to the people involves the permission of those whose singular function is to regulate and refuse our access** to our food and our common spaces. We do not agree to “charity.” We do not agree to asking for what is already ours.

*UC: number one in fucking its students over.*

Much love to our transterritorial comrades at UC Davis, UC Santa Barbara and UC Santa Cruz who were collectively able to offer free lunches to over 3,000 people without facing police violence, though some still dealt with **dining managers ceasing food production** to limit the number of community members able to eat. Much love also to our comrades at UCLA, who faced **university administration physically blocking, pushing, and intimidating them** to thwart their dining hall liberation. University administration are white-collar police!

### So What Now?

This dining hall liberation was only the start of our actions and events, and we hope December 7th was a radicalizing moment for many Riverside community members. If you heard that there was free food at Glasgow and went there expecting it, **know that what was being provided was taken away by the police this university mobilizes to sustain the exploitation of its students and workers.**

The existence of campus police is rooted in the university's interest in reifying

the violence of poverty against the students glorified in their advertisements of “class mobility.”

**If you starve now, the university has no interest in helping you,** and after they’ve taken your tuition and handed you a degree, any success you attain outside of this classist institution will be reduced to a statistic, and waved like a flag to attract new students to extract tuition and labor from.

**We want and deserve a better education, and world, than this.** Our resources can be dedicated to far more important things than police and overpaid administration — like having our basic needs met!

If you share our vision, check out the “Swipe Free, Tuition Free, Cop Free University” zine linked in our bio!<sup>1</sup>

# Seeing Ghosts: On the Negation of Worker-Student Life

by disaffected communists

December 14, 2022

## Impasse

We have arrived at a crossroads, so it seems. At least that is the narrative being spoon-fed by the ‘dissenting’ members of the bargaining team.<sup>1</sup> While the contract language around policing was never seriously up for consideration,<sup>2</sup> the split in the bargaining team emerged first around the “access needs” article before cementing itself around the meaning of ‘cost of living allowance’ or whether that language should be dropped entirely from the contract. In both cases, the vote came down 10-9 in favor of removing “access needs,” reducing the pay floor, and eliminating the language of ‘COLA’ from any tentative agreement.

This accounting is accurate, as far as the facts of the matter are concerned. We do not dispute the facts, nor are we concerned with them. What matters to us is what these conditions mean for the present possibility of the struggle. This is a matter of historical interpretation. If, as the much-revered bargaining team ‘dissidents’ argue, we have reached a deadlock, it is not immediately clear what that means on the ground. Their own take, with which you have no doubt been inundated over the last several weeks, is that the majority of the bargaining team, closely aligned with the UAW administrative caucus, has made a major strategic miscalculation. Believing the strength of the strike is found in the spectacle of the picket line, they have been fumbling negotiations and conceding major demands out of fear that the picket sign-ins are dropping as we near winter break. The correct analysis, so our heroic dissenters tell us, is that ‘peak power’ is a mirage that emerges from a naive theory of worker power. They tell us that worker power is a product of the quantity of labor withheld by the length of time over which it is held. Thus, we gain worker power with every passing hour, with every canceled lab, lecture, or discussion section, with every missed grant deadline, and with every ungraded paper or exam. As the semesters and quarters draw to a close, we reach the first real test of this power—in the form of unsubmitted grades for tens of thousands of students across the UC. This is a strike for the long haul, they say, and we are only just beginning.

Here, the analysis of the dissenting members of the bargaining team has con-

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1 We would never do something as corny as refer to the split factions of the bargaining team as the “BT9” or the “BT10”.

2 See mack, “No University at the End of the World: On the Anti-Blackness of the University and the Union”; “Antiworking Conditions: Strike Means Fuck the Police”

verged with some popular ‘rank and file’ analysis that has been widely distributed on picket lines and digitally through social media since the beginning of the strike. Rank and file worker newsletters, such as *Strike! A Newsletter for Workers at Berkeley* at Berkeley and *UAW on Strike* from Santa Cruz, have become mouthpieces for the more ‘radical’ rank and file more generally. This makes some sense, given that academic workers at Berkeley and Santa Cruz are some of the most rent-burdened within the UC system.<sup>3</sup> The current struggle is itself an extension of the wildcat strike that began at Santa Cruz in 2019, where rank and file UAW members there developed their analysis through “Pay Us More UCSC”, which writes and publishes *UAW on Strike*. Berkeley has one of the largest graduate student populations and is home to the largest bargaining units of UAW2865 and SRU.<sup>4</sup> It is also adjacent to larger organizations across the Bay Area, such as the Communist Caucus of the Democratic Socialists of America or Tenant and Neighborhood Councils (TANC), each of which represent the assumed strategy of ‘base building’ working class power—through labor and tenant organizing—that leaps from the pages of *Strike!* As the story goes, the UC is both the largest employer and biggest landlord in the state of California. Thus, the strategy is deceptively simple and convincing, if painfully familiar: build working class organization through labor and tenants.<sup>5</sup>

Against this capacity building among workers, the union bureaucrats have opted for a different path. Increasingly pressed between an angry rank and file who feel betrayed by their union representatives and an unflinching UC bargaining team, who sit across the table having made virtually no concessions of their own, the bureaucrats have opted for the *representation* of ‘escalation’ in the spectacular acts of ‘nonviolent civil disobedience’ and the compliant and passive ‘occupation’ of administrative buildings. Dozens have been arrested this last week in this carnival of virtue signaling. The writers of *UAW on Strike* are correct to call this development “desperate” and “demoralizing”<sup>6</sup> as it is carried out by petty bureaucrats who long for a quick resolution to a fiasco with the potential to drain UAW strike fund coffers. However, in their typically swift fashion, they presume a number of things that we believe deserve greater scrutiny. Unfortunately, in the rapidity of banal information overload that takes place on the picket, these analyses, branded as they are as ‘rank and file’, have very quickly gained favor.<sup>7</sup> Each new missive declares that the tactical repertoire

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3 For a breakdown of rent burden across UC campuses, see Daniel Masterson, “University of California PhD Pay is Among the Lowest in the U.S. After Accounting for Cost of Living”: [https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/campuspress.yale.edu/dist/al/487/files/2022/11/Masterson\\_PhD\\_stipends\\_v1\\_nov29\\_2022.pdf](https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/campuspress.yale.edu/dist/al/487/files/2022/11/Masterson_PhD_stipends_v1_nov29_2022.pdf)

4 For a comprehensive breakdown of the UAW bargaining units across campuses, see: <https://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/labor/bargaining-units/index.html>

5 The DSA Communist Caucus published “Our Moment: Proletarian Disorganization as the Problem of Our Time” earlier this year as an explicit diagnosis of the American ‘left’ as ‘disorganized’ and in need of ‘dense organization’, by which they mean essentially a not-so-distant relative of the ‘dual power’ model of building up ‘alternative’ proletarian institutions, traditional in form and formed by tradition.

6 See “How to Break a Deadlock”: <https://twitter.com/payusmoreucsc/status/1600203615129374721?s=20&ct=atHbOr7BHezRSymUcQDCZQ>

7 It is also ironic and worthy of note that ‘rank and file’ has been recently adopted by a decidedly conservative faction supported by the administrative caucus, branding themselves under

has been exhausted, implicitly or explicitly, with the exception of the long-term withdrawal of labor. The maturation of the strike, from this perspective, is synonymous with the coalescence of a rank-and-file strategy that privileges this withdrawal above all else. This is par for the course for any analysis of graduate student life or academic work as themselves something to be valorized, rather than negated. Many of our friends appear to have adopted this quasi-official ‘rank and file’ line without much due consideration for its assumptions or implications.<sup>8</sup> We wish to consider this matter more closely.

**Our concerns can be grouped into three primary areas.** The first is the *careless and naive characterization of the UAW’s activities as ‘escalation’ and ‘direct action’*, essentially taking the union at its own word, which flattens all material distinction between terms such as ‘direct action’, ‘civil disobedience’, ‘diversity of tactics’, ‘illegality’, ‘spectacle’, and ‘symbolic’. We suspect that the generalization here is meant to at once denounce the union bureaucrats’ retreat to the spectacular and communicative, while consolidating the rank and file around a strategy of the ‘long-haul strike’ by fending off direct actions—such as recurrent dining hall liberations and hard blockades of traffic and the flow of goods—that have appeared on its own fringes. The same organizers who publish these worker newsletters have said nothing in regards to these direct actions, preferring silent condemnation rather than a transparent assessment or appraisal. This absence of recognition would seem little more than a half-hearted redux of criticisms of ‘ultra-left adventurism’ that appeared during the 2009-2010 student movement,<sup>9</sup> but which have been a constitutive feature of communist politics since the time of Marx. Here, they are in lockstep with the union officials, even if it is only the latter that explicitly communicates its disdain.

Second, *the prevailing diagnosis of the ‘rank and file’ rests on an understanding of the strike itself as fundamentally about instrumentalizing the withholding of labor towards a narrow set of contract demands*. Rank and file mouthpieces have made this abundantly clear in every one of their communications, as it reflects their theory of worker base building. Wrestling the ‘COLA’ demand from the UC would amount to both an increase in real wages, against inflation in the cost of living, *and* disincentivizes the UC from rais-

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the name “Solidarity”. These accounts have pushed back against ‘rank and file’ organizers who have been campaigning for COLA as ‘anti-union’ and are pushing for ratification of whatever tentative agreement the UC and UAW come to. We think this fiasco betrays the limits of ‘rank and file’ worker identity itself. This is why we prefer to frame the pertinent questions around communist prospects, rather than ‘democracy’ or the ‘union’.

8 Representative of the analysis we are considering would be *Strike! Issue X 12.2.22* and *Issue XI 12.8.22*, *UAW on Strike* issues “How does a no vote fit into the ‘long-haul strike’ strategy?”, “How to break a deadlock”, “Peak Power”, and “No COLA, No Contract!”, as well as the “Strike Smart” graphic that has been circulating: <https://twitter.com/CharmaineSCHua/status/1600583046830428162>. Magally Miranda Alcázar’s popular essay presents a similarly narrow conceptualization of the strike. See “As a UC Academic Worker, I Need a Contract That Addresses the Cost of Living”: <https://truthout.org/articles/as-a-uc-academic-worker-i-need-a-contract-that-addresses-the-cost-of-living>

9 See “After the Fall: Communiqués from Occupied California”: <https://libcom.org/article/after-fall-communiques-occupied-california>

ing rents, as they would factor into the cost of living. In our era of persistent inflation and stagnant productivity gains, especially in the nonmanufacturing sectors,<sup>10</sup> COLA would thus achieve a significant victory in setting the price of labor-power and reducing the surplus revenue that the UC captures—it thereby reduces the rate of exploitation.<sup>11</sup> It thus is a necessary, if insufficient, condition for building worker capacity in general. We submit that this is not an insignificant consideration, given the relative size of the UC’s workforce and position of education in the social division of labor. Against a half century of wage stagnation and repression, such measures also seem to be immediately necessary for any meaningful return of the workers movement. Our issue lies not with this analysis of COLA as such, but what it betrays about their larger ‘revolutionary’ project.

It is here that we arrive at our final concern. *Both the first and second considerations rest on the more general premise that the path to communism lies in the slow, methodical, careful, (dare we say ‘reasonable’?) lurch towards the development of ‘worker power’ through worker ‘organizations’.* ‘Organization’ here references the conventional notions—trade and industrial unions, workers councils, tenants unions, political parties, ‘base building’ more generally—of the formal party.<sup>12</sup> As we will explore below, any semblances of the traditional formal party have largely disaggregated and degenerated into defensive struggles. This leaves open the question of the forms of organization available in the present juncture and what sets their historical terms of engagement. If, as we maintain, the workers movement as such has been eclipsed by the resurgence of disaggregated proletarian revolt,<sup>13</sup> and this character of proletarian activity has been attended by restructuring the capital-labor relation, what are the openings in our arena of struggle, in the sphere of reproduction in general and at the public university in particular?

It is our wager that ‘we’ have indeed reached an impasse, or a divergence of paths, or whatever pithy term you wish to apply. But the situation is not reducible to the tension between the business unionist strategy and the strategy of the ‘rank and file’. Rather, it is a historical tension, emergent in our current era of secular crisis and the attendant restructuring of the capital-labor relation. The cycles of struggle have passed from a period of the program, represented by the adherents to the traditional ‘formal party’, through to a period in which the program is unrealizable. Struggle takes on a character distinct from formal

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10 See Aaron Benanav’s *Automation and the Future of Work* (2020) and Jason Smith’s *Smart Machines and Service Work: Autonomation in the Age of Stagnation* (2020).

11 Along with the demand for “COLA4ALL”, this orientation bears some resemblance to the workerist demand for a ‘generalized wage’, which later took the form of the ‘political wage’, delinking the wage not only from productivity, but from labor itself. See Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism*: <https://libcom.org/article/storming-heaven-class-composition-and-struggle-italian-autonomist-marxism-steve-wright>; For a critique, see Théorie Communiste, “Much Ado About Nothing”: <https://libcom.org/article/storming-heaven-class-composition-and-struggle-italian-autonomist-marxism-steve-wright>

12 See Amadeo Bordiga, “Considerations on the party’s organic activity when the general situation is historically unfavourable”: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/bordiga/works/1965/considerations-on-the-party-s-organic-activity-when-the-general-situation-is-historically-unfavourable/>. Yet worker organization as such must of necessity persist.

13 See “Re-emergence and Eclipse”

*We argue that this tension is reproduced here in the current sequence as a tension between the formal strike and the general strike, or the generalization of revolt.*

A ‘fair contract’, no matter its gains, cannot but fail as a communist animus. We do not dispute that the ‘strategy’ of the strike managers is toothless and futile.<sup>14</sup> They are charlatans, technocratic careerists and capitalists lackeys. Let us waste no more time on this miserable groupuscule. We are unequivocal: *the strike must continue*. However, that this has been presented as some sort of incisive and resolute agitation should be seen for the fortuitous divulgence that it is. *In the long twilight of the workers movement, there is nothing luminous here*. If we are beginning at this foreclosure—that the narrowness of a contract is the only reasonable horizon—then we have already lost. Instead, we look for communism in our historical drift, in the *derivé*, in the cacophonous conflict with the material community of capital. *This is the strike we want*.

## What is a Strike?

We have raised this question before.<sup>15</sup> As it has been presented again and again to union members, faculty, students and the broader sympathetic public, a strike is nothing more than the withdrawal of labor, a measure taken as a last resort when negotiations have failed. While this may seem plain to the social democrats and ersatz-workerists in the rank and file,<sup>16</sup> for us this characterization of the strike is constrained by both class belonging and formal membership and is historically limited.

Formally, the current strike is one protected by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) under our right to strike against the UC’s “unfair labor practices” (ULP). As the UAW has maintained, the UC has not been bargaining ‘in good faith’, so strikers maintain job protection during and after the strike. This mass withdrawal of labor is formally mediated and protected by union membership. Concomitant with these conditions for proletarian action, the strike not only reproduces class belonging, but union membership, as an external constraint. This is the case with essentially all worker action in the United States. To act as a ‘working’ class is to act through the formal mediation of the union—either through electoral and bureaucratic mechanisms, rank and file organizing, self-management, or syndicalism. Regardless of its various stripes, the formalist program itself only mediates the reproduction of the proletariat as a necessary moment in the reproduction of capital. *It cannot break free of this integration and mutual antagonism*.<sup>17</sup> To act as a class—to build up

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14 The so-called “BT10”

15 “Re-emergence and Eclipse”

16 E.g., documents such as “Strike Smart” clearly assert that “The purpose of striking is to do financial damage to the boss... The best way to hurt the boss is to withhold our labor from which they benefit.” <https://twitter.com/berkeleyRnF/status/1597018564632145922>

17 The classic analysis is offered by Theorie Communiste in texts such “Self-organisation is the first act of the revolution; it then becomes an obstacle which the revolution has to overcome”, “The Glass Floor”, and “The Present Moment”.

formal working class organizations and conventional institutions to ‘base build’ working class power—is to develop and affirm the proletariat as a pole of the capital relation. It is to affirm and reproduce capital itself. Unionism is just one particularly insidious form of this program.

The present ‘formal strike’ is then self-limiting. This should come as no surprise to anyone reading any of the ‘rank and file’ newsletters. Though they advocate for a long haul strategy, they instrumentalize the strike as a means to achieve the strongest bargaining position. This is evident not only in their statements but from the strategy itself, which would be untenable were it not for the eventual foreclosure of strike activity via a renewed contract between capital and labor in the form of a cost of living adjustment. The only purpose of a formal strike is to reproduce the capital labor relation on different terms contingent upon the balance of class forces; it of course does not eliminate the antagonism.

Why, then, do the social democrats, syndicalists, and ersatz-workerists, who appear committed—in deed and affinity, at least, if not in letter—to building worker power against ‘the bosses’, to building socialism and communism through wielding alternative proletarian institutions, insist on a strategy of self-limitation? They certainly do not see it as self-limiting. As noted above, a cost of living adjustment would amount to a reduction in the rate of exploitation. It is an attack on capital, or at least an expropriation of the surplus captured by the university against our wages. More importantly for their larger political project, they see it as capacity building.

But such conceptions of proletarian self-activity are delimited by historical conditions in the mode of capital’s self-reproduction. We do not live in the era of the strike in the classical sense<sup>18</sup>, as the mass withdrawal of labor at the point of production. In the United States, this era was both tardy and short-lived. As a settler colony and racial regime with a large population of enslaved agrarian workers, much of the labor force was tied to the land well into the early 20th century. Though industrialization lagged behind the Anglo-metropole of England, it came swiftly and decisively, albeit punctuated by two world wars. It was this period of about a century in length, between Reconstruction and the height of the Vietnam War, that saw the uneven and racialized consolidation of the workers movement.<sup>19</sup> This process of proletarianization was most rapid following World War I and after the waves of black migration to industrial cores. The height of unionization and strike activity occurred in the late 1940s through 1950s, but by then union bureaucracies had already seized the workers movement and were in the process of purging communists and anarchists, along with disciplining and segregating black workers. From about 1950 to the end of the 1960s, manufacturing in the United States achieved an unprecedented rate of profit and along with it gains in productivity, real wages, and

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18 For a good history of the rise and fall of the workers movement, see Endnotes, “A History of Separation.”

19 We explore this as well in “Re-emergence and Eclipse”



investments in new plant, equipment, and labor.<sup>20</sup> In this context, unions such as the UAW were able to negotiate wage increases pinned to productivity gains, but in doing so they began to spell the decline of the union and the workers movement itself. The automation of this period began to displace greater segments of ‘unskilled labor’, with black workers hit first and hardest.<sup>21</sup> On the international level, this rapid accumulation of capital appeared as a constraint in the form of ‘overabundance’, ‘excess capacity’, and competition. By the mid 1960s, prices began to fall and with them the rate of profit, first in the United States, which was shortly followed by other overdeveloped countries. This secular tendency of the capitalist mode of production to undermine its own capacity for accumulation has translated into a general shift—initiated in earnest by the oil crisis of 1973—from capital accumulation to profit and rent-seeking, an increasingly zero sum game leading to a protracted period of stagnation with punctuated financialized bubbles.

This long downturn of accumulation since the early 1970s has been managed by capital with what we might call the ‘long downturn of labor’.<sup>22</sup> Investment has moved from manufacturing to non-manufacturing, services, and the so-called FIRE sector (Finance, Insurance, Real Estate).<sup>23</sup> These sectors are typically non-unionized, more difficult for workers to organize as a technical matter, and more difficult for capital to mechanize, given the nature of the services involved. Still, because non-manufacturing sectors are able to raise prices without being exposed to international competition and suppress wage costs without union intervention, they have remained generally more profitable. Both capital and labor have shifted as a result and productivity as a whole has thus stagnated for the last half century. In manufacturing, investment opportunities for new plant and equipment or entirely new lines remain bleak in prospect. As a consequence of this systemic restructuring, the general tendency has been for capital to shed ‘redundant’ labor and capital in domestic manufacturing and increase output by increasing the rate of exploitation. What labor is shed either is absorbed by the nonmanufacturing and service sectors, thereby driving down real wages through competition, which in turn increases the movement of capital and labor to those sectors in an inverse wage-price spiral, or becomes a part of the relative surplus population of under- or unemployed—the ‘gig’ and ‘informal’ economies of the dispossessed.

In this era, formal strikes have been primarily defensive in character. The rate of unionization has declined precipitously from its post-war boom peak and both the size and frequency of labor activity has declined with it. The formal activity that remains has coalesced around anything from defense of the wage against the inflation in the means of subsistence to defense of the right to strike to defense of benefits and pensions to defense of the unions themselves. More

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20 See Robert Brenner, *The Economics of Global Turbulence* (2006)

21 See James Boggs’ account of the UAW in “The Rise and Fall of the Union”: <https://libcom.org/library/chapter-1-rise-fall-union>

22 See Jason Smith, “Striketober: Labor’s Long Downturn”

23 This shift has occurred within the UAW itself. Some 100,000 of the UAW’s 400,000 members are now academic workers: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-11-18/california-strike-by-48-000-academic-workers-flexes-uaw-s-muscle>

pointedly, labor struggles in this era have been largely reduced as struggles for access to work itself, access to the wage-form, as it is the only mediation available to ensure the reproduction of proletarian existence at all. It is in this sense that we agree with *Théorie Communiste* that the mere fact of acting as a class now appears as an external constraint.<sup>24</sup> The defensive character of struggle reigns and betrays its secret: the proletariat is a mode of existence of capital, and when we defend ourselves and our right to exist ‘as workers’ we are defending capital. The era of the workers movement has passed. The world of the worker and for the worker is dead.

All is not lost, however. The disaggregation of capital and labor has produced a deluge of ‘nonlabor’ activity and informal organization as an offensive attack on capital and the forms that mediate and enforce proletarian existence: the police, state functionaries, union, schools, universities. These struggles against the reproduction of proletarian life have their center not in the hidden abode of production, in the classic sense, but in the ‘anarchy’ of circulation and reproduction. ‘Circulation struggles’ and ‘reproduction struggles’ here are both direct attacks on capital—e.g., looting of commodities, destruction of property, blockades of circulation—and attacks on the reproduction of the proletariat—offensives against the police, against prisons and other forms of state administration, against the ‘family’, against gender, against race.

Following the crisis of profitability, capitalist restructuring has disaggregated manufacturing processes, ‘aerosolizing’ production across the planet and thus internalizing the process of circulation. Logistics is the order of the day. What this means is that any neat and tidy separation of the sphere of ‘production’ from the sphere of ‘circulation’ cannot be easily maintained. They are integrated in complex ways and have reproduced the antagonism of the capital relation in similarly complex ways. If proletarian existence is mediated through circulation and reproduction and this is the terrain of social conflict in our era, then struggle here not only attacks proletarian existence—it interferes with production itself.<sup>25</sup> This is the meaning of the historical decoupling of the reproduction of capital from the reproduction of labor: two terms have been recomposed to open up an attack on the banality of proletarian life itself. This is an attack on the economy as such, a negation of the capital relation through the suspension and abolition of both of its terms—capital and proletariat. This generalization of revolt might be called insurrection, a general strike, or maybe a mass strike,<sup>26</sup> in which the conditions for spontaneity-cum-coordination are brought to the fore by the mute compulsions of political economy. In the present and protracted crisis, these conditions have reoriented from the formal withdrawal of labor to attacks on capital *beyond* the immediate process of production. Even during their Golden Age, for formal strikes to open into general strikes, they tended to be accompanied by sabotage, occupations, blockades,

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24 “Much Ado About Nothing”

25 See Research and Destroy, “Limit Analysis and its Limits”: <https://researchanddestroy.wordpress.com/2014/04/13/limit-analysis-and-its-limits/>

26 Rosa Luxemburg, *The Mass Strike*: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/download/mass-str.pdf>

and expropriations. Now, in our present post mortem, these circulation and reproduction struggles increasingly take center stage in their capacity to destroy the economy.

For that particular institution that we call the university: what does this practically mean? Before considering this, we must first assess historically how the university is imbricated in the capital relation. If we wish to consider the strike as an offensive attack on the reproduction of capital, this returns us to the considerations of the actual compositions of capital and labor on and among campuses.

## **Business as Usual**

The fundamental function of the university is the reproduction of the relationship between capital and labor.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps, in a bygone era, we could stretch this to say that the university fundamentally reproduces labor-power for the market. What a dreadful thought: the Golden Age of churning out ‘skilled’ labor for the increasingly technologically integrated manufacturing world of the post-war boom is now behind us. What is left is still less clear. The social democratic tendencies of the union rank and file cling to the ‘public university’ as a public good and social mandate, a bastion of intellectual inquiry and class mobility, necessary for the ‘good life’ promised by socialism and held hostage by capitalism. At best, that university is dead along with the Golden Age its image conjures. A more sober assessment would be that it never existed in earnest. Already the product of colonialism, racial domination, and heteropatriarchy,<sup>28</sup> the thin veneer of ‘education’ that cloaked the university existed by virtue of the caprice of capital during the era of its long expansion. Ever fickle, capital constrains as much as it makes allowances. With the long downturn beginning in the late 1960s, that veneer began to crack.

This in turn has led to a disaggregation of the university’s functions. With the decoupling of capitalist production and the reproduction of labor-power, the university has increasingly taken on a twofold character. On the one hand, to the extent that it reproduces labor-power, it does so by managing a portion of the surplus population with declining future employment prospects, especially in the productive sectors of the economy. It thus does not occupy the same role in directly reproducing labor-power that will go on to be capital forming. From the perspective of capital, then, the university offers diminishing returns in the sphere of production. Yet it is not superfluous to the turnover of capital. Indeed, on the other hand, it has been rescued as a sink for surpluses of circulating capital: in the form of highly leveraged debt-financed capital projects and real estate speculation, made possible by the asset-price Keynesianism practiced by university managers with university endowments, and through the securiti-

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27 For a good overview, see Harvie et al, “The Political Economy of the Public University”

28 See Craig Steven Wilder *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America’s Universities* and Robert Lee and Tristan Ahton, “Land-Grab Universities”

zation of student fees and the financialization of student debt made possible by rising tuition. At the university, like the capitalist world of which it is part and parcel, the reproduction of capital and the reproduction of labor have decoupled and diverged.

Since the second half of the 1980s, real estate, finance, and construction have expanded dramatically relative to the manufacturing sector of the US economy.<sup>29</sup> As the university's role in reproducing labor-power has shifted towards absorbing the surplus population, its function for surplus capital is no longer determined by levels of investment in new production that can attract growing populations of skilled, educated workers. Concurrent to this decline has been wave after wave of austerity that reduces the public funds available to public universities to pay for programming and instruction and to meet the growing demand for college education.<sup>30</sup> In this climate the significance of revenue generating activities is brought into relief. Rather than state funds, university operations pivot on tuition and fees, sports, events, housing, conferences, and student activities. Nevertheless, despite massive rises in tuition, fees, and housing over the last several decades, public universities remain saddled with debt. Even with this debt, the UC and other universities are able to maintain highly favorable bond ratings because they can use tuition as leverage.<sup>31</sup> The modern university typically takes on both short and long-term debt with banks and by issuing bonds, which then consign university managers to increase revenue streams by expanding construction operations (capital projects), raising tuition, fees, and other rents, reducing overheads, expanding class sizes, relying on contingent and adjunct instruction, and investing the majority of their endowments in speculative vehicles. They also increasingly venture into public-private partnerships and other 'special purpose vehicles', which are effectively public sector subsidies for private investment, feeding further bubbles in asset prices. This is how they maintain surpluses on their ledgers, which they then take with them when seeking further financing.<sup>32</sup>

Universities operate with these 'artificially' high credit ratings and attract surplus capital that cannot find adequate investment in the productive sector in the face of stagnant manufacturing profits. Rather than funding expanded instruction, these funds are funneled into capital projects that may or may not be revenue-generating on their own; what is clear is that they are not intended to accommodate increased enrollment.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, it is tuition that in actual practice pays the return on investment in construction. If, in fact, the

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29 See Brenner

30 Despite declining employment prospects and labor force participation for college graduates, the divergence in prospects relative to those with no college education remains quite stark.

31 This of course was a major source of discontent during the student unrest of 2009-2010. See "They Pledged Your Tuition" by Bob Meister: <https://ucaft.org/content/they-pledged-your-tuition>

32 For the foregoing, see "They Pledged Your Tuition", "The Political Economy of the Public University", "Securitization, Risk Management, and the New University" by Amanda Armstrong: <https://reclaimuc.blogspot.com/2015/01/securitization-risk-management-and-new.html>, and "Circulation and the New University" by Brian Whitener and Dan Nemser: <https://libcom.org/article/circulation-and-new-university-reclamations-journal>

33 See "They Pledged Your Tuition" for the mechanism in detail.

student body is not increasing on par with the demand for higher education, then debt-financed construction projects are little more than real estate speculation mediated by the public institution. Though in reality they run into the red, managers are able to attract financial investment through leveraging and securitizing tuition and fees, pressing them to raise tuition and fees over the short and long term, giving the appearance of account surpluses. This, in turn, attracts more investors to buy up student loans. But universities do not then use that revenue to pay for expanded instruction, because the cost of instruction eats into their account surpluses. Instead they funnel it into real estate, construction, and infrastructure, dispossessing and gentrifying in and around college campuses and driving up housing costs. These capital projects are long-term and capital-intensive and seen by university managers as an investment and further revenue-generating activity. Externally, this same principle leads them to tie up endowments in asset vehicles, such as real estate, equity, hedge funds, and venture capital.

This trend is not shocking when viewed in the broader context. Since the 1980s but especially since the mid-1990s, the most dynamic and turbulent sectors of the economy have been in nonmanufacturing, principally in equities and real estate, giving rise to the dotcom bubble and housing bubble, respectively. Throughout this period, asset price appreciation has more or less continuously driven a construction boom. This vicious cycle has meant that speculative asset appreciation has increasingly been mediated through universities, especially since the collapse of the housing market and subsequent Great Recession. As those asset markets and vehicles unwound, money increasingly crept into the corridors of ‘knowledge’ to find student loan markets and secondary markets, construction bonds, and lease-revenue bonds.

This integration of nonproductive capital into the circuits of the university is a sign of the times. The era of capital accumulation is at its terminus, in one way or another. Ours is an era of disaggregation and decomposition. Still, productive capital does find ways to instrumentalize the university. It does so primarily by subsidizing and thereby reducing the cost of research and development through public-private partnerships. This too is a sign of the times. As a component in the formation of the value of constant capital, research and development is a cost of production that drags down the rate of profit. In the face of secularly declining profitability, capitalists are compelled to reduce the costs of production by cheapening the elements of constant capital.<sup>34</sup> By partnering with universities and using state funds to fund research with consequences (and patents) for the private sector, they are able to accomplish the trick.<sup>35</sup>

The public university occupies a relatively strategic place in the general social division of labor. Though its significance to total social reproduction has waned, it is, broadly considered, still squarely an institution of the sphere of

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34 Marx called this cheapening of the elements of constant capital one of the principle factors counteracting the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. See Marx, *Capital: Volume III*, 339.

35 “Circulation and the New University” and “Securitization, Risk Management, and the New University”

reproduction and, increasingly, circulation. The flow of circulating capital through the university has intensified in recent decades. The logistics revolution has left no stone unturned. The university is integrated into the supply chain in ways particular to the present contradictions of the capital-labor relation. In general, the sphere of social reproduction is organized through the misfortunes of race, gender, and the family. As the university is occupied less and less by the productive workers of the future, it is tasked instead with managing a growing student population made up of the surplus, the indebted, and the ‘downwardly mobile’. At the same time, the social reproduction that is carried out on university campuses, whether in the form of precarious instructional labor or the various ‘services’ on campus—food service, maintenance, custodial, landscaping, sanitation—are increasingly feminized and racialized.<sup>36</sup> This uneven composition of both capital and labor, their disaggregation and fragmentation, makes struggle here less amenable to the ‘unification’ of working class identity and more so to the generalization of proletarian revolt.

## Passage

As we have argued elsewhere, the present sequence of struggles has passed from open racialized rebellion into a protracted period of ‘working class’ reconstitution.<sup>37</sup> This sequence has been characterized by a degree of overt state repression and counterinsurgency, to be sure, but the fundamental determinant has been internal to the revolt itself. That is, formal mediations—social justice organizations, political parties, platforms, electoral politics—insinuated themselves between the revolt and its representation in attempts to ‘unify’ the actors involved, some populist, most ‘democratic’, and many ostensibly ‘radical’.

Critiques of the recuperation of the George Floyd Rebellion are not novel.<sup>38</sup> Where we depart is our emphasis on the role of ‘working class’ identity and the resurgence of ‘labor’ in this process. The arc here moved from heterogenous and uneven revolt to the pursuit of building relatively homogenous working class power. During the long boom of capitalist expansion, the acme of the workers movement, this unification was achieved through subsumption to the white male worker. In the long downturn, such unification appears as ‘working class power’, but remains anachronistic at best. Through the long nadir of the workers movement, the product of the disarticulation of the relationship between the proletariat and capital, the concrete differentiation through which the proletariat is objectively reproduced has been generalized and brought into the foreground. For proles, production has yielded to reproduction, and this realm has always been highly atomized and disintegrated. Here, ‘class belonging’ in the abstract must be mediated in the concrete. Though this is the general condition of uprisings today, it is also a concomitant limit.

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36 Endnotes, “The Logic of Gender”; Low End Theory, “Theses on Adjunctification”: <https://www.lowendtheory.org/post/112138864200/theses-on-adjunctification>

37 “Re-emergence and Eclipse”

38 ‘Ultra-left’ critiques of ‘identity’ abound, to varying effect and with little nuanced appreciation for the concrete materiality of race and gender in the abstraction of the proletariat.

So, we find ourselves back where we started: the impasse. But now we can examine it in a new light—*in situ*—provided by the preceding historical and political economic detour. For our social democratic, syndicalist, and workerist counterparts, this impasse appears as an opposition between the long-haul strike and the frenetic capitulations of union management. While we concur with their assessment of the UAW's lack of strategy, we must note here, critically, that their conceptualization of 'working class power' rests on a theory of unification that is wholly out of step and woefully inadequate in our period of decomposition. For us, the impasse takes the form of this contradiction, this tension between 'working class' identity forged through unified action and towards methodically building capacity, on the one hand, and the generalization of the strike through the generalization of revolt against capital, on the other. As struggle in general is necessarily differentiated and fragmented, the only passage into communism comes through pushing against the limits of discrete, disarticulated struggle to produce the conditions of its own overcoming. *Struggles must overflow into the general antagonism against the misery of everyday life.*<sup>39</sup>

There is thus a continuity and a rupture between the formal strike and the general strike. The 'rank and file' unionists have betrayed their fidelity to the formal program. For them, the strike must be contained to the withdrawal of labor and any divergence from this 'united front' must be disciplined, or at least ridiculed from on high. Whether or not they see it for what it is, they have retreated to the defensive struggle, the last refuge of the programmatist. To present these narrow means of struggle as an offensive pursuit and the *only* reasonable, strategic, and 'mature' path to extract concessions from 'the bosses' and toward the construction of a communist program is an artifact of an era long since passed. *The workers movement is dead and all attempts to resurrect it as such are anachronistic and exercises in necromancy.*

We would like to end with some general theses on expanding this strike from the formal to the general. In the absence of that overcoming, the strike in itself will be little more than an exercise in self-valorization.<sup>40</sup> *We, however, seek the negation of worker-student life—the total breakdown of the university and its functions—because we seek the end of capital.* To that end, we offer the following.

**1. Generalization of student strikes has in fact been a persistent feature of student activity since the beginning of the long downturn.** Some of the most lauded experiences come from the Parisian May of 1968 through the activities of students at the Sorbonne,<sup>41</sup> or from the sequence of student strikes

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39 For the distinction between 'unification' and 'generalization', see "Under the Riot Gear", "Generalisation is the only communist horizon of the present moment.": <https://libcom.org/article/under-riot-gear-rust-bunny-collective>

40 Here we must soberly admit that unfortunately this is the manifestation that we anticipate. After all, graduate students tend to be a tepid bunch.

41 Roger Gregoire and Fredy Perlman, *Worker-Student Action Committees, France May '68*: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/perlman-fredy/1969/workerstudent-action-com->

and occupations that culminated in the events of the Italian “Hot Autumn” of 1969.<sup>42</sup> In both instances, the generalization of revolt led to the development of work-student coordination that both superseded and antagonized union bureaucrats and established Communist Party functionaries. Though less devastating to political and economic stability, general strikes at universities were quite numerous and destructive in the United States beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s, following the long, hot summers of black rebellion in ‘67 and ‘68.<sup>43</sup> In this sequence of struggles, the generalized and antagonistic character of revolt was preserved. In California, Reagan declared a ‘state of emergency’ after the Black Student Union at San Francisco State College (SFSC) led the formation of the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) and initiated the longest student strike in US history, which began first at SFSC and then spread to UC Berkeley. Militant students of color disrupted campus life for months on end and engaged in open conflict with the police and National Guard.<sup>44</sup> On the national stage, dozens of buildings burned across college campuses and the National Guard was routinely deployed. More recently, the 2009-2010 occupation movement across California galvanized antagonistic elements before spreading into the occupy movement and port blockades.<sup>45</sup> In the recent cycles of struggles, student general strikes have been a constitutive feature of general revolt all over the world—from Chile to Brazil to Hong Kong to Iran to South Africa.

**2. Given this general tendency and the historical terrain on which we find ourselves, this strike itself must be seen as a potential rupture into the possibility of general strike, or general interruption into the realms of (re) production and circulation, rather than a merely a defensive struggle.** This would be to transform the defensive into the offensive attack on the economy as such. It is both possible and necessary. For this to generalize, the present institutional limit—the university as such—must be overcome.

**3. In defensive struggles, such as defending the price of labor-power against inflation in the cost of living, the expropriative character of**

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[mittees-france-may.html](#); René Viénet, *Enragés and Situationists in the Occupations Movement*: <https://libcom.org/article/enrages-and-situationists-occupations-movement>

42 It is notable that, like their Parisian counterparts, students developed networks with striking workers, who, after being largely abandoned by the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and its union the Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL), relied on ‘worker-student’ networks of communication and coordination. The union perceived the student movement to be undermining its organizational role. See “Worker and student struggles in Italy, 1962-1973”: <https://libcom.org/article/worker-and-student-struggles-italy-1962-1973-sam-lowry>; “The Workerists and the unions in Italy’s ‘Hot Autumn’”: <https://libcom.org/article/workerists-and-unions-italys-hot-autumn>

43 In May 1970, following the Kent State shooting and a series of police shootings of black students and protestors, “448 campuses were either striking or shut down: some four million students and 350,000 faculty were taking part in what amounted to a campus general strike. During the first week in May, thirty ROTC buildings were burned or bombed and National Guard units were mobilized on twenty-one campuses in sixteen states.” See Max Eblau, *Revolution in the Air* (2018), 27.

44 *Revolution in the Air*, 27-30, 77; “San Francisco State: On Strike”: [https://archive.org/details/cbpf\\_000124](https://archive.org/details/cbpf_000124). The TWLF would re-emerge at Berkeley in 1999, though in a far more muted form. See also “Against the University, Against the Hydra!” (forthcoming essay by some friends).

45 “After the Fall”



**struggle is stillborn.** At best, it is only a half-measure. While it eats into the pecuniary gains of the university, by raising the cost of instruction without a compensatory increase in revenue streams, even the COLA demand remains defensive in that it is exercised only through maintenance of the capital-labor relation as such. It might act in the favor of the pole of labor, as against the pole of ‘capital’, but the terms of that relation are only affirmed when workers struggle to maintain access to the wage. To take full measures of expropriation—to be communist in character—struggle must generalize to the extent that neither capital nor labor are affirmed. Both terms are suspended through acts of negation: communist measures.

**4. Antagonism at the increasingly crucial points of circulation must be brought into the foreground of any further considerations of the strike and its unfolding developments.** In our current context, this has been occurring through dining hall occupations, expropriations of food and resources, and blockades of entrances into the university, which disrupt the flow of goods and services. Other opportunities for sabotage, property destruction, and expropriation abound.

**5. The union has recently turned ‘blockades’ and ‘occupations’ into spectacles, but these ‘direct actions’ have not in fact stopped the flow of capital.**<sup>46</sup> We assert vehemently that these are ‘direct actions’ in name only. They are not practical actions oriented towards generalizing the strike. Nevertheless, the ‘rank and file’ mouthpieces have gone on to dismiss ‘blockades’ and ‘occupations’ as entirely about shifting public opinion, eliding the very real capacity for these tactics, when deployed in earnest, to shut down the operations of the university.

**6. The university’s integration into the supply chain has been reflected by increased securitization of value flows.** As instruction and reproduction of labor-power have receded in significance, they have been replaced by profit- and rent-seeking capital accompanied by the protective assurance of police violence. Supply chain security is a preponderant influence in university management. The university manages ‘risk’ in this regard by managing the population on campus and litigating who does and does not ‘belong’. The ‘non-affiliate’ that provokes the anxieties of the administration is racialized and subjected to disproportionate levels of police surveillance, harassment, and violence.<sup>47</sup>

**7. Any generalization of the strike is contingent upon an antagonistic posture towards the police—not just the campus police, but police in general as enforcers of the racialized capital-labor relation.** It is little wonder then that the leading edge of the circulation struggles throughout this strike have been carried out by autonomous factions organized around police abolition and anticolonialism. Not only do the bureaucrats condemn this rabble, but the

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46 These actions have been nothing but symbolic, as union strike marshalls have ensured that traffic remains unimpeded.

47 “Securitization, Risk Management, and the New University”; “No University at the End of the World”

'rank and file' formations have adopted a stance of restrained pretension and quiet disapproval. The homology between the administration's racialized supply chain security and the union's policing of acceptable strike activities should give us pause.

**8. Coordinated attack on the circulation of capital cannot be subsumed by the bureaucracy of the union, nor need it be reduced to hand-wringing about 'strategy' and 'realistic' goals.** It is the generalization of the strike, realized when defensive struggles merge with offensive ones, that seizes the self-reproduction of the university. Any politics or strategy, whether offered by union bureaucrats or 'radical' rank and file, that refuses this generalization of expropriation as 'naive', 'disorganized', or 'irresponsible' is *not* communist in character.<sup>48</sup>

We close with a final thought. Though our interpretations of the impasse and potential openings diverge significantly from the self-appointed representatives of the rank and file, we confess that we both find ourselves seeing ghosts. The strategists for unification, who assume the working class as a homogenous mass, the self-activity of which is to be affirmed, are practicing a necromancy to raise the corpse of the historical workers movement. As opposed to this, we who seek the generalization of revolt find the specter of communism on the fringes of this activity, ushered in by our era of expropriation without demand. *This* is the ghost haunting the general antagonism, *the sweeping enmity against the material community of capital*. It finds struggle as it is, on its own terms—differentiated, racialized, gendered—and through this motley composition is able to swell small expropriations into larger ones and communist measures into communism.<sup>49</sup>

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48 Phil Neel, "The Knife At Your Throat": <https://brooklynrail.org/2022/10/field-notes/The-Knife-At-Your-Throat>

49 Léon de Mattis, "Communist Measures": <http://sicjournal.org/communist-measures-2>

# Who the Fuck is ‘We’?

by some maladjusted anarchists

December 17, 2022

No need to couch it in the corny faux-social justice™ language of ‘historic’ solidarity and unity, *we get it*: what you really want is to get back to your oh-so-important teaching and research. To return to the professional career path you were promised. Or ‘earned.’ You see the strike as a way to make that journey just a little bit more equitable. The overwhelming (astroturfed?) enthusiasm around the (as of the writing of this piece) signed Tentative Agreement says it all. While you might be righteously outraged by the indignities of the ‘neoliberal university’--especially in regards to wages--and perhaps share a low-level commitment to disability and racial justice, *you can just admit it*. You *want* to return to work. The only question is: on what terms?

*“The loud ‘or bust’ folks need to stop shaming their coworkers. We want to work. We love the deal.”<sup>1</sup>*

Whether you’re an ethnic studies ‘scholar-activist’ teaching about late ‘60s militancy and anticolonial movements, an agricultural scientist working on the next GMO seed to flood the South Asian market, or an economist doing... whatever the fuck it is that economists do, chances are you see the teaching and/or research labor that you do as somehow more special and important than most other peoples’ jobs. *Not just your work, but your vocation, your career*. And of course this idealization of our positions as scholars and educators comes in an infinite variety of flavors indelibly riven with the fissures of race, class, legal status, and gender. There are real material and ideological differences in these positions that undergird their various responses to the strike. For the business unionists and their cronies, this strike is a last resort, a temporary, pragmatic exercise of symbolic power to bring the UC to the table to negotiate a new contract and settle contentions as quickly as possible (as evidenced by their current push for a TA ratification vote ASAP). For the ‘militant’ rank-and-file, the strike is an opportunity to ‘democratize’ the union, the workplace, and transform relations of power in the University, perhaps with the long-term goal of eroding the power of the bosses and building the power of the ‘working class’, piece by piece, article by article. *Either way, ultimately, our attention is turned to the inevitability of returning to work, under a set of more or less conciliatory conditions*. Any horizons beyond the world of work remain but a dream, lost within a labor movement thoroughly disciplined by Capital.

But it bears repeating--as our friends titled an essay back in November--*there is nothing special about what we do*. This point is more than just pithy polem-

ics. It gets at the heart of a disjuncture; that gap between who we think we are (and the importance of what we do) and the roles we actually play in the reproduction of racialized class society. That despite the fact that some of us might ‘love’ what we do, or see ourselves as ‘the good guys’ dedicated to a stately vocation of pedagogy and knowledge production, *at the end of the day what we do is just another job like any other*. And the unspoken truth is that going to work fucking sucks, even if you ‘like your job’ or whatever you tell yourself to get through the day. So why all the moralizing about wanting to go back?

***“WHAT ABOUT SRS WHO HAVE STRUCK WORK HARMING THEIR OWN PROGRESS”***

The latent careerism in our movement has even expressed itself recently as scab apology; as some argue, even the prospect of shunning or discouraging various forms of ‘scabbing’ is a step too far. After all, as one of our esteemed ‘comrades’ urged recently on Twitter, grad school is “a time to develop your capacity in your career as much as it is a job to produce for your employer.” They argue that because of the threats of professional retaliation and the potential impacts of neglecting ‘career defining’ research and connections, we should not shun our ‘comrades’ who cross the picket line--which is becoming more and more of a reality as the strike marches on. God forbid we invite ‘hostility’ into ‘our communities.’ (Only a fucking grad student would be so corny as to talk about their programs/workplaces as ‘communities’).

***“I cannot believe the nerve of some people denying just how life changing this would be.”***<sup>3</sup>

We all do what we have to do to put food on the table, pay our rent, and provide for our loved ones. And sure, we do find some value in having a space to discuss colonialism, capitalism, race, etc. But it takes a special kind of tunnel vision to assume that the University is the ideal or only place to do that. In a climate of austerity and budget cuts, especially for ‘critical’ fields like ethnic studies, feminist studies, etc., it’s understandable why ostensibly ‘radical-minded’ folks would seek to retreat back into the tenuous ‘safety’ of their siloed departments. When the production of theory, curricula, and journal articles stands in for actually acting on the irreconcilable demands of the movements that birthed said departments, there’s a certain level of recuperation at work. And that recuperation is lucrative. It makes careers, a rare thing in an increasingly austere and hostile University. But we know where that road leads.

***“People in my department WANT to return to work! Many departments already HAVE returned to work”***<sup>4</sup>

We’re not saying that you shouldn’t enjoy sharing knowledge and learning about the things you are passionate about. What we’re saying is that you’ve

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2 Ibid.

3 Verbal comment, UAW SRU/2865 Bargaining Caucus, 12/15/22

4 Ibid.

got to stop confusing your fucking research interests, career goals, and class aspirations with something deeper. To stop operating with the pretension that revolutionary struggle can be waged merely through ‘education’ and ‘research’. Or that intellectual pursuits are somehow insulated from all the bullshit that keeps this world turning over. Even if you think the topics you discuss in class are just \*so\* ‘transformative,’ even if it pains you not be in the classroom ‘speaking truth to power’ and ‘raising consciousness,’ it bears repeating the late Gustavo Esteva’s reminder that pedagogy—even in its ‘critical’ forms—still functions as a mediator of an oppressive system that reproduces domination and hierarchy.<sup>5</sup> ***This fetishization of being a ‘radical’ teacher engaged in ‘revolutionary’ education serves to exceptionalize the classroom as the premier site of knowledge production, foreclosing the innumerable vernacular modes of reflection, study, struggle, and action within, beyond, and against these ‘ivory tower’ institutions of extraction and exploitation.*** The picket line, barricade, occupation, riot and other (albeit temporary) spaces of insurrectionary *comoción*, are crucial sites of knowledge production, relationship building, and learning. Without reckoning with this, we are left with a particularly annoying form of self-indulgent careerism billing itself as ‘liberatory’ and ‘student centered.’

***“Don’t let labor relations mess up this deal we need it NOW”<sup>6</sup>***

So what happens when the strike inevitably ends, and we’ve gained a new contract? We go back to the classroom. Or the lab. Or the ‘field.’ Slogging away again in our programs, content with our marginally better pay and our positions secured within the ‘safety’ of the University’s warm embrace. And then, ideally on to the greener pastures of overly paid tenure-track or nonacademic ‘industry’ employment. The temporary “poverty” of graduate student life is just a blip on the journey of an otherwise sure to be successful or lucrative career. That or a lifetime of precarious adjuncting and underemployment. We’re not here to tell you to not want that--a stable job with wages and benefits goes a long way in the fucked up world we live in. But if that’s our horizon, all “we” want, then “we” might not be in the same fight, and we have to stop trying to convince ourselves otherwise.

This isn’t some holier than thou wagging of the fingers--at the end of the day all we still work and study here right? We always have the option of leaving. But what an anti-work orientation<sup>7</sup> offers those of us struggling against the University is illuminating the uncomfortable truths about the complete unexceptionality of the ‘work’ we actually do here. If what we do isn’t special or different, but rather the same alienated life activity as any other form of labor, then why are so many of us so loyal to our ‘vocations?’ It urges us to reject not just wages or conditions of the workplaces, but the very category of ‘work’

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5 Madhu Suri Prakash and Gustavo Esteva, “Escaping Education: Living as Learning within Grassroots Cultures” *British Journal of Educational Technology* 39, no. 4 (2008): pp. 760-760,

6 Zoom Chat, UAW SRU/2865 Bargaining Caucus

7 See “But We Have to Do it Real Slow” by Noche

itself, the blariness of the life it creates, which is inseparable from the relations and reproduction of the racial regime of capital.

*We do not want to return to work.* Not because we hate this job in particular, but because we hate all jobs. Not because we think our jobs as graduate students are exceptionally bad, but because we know they are not exceptional at all, that they are just another form of exploitation like any other. We do not want to return to work because we want the end of the world of work and all its miseries, for ourselves and everyone else. *Anything less, any potential contract IS already the concession, no matter the terms.* So even after this strike ends, don't just teach your students, *commiserate, plot, study.* Don't just play your assigned role in your PI's research, *slack off, expropriate, scheme.* Or don't, just continue your assigned role as a productive and obedient scholar, educator, or researcher. But don't pretend your work is more important than the strike itself.

*You don't have to identify with the work that you do.* You really don't.

It's a road to nowhere. You're just fucking playing yourself.

(but maybe that's all most of us want anyway)



