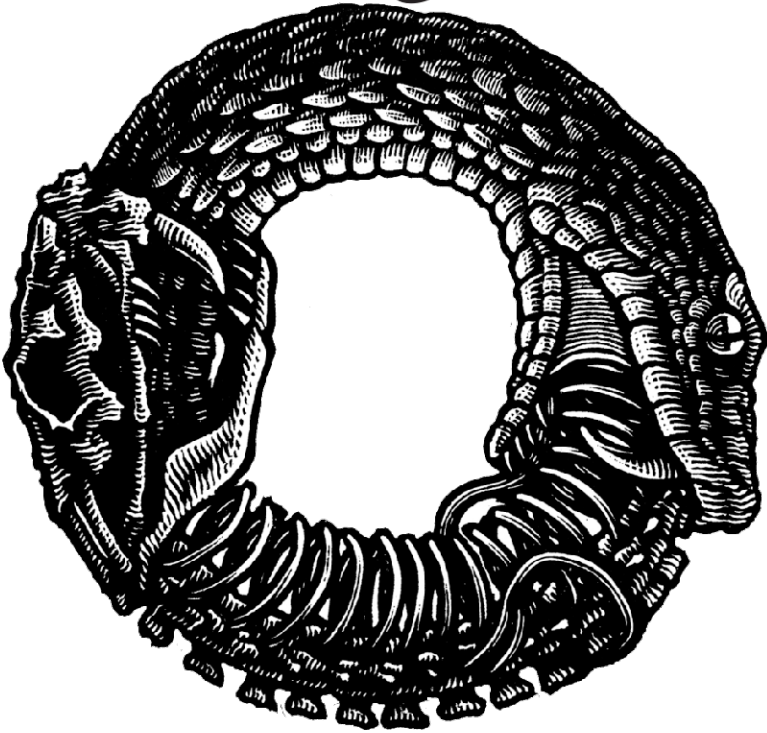


Against the Hydra!



On the Continuing
Appeal of Unionism

mapaches clandestinxs

Typset in ~~Berkali~~ ~~Blackletter~~ and Baskerville.

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*Against the
Hydra!*

On the Continuing
Appeal of Unionism

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FOLLOW THE HUMMINGBIRD A PROVOCATION

September 2023

*To the disgruntled workers, students, and militants in (and not of) the UC-system,
To the anarchic rebels, “ultra-left” communists, and the left from below beyond the UC-
system,*

*To the misaligned-dissenters, the “agent provocateurs,” and our accomplices against the
UC-system,*

To the trouble-makers in the undercommons making a fucking ruckus,

And lastly, to the UAW “socialist militants” (read as business unionists) and their allies:

May we “consistently [fail] to deliver” the demands of UAW bureaucrats.

Fuck the UC

Concretely, their [Abolish the UC!] core prescription was for small groups of activists to find ways for the strike on campuses to “spill-over” into a general struggle against capitalism itself through dramatic and spectacular tactical escalations. That they alone made this “call” was itself evidence of a more advanced radicalism. —Jack Davies & Sarah Mason¹

One must live a life of material privilege to overlook and unsee the ways UC “student-workers” have had enough. Yet, some of us felt the collective fire of a discordant *ya basta!* from the tired, hungry, and anxious bodies of UC “student-workers.” The dignified rage exploding from the barricades, banners, zines, classroom revolt, polemic, and clandestine activity of ghosts were direct actions and rebellious performances making *grietas* in the walls of each UC campus. We felt the agitated desires from these ghosts of the general antagonism. They were weaving themselves as anarchist cells in UAW assembly meetings; subverting chants as insurrectionary radicals, yelling *Fuck the UC*; writing biting analysis as the *oh-so-spooky* ultra-left communists on UAW tactical paternalism; and we felt an aliveness in this rebellion, as words and action opened an *arrebató* in our oppositional consciousness: a coyuntura to build trans-territorial confrontation against the Hydra-Head called the UC war-machine. We felt the *gritos*, however so softly at times, of the miserable graduate students who turned their wretched labor for the UC into energies to abolish it. And yet, UAW rank-and-file grad workers—from the above epigraph—are still unable to see

¹ Jack Davies and Sarah Mason, “Short of the Long Haul (2).” *Notes from Below* (July 28, 2023): <https://notesfrombelow.org/article/short-long-haul-part-2>

beyond their own appearance as a “militant” union, which itself fails to break away from fantasies of a UC-system which funds not only projects of death across the Americas but is itself a settler-colonial technology which has never redressed its historical and ongoing crimes on Indigenous lands or its antiblackness which permeates the collective psyche of us all. Land and life are at stake in abolishing the UC and its power, accumulation, and capture of student-labor. We must betray all conventions which prescribe the UC as our terrain of struggle through the mediation of “organized labor.” The territory is racialized class war. It is a war enacted by the *les damnés* and our accomplices. This was the spirit of our word, our actions, and our dreams — igniting the flames of the general antagonism: “*We do not want to return to work.*”² We do not desire to be captured.

Apologists flood the UC-UAW and their partner associations, merging their reflections and *autocrítica* into “accounts” of the strikes without ever asking if the land-grabbing University they organize “labor” on is accounting for contradictions greater than immaterial wage-labor. They orient their “organizing” of rank-and-file and “solidarity” with labor movements as wannabe Socialists and perform Marxist grammars of suffering for the figure of the student-worker—a detestable horizon to desire to maintain. UAW critics are blinded by the appearance of the University, focusing on their disappointments and the supposed failures of “Abolish the UC!” to “advance *the* struggle.” The joke is leveraging a critique which assumes our goals were “organizing labor.” As many of us conjured words and enacted direct action, we desired only an invitation: to expand the vision of the strike and take multiple paths to realize our call for generalized insurgency against Capital.³ The UC war-machine is not our friend. The UC war-machine will never love you. They will squeeze us dry and to death, with contracts, with a COLA, with a Ph.D. degree.

As unionists prepare for their “long struggle,” we find it necessary to remind the multitudes of the workers, students, and racialized proles in, against, and beyond the University to realize other means in the *trincheras* of the UC war-machine: to dream a world other than Capital, to imagine relations beyond the settler-colonial situation, to find each other in the miserable seminars or classrooms and conspire against the Hydra-Head of the University. Fuck a union which characterizes our negative ruptures as a dead-end “generalized insurrection” as though the “organizing” of student-worker labor for “fair contracts” was the emancipatory means of an eclipsed US *settler* labor movement. Destroy the fetish of the union and we

2 Some Maladjusted Anarchists, *Who the Fuck is ‘We’* (United States: self-published zine, 2022).

3 Emily Rich, “After the Strike: Reflections on the UC Struggle,” *The Brooklyn Rail* (March 2023): <https://brooklynrail.org/2023/03/field-notes/After-the-Strike-Reflections-on-the-UC-Struggle>

might reveal an overwhelming organization of professional bureaucrats (i.e., self-described Socialists). May we continue to not deliver whatever goods are projected on our word and actions. Fuck the UC means the realization “we” are captured. May we escape the dreaded territory of unionist fantasies of a “revolutionary” rank-and-file. Fuck the UC means finding it in your heart to betray the University and enter the door of a generalized revolt against Capital. May we escape the gridlock of analysis from white settler unionists who, in their rigid radicalism, swallow the pretense they struggle with The People™ as a “return to earth.” In the end, perhaps the wage(r)s of white settler unionists is to imagine and perform a University which continues its unaddressed terror here and everywhere. Fuck the UC means not being consumed by unionism and its “strategy” to win incremental crumbs so that UC grad students can continue to design their war-machine technologies represented by research projects, labs, and careers supported by white supremacist funding sources.

We, the degenerates with “ultra-left tendencies,” regenerate in *the below and to the left*, to suspend, anticipate, and refuse from the unruliness of the undercommons, finding each other in another world already existing. As some malcontents have already stated, “There is an entire subterranean world of refusal, expropriation, and fugitivity bubbling below the surface, yet to the union organizer this world does not exist except as potential material for the next membership drive.”⁴ In the wake of Fuck the UC, may we all remember that the revolt against Capital toward anarchy and communism is not the “organized labor” of middle-class, middle-brow graduate students who sell-out the potential of the multitude, but is the realization of the fire in our bellies to feel the glimmers of the emancipatory horizon. We do not claim your bunk-ass “evidence” of an “advanced radicalism” for we do not pretend to be “ahead” or “above” of anyone. Our struggle, as we saw and continue to see it, is to agitate, conspire, and re-seize the affective capture of our images — in other words, to expropriate everything from the University which has already destroyed us and rendered some of us into corny-ass drones conceding lines of flight for their recognition into the empire of the UC.

We are taking back our lives from this hell-world of the University. When “labor” strikes again, we invite you to *strike* the Hydra-Head of the UC war-machine. Fuck the UC has always meant an invitation to resistance and rebellion. Abolish the UC! is the opening to our collective fire. Follow the hummingbird.⁵ We call onto you/us to locate struggle in and outside the University, and to make a clang or a crash or a grieta on

4 Some Malcontents, *The Clarity of Denial and the Denial of Clarity* (United States: self-published zine, 2022)

5 This was a slogan spread across the UC Santa Cruz campus by the undergraduate affinity group The People’s Coalition in the 2020 wildcat strike.

the wall. We mustn't always appeal to the rigid unionism of the UAW and its "long-term" strategy. Our struggles, and the specificity of the racialized class struggle in the University, is beyond organized labor. It is class war. For the UC has leveraged war against us since its founding. On Indigenous lands, on the body of Black people, on racialized Mexican and Asian labor, and the working-class communities forced to re-locate for the traditional white-student population — and now we all participate in its forces of dispossession, marginalization, and exploitation. May the UC war-machine fall and may a "we" rise from its rubble. The University is death, and we struggle for life.

The University is Theft

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! —Abolish the UC!

Our destiny is to struggle, always struggle, at all hours, at every moment, in every place.
—SupGaleano

It is not too much to demand nothing and take everything. —disaffected communists

The appendix to this polemic — to articulate, multiply, and circulate the spirit of #cola4all in the early months of 2020 — is a historical note from the waves of student rebellion ignited by the wildcat strike ignited by a tiny contingent of UC Santa Cruz graduate students. The words never emerged in the discourse. Yet, they ring true to the realities and everyday life students and workers endured and continue to experience in the infrastructure of the UC system. The lines of revolt from disillusioned students were a fire for another world, more than a COLA, more than a "fair" UC-system. I share these words (found in the appendix) to remind us of what is at stake in the autonomous direct action *from below and to the left*, from the disaffected communists, maladjusted anarchists, embittered abolitionists, and dissenting militant student-workers who feel the UAW bureaucrats are self-serving, professional *levas*. More than this, it is to remind us that the struggle is more than "fair pay" or "fair contracts." It is the abolition of the UC death-machine funding settler colonialism, war, imperialism, and domestic terror in racialized prole neighborhoods. The UAW union's line and its authoritarian predisposition has us paralyzed. How do "we" who desire

another world unfeel and disrupt these acts of paralysis?

We — ghosts of the general antagonism writing from the undercommons — refuse to be or become the enlightened state agents of the professionalizing managerial class. We are the alienated student-workers, of both intellectual and manual labor, seeking refuge in each other, not the University nor the union. We are the *not* the union, but are below it, in the crowds, faceless without names. We are neither ranked nor filed. We are not a Left, but a left from below. We are the ungovernable. We are not alone. As the Zapatistas declared in 2020 in their *call for la lucha por la vida*, “We do not surrender, we do not sell out, and we do not give up.”⁶ It is this spirit in which we struggle, more than “fair pay,” more than a “fair contract.” We are against the Hydra-Head called the University. The University is theft! To strike the heart of the Hydra is to struggle against the multiple Hydra-Heads which peek out and confuse us. There must be a line of precision from where we speak. There must be an antagonism from where we strike. As we continue to fail ourselves in recognizing our sick planet and the global storm in which we endure, our survival will mean nothing if we act only on contracts and not the struggle for life where the stakes are too high to ignore. We struggle so that our paralysis may break free and open.

We lived in an unusual world during the 2019-20 wildcat strike — a world not inhibited by the novel coronavirus pandemic and its supposed afterlife. It was the 2020 pandemic that stunned not only the world-system but the heart of the general antagonism for a #cola4all in the UC-system, and more: the abolition of the UC itself. For two years and enduring to this day, students, staff, faculty, and others in the university suffered and practiced survival in multiple forms. Teaching assistants or “gradjuncts” had to “adjust” to what was informally known as “Zoom University,” the virtual teaching for a generation of undergraduate students. Alienation and its form transmuted with these adjustments. This move was not for the sake of public education. It was a move for accumulating profit, exploiting graduate students for their labor in a time of crisis. Rather than shutting down to respond to the pandemic, business went on as usual in its soft brutality. In the shadows, the agony and dissent of such conditions swelled in the hearts and hands of student-workers, staff, and lecturers. In “returning to the classroom,” only a year later, we were left open to the vicious brutality of the UC and its desire for profit at the expense of student exposure to covid-19. Now we are here, having had to strike again in 2022, but for a “fair contract” under “ULP” sanctioned strike activity, struggling for a sense of a dignified life, again, from both concessionary standpoints and in the

6 Comandante Don Pablo Contreras and Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, “Part One: A DECLARATION... FOR LIFE,” *Enlace Zapatista* (January 1, 2021): <https://enlacezapatista.czln.org.mx/2021/01/01/part-one-a-declaration-for-life/>

margins from below crying out against the hell-world co-constructed by the UAW. And some of us want to abolish everything.

The limit of the strike was the UAW's bureaucratic reason, twirling its promise in our faces as the "rank-and-file" cry out for their sense of dignity: some disillusioned, some already disrupting this University with "unconcerted" activities. We continue to feel the words in *Abolish the UC: A Provocation* (2020):

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.

As we witnessed and articulated from the activity of the UC-UAW sanctioned strike, many from the *grietas* of the University started to breathe and sing: Long Live the Wildcat! And its ghost sent a shiver down the backs of spineless, enlightened, democratic socialists settling for crumbs. The conservative chatter on the picket line was riddled with patronizing disputes that the bargaining units were rational, realistic, and reasonable — "we elected them, let them represent us!" Nothing was further than the truth, and the illusions broke down every day. UAW Local 2865, and the other units, represent themselves. The taste of a high wage — the bare minimum of this "fair contract" bargaining — being collapsed on itself, has aggravated us all. The question we ask now is as necessary as ever. What will prompt you/us into revolt? When will the everyday poverty of student life and the suffering procured by work in general will prompt you to make a *grieta* among the other *grietas* against the wall of Capital which sustains the brutality of the UC war-machine? The storm is already here. We are at the end of the end of the University — in its abolition or its recourse to develop the war-machine and technology of dispossession against the planet we call Earth. Our time is now, as it was yesterday and as it will be tomorrow. A contract is not dignity, the end of Capital is.

The months leading up to the 2022 strike was a moment which conjured the ghosts of the wildcat, #cola4all, and the desire for abolition — to tear down, expose, and burn the halls of the University, a vicious Head of the Hydra. *The ghost of the general antagonism has awakened.* Our invitation was the provocation: spread the strike, build autonomous, abolitionist lines of struggle! As we scavenge our collective memory of 2019-20 and 2021-22, we gesture toward UC Santa Cruz's The People's Coalition: follow the hummingbird. Enter the insurgent swarm of the disaffected, the dispossessed, *les damnés* of the University. Channel your emotions into the

revolutionary affects of dignified rage and fan the flames of your discontent! We are here not for the organization of *petit bourgeois* graduate students; we are here to commit class suicide. We are here to remind the shameless UAW bureaucrats and the University to be afraid. And be fucking afraid.

The UC war-machine steals, exploits, and produces us as commodities for the market where we will spend the rest of our lives entangled in the capital-labor relation. We are not here to defend careerism. We are not here to defend your research. Beyond the theft of land, time, bodies, life, and immaterial labor, the University squeezes us of our potential to ignite generalized revolt. We have been burdened by work. We have been depressed by work. We have been captured by work. The University steals our language, our grammars, our dreams, our visions, and our life. A union unable to recognize these simple acts and structures of domination have only ensured the University continues to exploit us, with fair contracts and all. The UAW will not save us. We must break the chains of unionism.

The University is theft, and we are the ghost of the general antagonism.

Break the chains of professionalism.

Fuck the UC.

Conspiring in the Break

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.
—disaffected communists

The fire is eclipsed by something dark, but it continues to burn, and its flames shoot out where they are least expected. —Fredy Perlman

We remember that month of 2020, when the United States signaled toward a “shutdown” of civilian activity in response to the emerging pandemic. Many of us were in Oakland, finding each other, at an encounter called *In, Against, and Beyond the Capitalist Hydra* that was hosted by the US-based network Sexta Grietas del Norte at the Omnicommons. It was there that UC Santa Cruz wildcat strikers were accompanied by friends from The People’s Coalition and #cola4all—that later turned into A Place 4 Us. It was this Zapatista encounter that inspired students to think in and with *zapatismo*. We felt its fire among the “trouble-making” strikers in 2020, who burned with a passion the desire for life beyond fair contracts and a people’s university; it’s a desire for abolition, presence in the absence of dignity.

It's the otherwise world dreamed from the *trincheras* of clandestine struggle toward abolitionist horizons. Our hope, at this encounter, was to suffocate the Hydra from all corners of the world — and it means the University, too.

The encounter was abundant in panels, pláticas, and performances inviting us to theorize what was then called *the civilization of death* or the capitalist hydra. It was to build critical thought in a critique of both civilization and capitalism. It was to build and sustain a network from below and to the left without adopting a singular line of political drama. At the heart of the encounter was autonomy and autonomous praxis toward another world in motion. For us, the wildcat strike and this encounter was the convergence of a cry from below: *¡queremos un mundo donde quepan muchos mundos!* As the uprising of the George Floyd rebellion generated the resurgence of Black radicalism in the streets, the scene of police precincts in Minneapolis burned, a collective heart of hope, revolt, and anarchy spread. The horizons of communism from below intensified with the dignified rage of proles and racialized peoples with nothing to lose.

But this is not a manifesto.

Almost four years since the wildcat strike of 2019-20 ignited by UC Santa Cruz and spread across the UC system, graduate student desires for a dignified life appeared in multiple ways, and it was the call for a living wage with a cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) igniting most students. This call was incendiary, as much as it was a popular concession from above (i.e., it was the only demand on the UC system). And a COLA will never be enough.

Four years. We find ourselves in the same old conditions with the same old concessions managed by the UAW Local 2865 union for graduate student workers. As UAW bureaucrats struggle for a “fair contract” with outlandish concessions, under the guise of respectability and of Unfair Labor Practices, an anti-political consciousness surges from the picket line: *fuck the UC!* Our terrain of struggle is the Hydra Head called the University. This current moment, with its slow incline and decline, has generated its own multiplicity in the face of union calls for “unity.” We are not innovative in saying unity is overrated: as some *compas* assert, our struggle must articulate itself as *a trans-territorial attack against the University*, and beyond it.⁷ We'd rather us, as others continue to express, to struggle from militant tactics and construct strategy beyond the re-constitution of our labor or the optimization of our work through wages. These tensions in analysis mean confronting the University as much as it is provoking the union's failures as a union. And we don't mean re-elections nor another union representation. Unionism and its content are what is repressing a struggle for cops off

7 “THE WILDCAT IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE WILDCAT! A COMMUNIQUE FROM ‘SANTA CRUZ,’” *communiqué*, 2022.

campus, disability justice, etc. The union is not our calendar, not our geography, nor our struggle for abolition. Abolition is not a student-worker's University.

The antagonism generated in opposition to union lines exploded into the barricades or liberated dining commons at multiple campuses in 2022, and the generalized feeling that the union sold us out was felt intensely. As compañerxs state in the communiqué “The Wildcat is Dead, Long Live the Wildcat,” “They care more about their ‘image’ and their whack ass singular demand than they do about actually causing disruption—saying ‘fuck the UC.’” The union had an entire body of “rank-and-file” waiting to win their “historic” victories in the UC. And they did win their “historic” strike, as they love to remind us in their autocritica and analysis of the 2022 UC strike. What was denied to everyone was the bare minimum of their strike against the UC. The appearance of union radicalism has been demystified as both representation and institution. We must not only theorize and act on this demystification but intensify its shattered image — to dig among its rubble and meta-ideologize a new image: the union has become a fetish among us, and we must put to task another proposal — to struggle for life beyond the form of unionisms. Our “civility” against the boss, whose blood-soaked hands squeezes us to death, will not convince them we are reasonable, as they will always attempt to defeat any demand they object as irrational. So let us become irrational in putting the stakes as our very lives.

A fire boils in the belly of disgruntled UC students and workers who have disenchanted the union's false promises. The banner of unionism hides not only our differences, but its petty crimes (concessions and conceding terrain) against student-workers. But our current moment is not only about future contracts. *It is a cry.* It is a refusal to accept the terms and conditions of a University that continues to profit from war, land dispossession, and student labor. Its accumulation is the theoretical infinite reach of the planet; its investment is the Earth as resource, people as consumable commodity. The commodity produced from its plantation is neither the degree nor status of a research-backed education. It is the student's body whose hands, mind, and degree will be bought, sold, and rendered for Capital and the re-production of commodities. *What is unionism if not the insurance that the commodity survives production?* What is our academic work if not the labor-power for the war-machine exploiting and expropriating the planet we call Earth yesterday, today, and tomorrow?

What *les damnés* are writing and doing from the undercommons is to intensify our differences of (anti-)political agitation to who we are as people with contradictory scales of experience to the violence of capital, racism, patriarchy, settler colonialism, imperialism, and so on and so on. To build struggle is to stay true to the multiplicity of tactics and affinities that expand

and spread any strike or antagonism against the UC to their generalized means for the end of this capitalist world. What union bureaucratic rhetoric and management has meant in the past in its gesture of the “united front” is the differentiation of anti-capitalist desire altogether. The disaffected communists who wrote *The Re-emergence and Eclipse of the Proletariat* said it best,

It is our wager that the UAW's tactical paternalism is not at all oriented towards these objectives [“to block the flow of value and expropriate at every possible turn”], 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.

The liberated dining commons across the UC in 2020 and 2022 asserted a parallel declaration: *the commons belong to everyone, todo para todxs*. Its temporal reclamation was also the fractured mirror against the union activities of empty and symbolic sit-ins. For us, expropriation and direct action gets the goods. For us, the liberation of dining commons is a dream made material in the opening of the doors, for as long as possible, for as long as we can hold out against the University. But let us not stray from the realities co-constructed by the autonomous and aligned rank-and-file who liberated the dining commons on their campuses — a split was being procured and the wound is being pressed on. The dissidents of the UC-UAW and those who are/were aligned *from below and to the left*, refusing the union’s official line, have broke open an event: a break from above and below in the union as an organization and institution itself. The event demands of us all to make praxis in the break, to commit from below and to the left a revolt in the name of the general antagonism, the ghost of our struggle. It is an event to refuse the refusal of autonomy. It is an event to be embraced by the warm food of the swarm who chanted from the barricades and who opened the doors to free food for students in liberated dining commons. Our “dignified wages” on stolen land is blood money. So, we are stealing back what is ours without permission, together and without apologies. We are the autonomous fangs of a de-fanged union, re-surfing from the margins with the spirit of generalized and open rebellion in our hearts.

In the *grietas* of the University, a door is being constructed: one that had subsisted in the rebellions of ‘68 around the world and in the spirit of a third world college that brought the UC to its knees in ‘69. Our door is no less nor more the same, except we must build it for it does not yet exist. To follow the hummingbird is to escape and dwell in the *grieta*, to listen to *les damnés* of the University and form an opposition which strikes the heart

of the Hydra! When we enter through the door, the uprising will become irresistible. Resist the temptations of the self-serving management of the union to save you.

We have our own declaration: *anarchy and communism*.

On the Future of UC Strikes

The earthquakes that shake the history of humanity start with a single, almost imperceptible cry of “Enough!?”; a discordant note in the midst of the noise; a crack in the wall. —El Escuadrón Marítimo Zapatista

To create a truly abolitionist university, this current world must end, and so must the University. —mack

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. —disaffected communists

Compañerxs,

There are fugitive-rebels in, against, and beyond the tide in the tame ocean of UC-UAW assembly meetings, dreaming your dreams of communism. They too are in struggle for dignity beyond work. We hope you find them, and that you find each other, and that we may also find each other too. In the words of a “cynical” writer who wrote the communiqué, “Everything is a Metaphor: When a Picket Becomes a Spectacle,” We too hope that you/we “...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.” In these gestures we open the door we constructed together to another world, one where we might not ever want to leave, and when the University destroys it, we will build it again, everywhere. Because you/we deserve much more than a fucking “dignified wage.” I leave those aspirations to the enlightened democratic socialists who were slowing down traffic on their campuses — prohibiting undergraduate students to perform their consumer duties for exams.

Abolish the UC! is not only a provocation, but a material struggle of anarchy and communism. You/we felt it when militant voices desired more than “fair contracts” and were called into making “Cops off Campus” a reality. You/we also felt it when graduate students organized zine-making workshops to intensify the form and content of the personal as political. It was felt when a flag of *tierra y libertad* was waved against the chants of “shut it down” as strikers walked in dead-end circles, the spectacle

of a snake eating its own tail. We are, rather, the serpent vomiting out our own existence into life. These gestures or invitations prompt us into other realities, dreams, and material desires. The union management of troublemaking signs and their yearnings was a repression of our emotions, our affects, and our time. We say keep on making white Marxists upset with your emotions, the future yellow-vest “de-escalators” worried you’ll/we’ll become a “contingent of troublemakers,” the bargaining teams feeling like they are selling out graduate students because they actually fucking do. Fuck Anglo-American pragmatism and socialism. We are students from Latin America, the Global South, the rez, the colony, the barrio, the borderlands, the hood, the disappearing community riddled with gentrifying graduate students, and the war torn ghettos of Palestine. We will not channel our emotions or energies toward “organizing.” *Fuck a union that patronizes.* Any and all strikes are ours, and we will not be made to produce the commodity of spectacles. UAW bargaining will continue to fail us, and the strikes do not belong to the UAW bureaucrats ready and willing to sell us out.

Imagine it. As you/we march, chant, and wave our signs of “On ULP Strike!” under the UC-UAW union banner, our enemy remains the same: the UC and its provosts, its regents, its chancellors, and its administrators. As you/we continue to disrupt, blockade, and resist the University, our enemy remains the same: the UC and its provosts, its regents, its chancellors, and its administrators. The form of our struggle must flow with the dignified rage of our strike, and that might mean taking the form of a wildcat strike beyond any union strike itself. It might mean a flowering of study groups (*semilleros*) to develop critical thought and analysis, to become sentinels of the encounter and generate new combative, militant content for our antagonism. It might mean refusing to convince any bargaining team of our humanity. It might mean refusing to make the UC “listen” to us. Our path necessitates not the valorization of the student-worker nor of unionism, but a critique of the student-worker then made into the praxis of abolishing the student-worker as the paradigm of our abolitionist horizon. A socialist or people’s University is still a settler-colonial University.

What is a #cola4all when it becomes reduced and limited to the the rent-burdened graduate student as a singular demand? What of *las señoras* cleaning graduate student offices? *Los señores* as grounds keepers denied access to dining commons? Of those racialized prole undergraduates who work multiple jobs to make ends meet and burdened by the emotions of a disgruntled graduate student? What is a #cola4all captured by the business unionists who betray its rank-and-file? The union struggles for the STEM research which funds war. The union struggles for social sciences which exploit the poor. The union struggles for humanities which ignores the racialized people who clean up their wine-mixers. Enough is enough.

We are tired. Fuck the UC.

So, compañerxs in the UC-system:

When the time comes or feels right, build the barricades! Liberate the dining commons! Drop banners that yell Fuck Cops! From the fire in your belly, refuse to be ordered by union organizers and their “de-escalators.” Strikes are your strike. We strike so that we may feel, so that we may think, and so that we may see — we are more than workers. And when they tear down, dismantle, or capture our/your autonomous direct action, in whichever form it expresses itself — let them think they have unsettled our dignified rage. In the words of la paperson, “Only the bad guys build things that last forever.”⁸ So, let us build things that shake us up and makes a fucking ruckus — however long they last, for we will build them again and again and again. We are no longer here to build cultural centers or elect union leaders. Abolish the UC! means building another world without it. May the flowering of resistance and rebellion germinate the seeds of autonomous life! May the world(s) waiting to be born flower with dignity! We are the visceral Earthquake of today, tomorrow, and yesterday. The worlds of anarchy and communism are on the horizon. Fuck surrendering everything less than our lives to demands for bunk-ass wage-increase. Let us revolt together and take it all.

Frente a muros y fronteras, nuestro navegar colectivo.

Frente al gran capital, una milpa en común.

8 la paperson, *A Third University is Possible* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2017): <https://manifold.umn.edu/projects/a-third-university-is-possible>.

DEMAND NOTHING, TAKE EVERYTHING A POEM

we all felt it
a whisper
of “*enough!*”
burning with rage

we bore witness to a major vote
of over 36,000 graduate students
who gave power for the union
to decide to call a strike
in the UC-system

November 14th
an event of sorts
emerged
tensions
in its wake flowed like water,
down a long stream of tears,
cries, and the resurgence
of a fire.

some woke up early
first week on Monday
we felt our breath
against the cold air.

and the verbal baton
beat out our dignity
instructing us
to march
for death
a familiar
territory.

in our refusal,
we rejected the union.

our autonomous
dignified rebellion
had no end
but the means
and desire for the

destituent processes.

the University
is a social relation
of domination
graduate student-workers
the intellectual
and manual laborers
who polish
the research,
teaching,
bibliographies.

many of us,
if not a minority
in the sea of graduate students,
are not only calling onto
student-workers to engage
their imagination,
but to dream.

commiserate, plot, study,
*slack off, expropriate, scheme*⁹
no debt, no tuition, no hunger,

Fuck the UC and their allies.

And if our survival
is not seen as reasonable —
*we will become unreasonable.*¹⁰

Communism
is nothing other
than the death
*of capital.*¹¹

stay trucha,
*stay dangerous*¹²

9 These two italicized lines are taken from some maladjusted anarchists in, *Who the Fuck is 'We'*, a zine published in 2022.

10 <https://communemag.com/become-unreasonable/>

11 A slogan seen on a sticker.

12 This is a statement taken from a *compa* from UCSC.

remember the wildcat.

when the union abandons you
we are here, already in coalition
hoping you join the dream
a world without work
a world with
anarchy & communism

un milpa en común
desde el semillero del futuro

APPENDIX

HISTORICAL NOTE IN, AGAINST, AND BEYOND THE UC¹³ | March 2020

Student-based movements are a struggle for dignity.

The United States-based public university system in California are the constructions of settler colonial technologies turned into research institutions that sit upon, in their clearing of land, accumulated Indigenous territories. From Ohlone lands to Kumeyaay waters, the University of California (UC) is a product of the Morrill Act of 1862 that set the framework and infrastructure for land-grant university campuses. UCs are on unceded, ancestral territories of Indigenous people. The UC is settler-colonial and a neoliberal, imperialist institution that continues to actively displace Indigenous peoples of California from their ancestral homelands, while simultaneously hyper-exploiting those it recruits to work and study within the university.

Since the early 1960s, students of all class, gender, and racial backgrounds have challenged the entire structure of these UC institutions of higher education. The struggle for a Third World College in the late 1960s is an exemplary struggle that challenged a reconstitution of the UC altogether, localized at UC Berkeley and its roots at San Francisco State University.

As a multi-racial struggle, the Third World College demonstrated the need for Third World Studies, initiated by the project for Black Studies and pushed forward by Black students at UC Berkeley. And alongside Black students were Asian, Chicanx, and Native American student organizers. The Third World College struggle was to re-create and re-imagine the university. It is imperative that we understand the university as an anti-Black technology where Black students, faculty, and staff continue to be underrepresented, targeted by police (university-affiliated and not), and continue to endure the anti-Black racism inherent in settler colonial institutions.

Led by the efforts of the Third World Liberation Front, the Third World College was a reality, if only for a moment and in the spirit of student struggles, a fragile crack in the university. It demonstrated the ability of students to convene, organize, and collectively decide for themselves and envision an autonomous education—an education free from capitalist desire. The fight for a Third World College was one of the longest student strikes in 1968. It was a call to action for students to demand control over the future and destiny of Third World people.

At the end of 2019 and in early 2020, before the pandemic, we were witnessing another iteration of resistance and rebellion against the UC by working graduate students. Sparked by the graduate students at UC Santa Cruz in Fall 2019, articulations of a cost-of-living adjustment, or COLA, led to a growing UC-wide response of other graduate students coming together to announce their own struggles of being rent-burdened.

Undergraduates, AFSCME UC service-workers, faculty, and community members supported the full strikes at UC Santa Cruz and UC Santa Barbara, and other iterations of wildcat student strikes across the UCs and continued to do so as the strike spread.

This UC COLA movement inspired by UC Santa Cruz increased and fanned the flames of student uprising, exposing the UC for its capitalist design and settler colonial practices. The UC would rather have invested in its settler-colonial project by exploiting the displacement of Indigenous communities and the desecration of Indigenous lands than investing in students and workers within the UC and the local Indigenous communities. For example, the UC has played an instrumental role in initiating and funding the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) project on Mauna Kea in Hawai'i. Mauna Kea, the sacred birthplace of Hawai'i and the Indigenous Hawaiian people, is home to rare, threatened, and endangered species and freshwater aquifers. Indigenous land defenders vehemently object to the environmental and cultural impact of a massive 18-story, five-acre telescope complex constructed on sacred land, yet the UC has invested nearly \$40 million in the project. The TMT project depends on the UC's support and would likely be unable to proceed without it. This student-worker movement provided a space for students to expose the ways in which the UC spends tuition money on projects such as the TMT while facilitating students and workers to live off poverty wages.

COLA offered an opportunity for autonomous student articulations of a "COLA4ALL." What we witnessed was beyond the demand for a wage increase for graduate students. It was about calling out the UC as a settler-colonial, neoliberal institution. On December 8, 2019, marginalized graduate students at UC Santa Cruz whose concerns and perspectives were not being addressed or taken seriously by the initial COLA movement, decided to organize autonomously. On the same day that UC Santa Cruz graduate students voted to go on a wildcat strike by withholding Fall quarter grades, COLA4ALL announced its obligation to expand the fight beyond simply a COLA for graduate students, by including and pushing for the demands of undergraduates, undocumented students, Black students, Muslim students, disabled students, queer/trans students, service and staff workers, refugees, and other hyper-marginalized groups found within the UC system. COLA4ALL began and continued with the vision of reimagining the UC that works for students, not against students.

As they chanted from the marches, “A place for us all to thrive.”

COLA4ALL proposed and engaged in direct-action endeavors that built community within the very institutions that sought to divide students, isolate them, and suppress their fullest potential; within institutions that are rooted in the violence of colonialism and the greed of capitalism; within institutions that will continue to take from them until there is nothing left to exploit. These extreme working conditions are not separate from the issues of struggle outside of the university. These struggles are deeply intertwined.

The liberation of dining halls, one of the most powerful direct actions organized by COLA4ALL, was in direct homage to the Black Panther’s Free Breakfast Program. By working against food injustice and the university’s profit-driven agenda, dining halls were opened to combat food precarity that is rampant within the UC, just as it was within marginalized, low-income communities of color. The liberation of dining halls created a space for students to come and eat for free and to build community with one another while recognizing that the food was already paid for by the extremely high cost of UC tuition.

Chants of “On Strike! Shut it Down!” resonate with the history of struggle against the UC. One of the most popular chants, “Cops Off Campus, COLA in Our Bank Accounts!” illustrates the extended demands by students that were more than just a COLA, but also about addressing and dismantling the militarization of the UC system.

What the decentralized movement at UC Santa Cruz and other UC campuses demonstrated was the necessity of democratic practices of making decisions and the gifts of direct action. Many UC Santa Cruz COLA organizers also articulated something beyond a COLA to also say, “Fuck the UC.”

This was a controversial position, but it is one we must listen to and be attentive toward. “Fuck the UC” is an enunciation against settler-colonial technologies, of gentrification, of racism, of corporate capitalism, of anti-undocumented student animus, and anti-worker infrastructure. “Eat the Regents” is more than just student wildcat striker rhetoric. It is a call to action against the very university system students are part of. It is to make visible the hidden capitalist-imperialism supported by the structure of the regents of the UC that make the living conditions of all workers within and outside the university unbearable.

COLA, in the spirit of the Third World College, sparked the potential to organize and mobilize students and workers. COLA re-inserted a dialogue about invisible labor, the precarity of workers, and the crisis of income and rent for many in the UC system.

With the firings of almost 100 UC Santa Cruz graduate student workers who went on a full wildcat strike and did not submit grades the Fall quarter, we saw the coercive power of the university with its inability to

not negotiate with its graduate student workers. On March 5, 2020, a UC-wide blackout took place in solidarity with the fired UC Santa Cruz wildcat strikers.

The spirit of COLA was beyond pay. The efforts of students, from undergraduates articulating their own demands to graduate students continuing teach-ins, political education, and collaborating across intersections that have fueled momentum for articulating what autonomy and being in and against the university can look like. It was a moment akin to the Third World College, where students imagined that another university was possible, where exploitation and rent burdened life did not exist; where students and workers can fill their stomachs from mutual aid; and, where students teaching each other about oppression and the history of collective action can take place amongst joint struggles.

This movement was more than just COLA. It was and is part of a long history of student resistance and rebellion that desires solidarity across all paths of life. As a decentralized front, the practice of horizontalism, and of its ability to include all, the movement for COLA has shifted toward a movement against capitalism and settler colonialism—or has the potential to be through UC Santa Cruz’s The People’s Coalition (and other formations such as the one at UC Irvine), an autonomous group in fugitivity who were organizing an undergraduate student strike before the pandemic. COLA was and is a crack in the university, and it is our imperative to build beyond COLA and to demand more than COLA. COLA4ALL means ALL.

Become unreasonable and become non-negotiable.

Another university is possible.

In coalition,
a UCSC wildcat striker and a UCSB dissenter

