UCSC Give Graduate Students a COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment)! Anakbayan Santa Cruz Stands in Solidarity with the Strike of Graduate Students!

For Immediate Release

Contact: Julius Abad, Chairperson of Anakbayan Santa Cruz,
anakbayansc@gmail.com

Dec, 12 2019

Anakbayan Santa Cruz issues unwavering and militant support for the wildcat strike started today by University of California, Santa Cruz graduate student workers fighting for a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). Understanding the power of their labor, these graduate students have been decisive in withholding the product the university depends on: grades for its classes. We salute the graduate students in their decisive step to struggle for their economic rights. As the cost of living, particularly rent, in Santa Cruz has skyrocketed in the past few years, students, university workers, and graduate student students have voiced their incredible difficulty in living in Santa Cruz. Many graduate students have voiced spending over 50% of their wages for rent. As a student organization of undergraduates, who also feel the pain of economic struggle, we understand our situation to be inextricably linked.

The exploited masses of this University have made their demands known. On November 7th, 1 in 10 of UCSC's graduate students marched on Kerr Hall demanding a Cost of Living Adjustment from the university's administration. On November 13th, service workers of AFSCME 3299 and undergraduate students striked for an end to outsourcing and fair contract with fair wages. These actions have shown the true conditions of the economic crisis that is present here in Santa Cruz. The administration has responded by offering "long-term" solutions to their demands, such as building graduate-student housing, but the issue is clear that this is an immediate crisis that requires an immediate solution.

The graduate students who have called the strike have voiced taking the utmost care in withholding grades and avoiding negative effects on undergraduate students. They have voiced their need for solidarity with undergraduate students and understand our unity is necessary for their victory. It is clear that this university system that shackles undergraduates in debt for the sake of profit is the same university system that pays unjust wages to the graduate students.

The clear enemy is this struggle is neoliberal capitalism and the sectors of the administration that uphold it. In prioritizing the production of profit based on the economic exploitation of service workers, graduate students, and undergraduate students over the espoused values of

equality and diversity this university shows its true face: inaction in the face of the masses that clamor for their basic needs.

In the face of rising repression of the US-Duterte Regime in the Philippines, this past November we have seen the raiding of progressive organizations, the arrests of activists, and unending violence against farmers in the countryside. All of this has been carried through the regime's new counterinsurgency program Oplan Kapanatagan, that seeks to launch all out war against the people's struggle for National Democracy through its "whole of the nation" approach which weaponizes even civilian bureaucracies. We must also highlight the US government's financial support of these atrocities, to the tune of $200 million annually, that goes to the Phillipine military rather than investing in fair wages for graduate students and service workers or the education of undergraduate students. With these grave injustices in mind, Anakbayan Santa Cruz sees it prime importance in standing in solidarity with the graduate students who are exploited by the university and fighting for their democratic rights, much like the toiling masses of the Philippines.

Anakbayan Santa Cruz calls on our members and other progressive student organizations to stand in solidarity with the graduate students fighting for the economic and social rights to housing, a livable wage, and fair pay for their labor. Hanggang sa tagumpay! Hasta la victoria! Until Victory!