

Homeless Union Supports U.C. Santa Cruz Graduate Student Strike: An Urgent Call for Solidarity!



“This is a strike against poverty, homelessness and starvation wages. In standing up for themselves, the students are fighting for eight million Californians barely surviving below the poverty line, for the 140 million people across the country who struggle daily for the bare necessities. In the face of an intensifying cultural and actual war on those unable to afford traditional housing, the strikers are dramatically shattering stereotypes and changing the narrative. From the camps to the campuses, we share both the specter and the reality of poverty, hunger, homelessness and police violence. Your fight is our fight; together we can win.”

--Resolution of Solidarity from the Executive Council, National Union of the Homeless

Graduate student teachers’ assistants at the University of California represented by UAW Local 2865, are defying police violence, suspensions, threats of termination and even deportation as their expanded wildcat strike against the University of California Santa Cruz enters its second week. The strikers are among the lowest paid workers in California, unable to afford the high cost of housing, food and other basic necessities. They represent the emerging, genuine face of poverty and homelessness. These are teaching assistants, PhD candidates and students sleeping in their cars,



going without food, doubling and tripling up in overcrowded apartments. They are demanding a modest cost of living allowance (“COLA”) of \$1412.00 per month from a university system with an annual budget of \$35 billion while graduate student teaching assistants earn less than \$2500 per month in a city where the median monthly rent is \$1685.00.

Faced with the refusal of UC administration to come to the bargaining table, strikers expanded their struggle on February 10 and in recent days have been joined by teachers, undergrads and UC maintenance workers. Although the wildcat strike has not been officially sanctioned, UAW has pledged to defend those students who have been suspended and otherwise punished for being on the picket line.

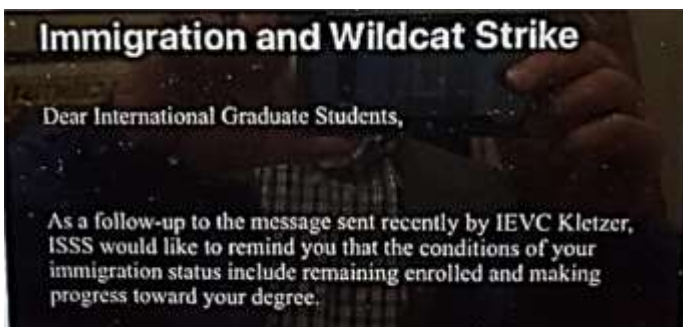


The University has responded with police violence and threats to terminate those who are on student or work-related visas, knowing full well that by so doing, they may be subject to deportation. Over 18 students have been arrested, many clubbed, beaten and injured by officers from at least five different police and sheriffs departments from as far away as 100 miles. Students who are arrested face immediate suspension without any prior due process. On the third day of the expanded strike, hundreds held the picket lines for four hours, forcing police to finally retreat.



Homeless Union stands with striking students

The significance of this strike cannot be overstated. Just this week, the federal government admitted that student homelessness from kindergarten to the 12th grade now stands at 1.5 million children. The housing crisis and the phenomenon of homelessness is the simply the most visible expression of the *failure of a system*, and not the personal failing of the poor. No one is immune: the displaced, gentrified renter; those hit with a family medical crisis; one paycheck, one wildfire away from homelessness. The striking students are changing the narrative and dramatically exploding the false stereotypes and the heavy-handed response of the University is showing how close the campus is to the camps. Indeed, it was the same police who routinely destroy the encampments and the rights of those on the streets of Santa Cruz who now make



A thinly veiled threat of deportation.

their way to the grassy slopes of the University, riot-equipped, nightsticks flying, the students armed only with their numbers and their determination, demanding “Money for housing, not police!”

The Homeless Union has directly supported this strike from the beginning; our partners in Santa Cruz Food Not Bombs continue to bring food and water to the picket lines, and our national Executive Council has mobilized all of our local unions to publicize and support the strike.

Please contact University of California Santa Cruz and University of officials to demand that police stand down, that all strike-related suspensions be rescinded and all threats of deportation against international student strikers be prohibited:

Janet Napolitano, Office of the President, University of California, email: president@cop.edu.

Cynthia K. Larive, Chancellor, U.C. Santa Cruz, email: chancellor@ucsc.edu. Phone: 831-459-4291;

John A. Perez, Chair, Board of Regents of the University of California, email: regentsoffice@ucop.edu. Phone: 510-987-9220.

Please send statements of support from unions, community organizations, churches, homeless advocates, students and educational associations to: **Yulia Gilichinskaya and Tony Boardman**, UC Santa Cruz Graduate Student Association at gsa_pres@ucsc.edu and to: **Alicia Kuhl**, President, Santa Cruz Homeless Union, alicia11@hotmail.com.



The National Union of the Homeless

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