

To the University of California community:

On behalf of graduate students in the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Irvine, we write this letter to demand accountability regarding the racist police violence which occurred at the peaceful march on Thursday, February 20th in solidarity with the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) strikers at UC Santa Cruz (UCSC).

On Thursday, February 20th nearly 200 students and their supporters marched to Aldrich Hall in solidarity with strikers at UCSC. Their wildcat strike began on December 9th, 2019. As of this letter's release, the strike has spread to UC Santa Barbara and UC Davis. Graduate students at *every* UC campus are now taking up the call for a COLA for every graduate student regardless of residence, immigration status, visa documentation, employment or funding status, to bring graduate students out of rent burden without raising tuition or campus fees and with a guarantee of non-retaliation for everyone, including lecturers.

With the intention to personally meet and deliver their demands and fliers to UCI Chancellor Howard Gillman's office, students were met with police brutality. Instead of meeting with students to discuss their urgent financial needs, the administration placed the building on restrictive access and locked the doors. UCI police officers blocked every entrance to the building and selectively admitted individuals who were predominantly older and white or Asian. During that lockdown, UCI police used physical force and verbal abuse against students, including many in our own department, effectively escalating events over the course of the day. "A UCI student heard screams coming from within the building and followed the sound to find a Black female UCI alumna being handcuffed by UCI police officer Trish Harding. The alumna was taken into custody by UCI PD and sent to the Orange County Women's Jail. As of February 21st, she has been released from police custody. The recap of the incident affecting [a Black alumna] is intentionally devoid of language that could harm her legal case" (BSU/USAS joint statement). UCIPD violently arrested a Black alumna, who was not participating in the peaceful march but was simply picking up a copy of her transcript. We condemn the UCIPD for their hypocrisy and anti-Black racism in tackling and arresting a Black woman and then charging her with assault, and we condemn the silence of the UC administration and the wider campus regarding this arrest.

We, UCI Anthropology graduate students, are committed to fighting the systemic anti-Blackness that leads to the violence that Black students face everyday at UCI. We regret the lack of urgency in our response and fully support the joint statement released by the UCI Black Student Union (BSU) and United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) and their demands: financial support for the alumna's legal and car fees, loan forgiveness and funding for Masters/PhD programs' life-long and free of charge psychological services for the alumna to be provided by Black

therapists and mental health practitioners; the firing of Trish Harding, a UCIPD officer, for her acts of violence at the COLA solidarity action; and the abolition of UCIPID and all other paramilitary forces.

This is part of a long history of anti-Black racism on the UCI campus. In 2013, while studying at UCI's science library, a Black woman student found a racist note slipped into her backpack. In the same year, the UCI chapter of Lambda Theta Delta Asian-American fraternity created and published a music video on Youtube depicting one of their members wearing blackface. The history and occurrence of systematically racist events on campus is long and endemic. A core tenet of the demand for COLA is the commitment to fight anti-Blackness in all forms. We understand that the fight for justice for graduate students across the UC system is not only a fight for economic justice, but for justice for all those facing institutional precarity, particularly those communities upon whom the existing current UC system exploits.

At UCI, the average graduate student spends 43% of their income on housing, and some students report spending as much as 80%. The Federal Housing Guidelines indicate that individuals who pay more than 30% of their monthly income for rent are considered rent burdened. In order to get out of rent burden, we are joining the call for a COLA increase at UCI in the form of a year-round monthly payment of \$1,084.00 in addition to our current wages. We currently make \$2171.91 a month for nine months (November - July) as a salary meant to cover expenses for an entire year, with desperately needed summer funding only provided at the discretion of our department instead of our employer. On an everyday basis, some of us are faced with impossible choices beyond the means we are given to address our basic needs.

Furthermore, in our commitment to reimagine a public university system which puts education over profit, we would like to draw attention to the most vulnerable among us: service workers, predominantly immigrants and people of color, who are the lowest-paid but most essential workers in the UC system. We would also like to recognize their tireless and brave work over the years as they have fought against unfair contracts, and unsafe and unjust working conditions. In our work to reimagine the public university, we commit to building long-term solidarity across and within the UCI campus - with service workers whose labor allows the University to literally function, with precariously employed lecturers who are often our teaching partners, and with the undergraduate students in our classrooms and who are food-insecure and rent-burdened.

We, the below signed graduate students, fully support the strikes of the UCSC, UCD, and UCSB graduate students and the demands of the BSU and USAS, and we hope their action can lead to a prompt response from the administration to truly solve this crisis across all the UCs.

Diana Gamez

Gina Hakim
Tarek Mohamed
Kaitlyn Rabach
Raymond Fang
Jessica Slattery
Elizabeth Rubio
Janelle Levy
Maria Liliana Ramirez
Andrew McGrath
Tanny Islas
Muneira Hoballah
Tawfiq Alhamedi
Monique Azzara
Shannon Bae
Anna Kamanzi
Annie Wilkinson
Scott Jung
Jason Palmer
Tim Schütz
Melissa Wrapp
Angela Okune
Rebecca Richart
Yvette R. Vasquez
Taylor Silverman
Darwin Rodriguez
Courtney Graves
Alex Wolff
Danielle Tassara
Alice Chen
Kathryn Cox
PhD Mama Collective
& other UCI Anthropology graduate students who wish to remain anonymous