



Wednesday 27 May 2020  
news on the digital picketline



# HANDS OFF CARLOS!

## HOW UC SANTA CRUZ USES POLICE RACIAL PROFILING TO SILENCE DISSENT

The most [newsworthy](#) and specular dimension of the graduate worker wildcat strike at UC Santa Cruz and on other campuses was undoubtedly its mass character. Hundreds striking and thousands demonstrating for a [cost of living adjustment \(COLA\)](#); 18 violently arrested; nearly 100 fired. Yet in the relative quiet of the enforced shelter-in-place, the UC has ramped up a more sinister weapon in its repressive arsenal, singling out poor, first generation student-workers of color like [Carlos Cruz](#) with student conduct violations for their participation in mass actions. Relying almost exclusively on police testimony, Carlos was issued with an interim suspension merely for joining his striking workers on the picket line and in dining hall takeovers, dubiously picked out from the massive crowd. He has since received a two-year suspension for a host of trumped up charges that bear all the hallmarks of racial profiling in a process carrying all the punitive power of law, and none of the oversight.

[Listen](#): police transmission recording reveals targeted surveillance of Carlos Cruz.

The dubious and obscure provisions of the student conduct board are designed to allow administrators to single out perceived troublemakers for retaliation. These proceedings no doubt cost much less than the extravagant [\\$300,000 per day](#) that Chancellor Larive thought fit to spend on riot gear, highway patrol, per diem for out-of-town police, and [military surveillance tech](#) at the picket line. They have certainly attracted much less unwanted attention so far. The student conduct mechanism also has the benefit of avoiding hard-won labor protections by targeting the student status of striking graduate workers, while achieving the same effect as the retaliatory firings in February: effective expulsion and unemployment.

Yet the police are everywhere in these kangaroo court arrangements. They had no plausible grounds to cuff students like Carlos for arrestable actions at the picket, despite their best efforts. Happily, the extrajudicial powers vested in them by the student conduct board offer a second chance, allowing them to supply the substance of the accusations, to stand as the witnesses in the investigations, and even to receive enforced acts of contrition meted out as secondary punishment for “guilty” students. One wonders whether or not the UC police officers in question, whose cozy six-figure salaries are only a little more modest than those of the administrators they assist, receive their standard \$90-120 per hour overtime rate for these valuable services.

For those who know anything about the function of the police in the United States, it will come as little surprise that the graduate workers targeted this way are (almost without exception) poor students of color, first generation students, and undocumented students. University administrators apparently see no duplicity in recruiting these children of immigrant parents as tokens of “diversity” to shore up their progressive credentials, while simultaneously reproducing racialized codes of criminality by piling all the weight of their punitive apparatus upon them.

Carlos Cruz was hit with a two-year suspension from the university, or a one-year suspension conditional on good behavior. Carlos was told that he could earn the generous one-year discount by conducting, among several other penitential gestures, a set of interviews with “UCSC affiliates whose work or learning were impacted by the strike.” The Assistant Dean of Students (judge, prosecutor, and parole officer all in one) does not hesitate to add, earnestly: “If you are interested in interviewing a UCSC Police Officer or staff member, please let me know and I will put you in touch.”

Called upon to explain his actions to the conduct board, Carlos writes:

“I participated in a peaceful labor action as graduate students at UCSC went out on a teaching strike. My relationship to this nonviolent labor picket is one that stems from a working-class immigrant struggle. I understand the importance of civic engagement and see the COLA movement as an extension of a fight against poverty. As a first generation Ph.D. student, I saw the importance of having my voice be heard at the picket line, but I did not imagine that our discontent would have been answered with violence by the police. I come from an immigrant community and was raised in a single parent household, so I experienced the realities of poverty. I spent most of my life hearing that higher education is the solution for one to come out of poverty and become successful. As I came to UCSC to chase a dream of becoming a college professor, I soon realized that my economic condition as a graduate student was substandard as I returned to live in poverty-like conditions where the only way out was through massive student loans.”

Carlos grew up in a community heavily policed by LAPD’s infamous [CRASH](#) unit (Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums) and his experiences on the picket line with the UC Police Department recalled a traumatic history of police harassment. The excessive force of officers equipped for riot control and the revelation that UCPD were actively surveilling him triggered the anxious symptoms of panic attack. As he recounts in a recent [Salon news story](#), Carlos was approached personally at the picket line by a police sergeant “who was able to identify me by first, middle and last name and date of birth.” Carlos has since suffered symptoms like a severely elevated heart rate, difficulty breathing, and excessive sweating. One can now read in the student conduct proceedings report after police report pinning the racist “ringleader” trope on Carlos, as though he were leading a gang of “hoodlums” rather than simply being on strike along with hundreds of his peers for the ability to pay rent. Despite Carlos’s own counter-evidence and his objections at being singled out, the Assistant Dean could not help but side with the weight of police testimony.

UC Santa Cruz would have itself known as a “sanctuary campus.” The Chancellor praises the diversity of our campus (diversity, she says, makes [“good economic sense”](#)). The UC President Janet Napolitano vocally supports DACA (notwithstanding her fingerprints on the ICE program from her former role as director of Homeland Security). Yet the experience of the student conduct proceedings for students like Carlos — and he is not alone among first generation graduate students recently targeted in the fallout from the strike — shows far more continuity with the most racist traditions of the US criminal justice system.

**We call on every member of the UC community to condemn the racist student conduct system.**

**Per the [student conduct code](#), the Chancellor has the “final authority” on the outcome of all student conduct discipline.**

**Email Chancellor Larive [chancellor@ucsc.edu](mailto:chancellor@ucsc.edu)  
+  
Dean of Students Naiman [gnaiman@ucsc.edu](mailto:gnaiman@ucsc.edu)  
to demand that all student conduct charges be dropped immediately.**

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