

Police attack Occupy protesters in Berkeley, California

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11 November 2011

Police attacked a demonstration in Berkeley, California on Wednesday, hitting students and youth with batons and arresting nearly 40. One graduate student was sent to the campus health center with serious injuries.

The actions against students in Berkeley, organized by the University of California campus police, are part of a wave of crackdowns nationwide that have led to the arrest of over 3,000 protesters. Last month, police in nearby Oakland violently suppressed protests, using teargas and flash grenades against Occupy demonstrators.

The “Occupy Cal” demonstrations at UC Berkeley began at noon with a rally of over 3,000 students at Sproul Plaza, in the heart of the UC campus. After an hour of speeches the group marched down Telegraph Avenue to a Bank of America a few blocks away, chanting slogans such as “We are the 99 percent” and “No Cuts, No Fees, Education Must Be Free.”

In addition to the social inequality targeted by the Occupy movement as a whole, students are protesting plans to once again increase tuition as a result of cuts implemented by the Democratic Party governor of California, Jerry Brown.

After marching for 30 minutes, the group met back at Sproul Plaza to hold a general assembly. Despite a warning from UC Berkeley’s chancellor prohibiting the setting up of tents, the general assembly of about 500 students passed a motion supporting the Occupy movement and declaring the start of Occupy Cal. Soon after, tens of police moved in to secure the grass space next to Sproul Plaza where the students were about to pitch tents. The crowd quickly reacted and rushed over to claim the area. After some time the initial police

force moved out and tents were set up.

Before tents were pitched, UC police officers had suited-up in full riot gear—equipped with batons, helmets, gas masks, teargas guns, etc.—just on the other side of the building. As students put up tents, news came in of police massing to drive them out. Students formed human chains protecting the tents. A battalion of riot police then came in from either side to force the students out. They cleared both protesters and observers away from the steps next to the encampment.

Police violently broke through the human chain. They beat students with batons, pushed and shoved, on several occasions throwing students to the ground. They uprooted tents and threw them into a pile. Shocked students filmed with their cameras as one police officer also took footage, but with different intentions.

Video of police beating unarmed students participating in the action can be found [here](#). Police ruthlessly used their batons to inflict injury on the peaceful demonstrators. Many protesters believe that the police were deliberately targeting women—several of the videos support this.

After their assault, the police grabbed the tents and filed out as students chanted slogans: “Shame,” “We are the 99%”, and at times “*You* are the 99%”, as they tried, unsuccessfully, to get police to stop their actions. After the police left, two tents were immediately put up as people cheered.

Later in the evening, a general assembly was called. Half a thousand students listened to a school administrator read a “compromise” proposal that was simply a reiteration of the earlier proposal prohibiting an encampment. After hearing the administrator speak, several students made speeches denouncing the UC Regents and highlighting the absurdity of not allowing

students to camp.

Around 10:00 p.m. police returned in force. Again, students were viciously attacked. It was at this point that at least one student was seriously injured. An associate professor was arrested alongside 38 others.

Throughout the evening, more and more students came to Sproul Plaza; at one point they numbered almost 3,000. A general assembly was called after 11:30 p.m., with debate continuing into the early morning hours.

In the end, a decision was made to call a system-wide strike on November 15, the day before a planned demonstration to shut down the upcoming UC Regents' meeting scheduled in San Francisco. The regents are considering draconian fee increases that follow already sharp increases over the last five years.

A third police raid was carried out around 10 a.m. on Thursday to clear new tents that had sprung up.

Patty, a single mother and student, told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “A lot of people of privilege attend this campus, but the ones at a disadvantage are the low-income ones. They’re struggling, they’re struggling to be here, struggling to put a roof over their heads. But they [the UC Regents] still want to make us struggle, to make a bigger blow than it is now. I think that’s because they want to push us out of higher education. And when I say ‘they,’ I mean the people who earn a huge income off of our debt.”

“I just feel that they know we’re catching on, we’re getting educated, we know what’s going on. We realize it, and we’re taking a stance. We don’t deserve this. I don’t see a point to why they are violent.”

When asked about what she felt about the Democratic Party, Patty said, “To be honest with you I lost faith a few years ago, especially now with the [Obama] administration in office. The way that I see the Republicans and Democrats, honestly if you remove the buildings they are in it’s the Bloods against the Crips,” she said, referring to two California street gangs.



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