

# Unite the working class to defend public education and democratic rights!

International Students for Social Equality  
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*This statement is available as a pdf for distribution.*

The attack by UC Davis police against peaceful protesters has shocked and revolted millions of people throughout the world. The use of pepper spray against the students has shown the hostility of the ruling elite to democracy, and the ruthlessness with which it deals with any opposition.

There is much more at stake in this attack than the misdeeds of one chancellor or a few police officers. The actions at Davis are part of a coordinated effort by mayors of major US cities—working with the FBI and the Obama administration's Department of Homeland Security—to shut down Occupy protests through violence. This crackdown has so far resulted in more than 4,600 arrests. Only three days after the violence in Davis, police assaulted and arrested students protesting tuition hikes in New York City.

This response is a devastating exposure of the hypocritical invocation of “democratic rights” by the American government to justify bloody wars and the destabilization of governments abroad. For all its talk about democracy and human rights, the American ruling class is ready to deploy mass violence the moment it perceives any threat to its own interests. One can imagine the uproar in the media if the events at UC Davis had occurred in Syria or Iran.

This police violence is just one component of a broader attack on the social rights of working people all over the world. In Greece, public assets are being sold off and wages are being slashed for the benefit of the bankers. In England, tuition is being tripled. And in the United States, Medicare and Medicaid are being cut, together with funds for public education and other critical social services.

But the working people of the world have shown that they are determined to resist these attacks. In dozens of countries, workers and young people are demanding the right to a future, economic equality, and democratic

rights. The latest round of protests in the United States is part of this global response, which has so far led to uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, as well as mass protests in Europe and the United States.

The key question is that of program and perspective. What is the way forward in the fight to defend public education, social equality, and democratic rights?

## **Break with the Democrats and Republicans!**

The police repression of the Occupy demonstrations makes clear that the state—the politicians of both big-business parties, the police and the courts—is not a neutral body. It is a *capitalist* state, which functions to defend the property and political rule of the corporate and financial aristocracy.

Ultimate responsibility for the attack on UC Davis students and the Occupy movement as a whole lies with Democratic Party lawmakers—including California Governor Jerry Brown and President Barack Obama. The Democrats as much as the Republicans are seeking to force the working class to pay for an economic crisis brought on by rampant speculation and the failure of the profit system.

The Brown administration is pursuing billions of dollars in cuts to social programs, including health care, education, and retirement. The bank bailouts overseen by the Obama administration have restored the wealth of the Fortune 400 to record highs, even as millions suffer from mass unemployment and poverty. In the midst of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, the Democrats and Republicans are engaged in a bitter struggle over the best way to slash trillions from government spending on the federal, state, and local level.

Chancellor Linda Katehi's own past highlights the international character of the attack and the coordinated response of the entire political system. She was involved in a panel that recommended the removal of restrictions against police raids on campuses in Greece, for the first time since the downfall of the military junta in 1974. In the United States, she is one of a couple dozen administrators that have worked with the FBI to monitor political activity on college campuses.

### **Turn to the working class!**

Students are being made to pay for the crisis of capitalism together with the working class as a whole. Among workers there is widespread opposition to the police attack at UC Davis and sympathy for the Occupy protesters. The conditions exist for forging a powerful unity between young people, fighting against tuition hikes and for the right to a decent future, and workers facing an unrelenting attack on their jobs and living standards.

Students at UC Davis and other Occupy protesters cannot restrict their activity to the campuses and encampments. They must turn to the working class—to all those who live from paycheck to paycheck, and work in the offices, factories and social services—and transform this sympathy into a powerful social and political movement.

A turn to the working class means a rejection of the various forms of identity politics that have come to define what is “left” in America. It is notable that the chancellor of UC Davis is a woman and that the president of the United States is an African-American. And yet the conditions for workers of every race, gender and ethnicity are worse than they have been for generations. So much for the claim that the political system can be changed by placing women and minorities in positions of power! It is necessary to focus on what unites working people and students—our common opposition to the dictates of the corporate elite.

A turn to the working class does not mean a turn to the trade unions. Efforts to create a “student-labor alliance” through coordination with the AFL-CIO and Change to Win unions are in fact aimed at subordinating the struggles of students and workers to the Democratic Party, which the trade unions unconditionally support. These organizations do not defend working people, but only the

interests of highly paid union executives. They have overseen a devastating collapse of living conditions without any resistance.

### **Take up the fight for socialism!**

Young people should draw definite lessons from the attack against students at UC Davis. It is impossible to reconcile the most elementary social demands with the present social system. Attempts to peacefully petition the powers that be are met with pepper spray and police truncheons.

Capitalism has failed—in the United States and throughout the world. In a world where new technological vistas offer boundless potential for the improvement of life, millions of young people are being told they have to languish in poverty and unemployment, facing a future of unending war and economic crisis.

The alternative to capitalism is socialism. Socialism means genuine equality—a society in which production is organized in the interests of social need, not private profit. Socialism can be achieved only through the establishment of a workers' state, which will transform the major banks and corporations into democratically controlled and publicly owned institutions.

For decades, the American ruling class has unceasingly denounced socialism, precisely because it fears it so much. As it enters into struggle, a new generation of young people must rediscover the historical traditions of the socialist movement. We urge all students who agree with this program to join the International Students for Social Equality, attend our meetings, and help build a socialist movement of the working class!



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