

Loyola Chicago adjunct faculty hold one-day strike

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As labor actions of educators spread worldwide, faculty and graduate students at Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois staged a one-day walkout on Wednesday.

Coming at the end of more than two years of negotiations, the walkout of 350 College of Arts and Sciences faculty, English Language Learners faculty, and the recently unionized graduate students was reportedly triggered by the university's 11th-hour imposition of a management rights proposal that asserted its ultimate authority over the adjunct faculty and the university as a whole.

The adjunct faculty, who are for the most part hired year-to-year or even semesterly, are paid \$4,000-\$4,500 per course, a rate which has not changed in the last 10 years. They are fighting for better pay, job security, health benefits, and to be considered for hiring when full-time positions open on the campus.

The April 4 strike date was set to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King. Reports had come in in recent days, from both the administration and the Service Employees Industrial Union, that an agreement would likely be reached before the April 4 deadline. Alyson Warren, an adjunct instructor, told the *Sun Times*: "We've said to the administration that we would love nothing more than for [April 4] to be a celebration, for 4/4 to be a time when we can be celebrating the fact that we've reached a contract that serves us all better."

Adjunct faculty voted to join the SEIU in January 2016, and since then have been in negotiations with the university to establish an initial contract. The negotiations have dragged on for more than two years.

Faculty complained that Loyola administration did not take them seriously and only in recent weeks, when it became clear a strike was possible, brought an

attorney to the negotiations.

The performance of the Loyola basketball team in the recent national college basketball tournament has raised the public profile of the university, and with it the plight of the adjunct faculty. The faculty has sought to use this publicity to pressure the administration to come to an agreement, appealing to the Jesuit university's reputation for being progressive and "social justice" oriented, often referring to its history of early racial integration in the 1960, and to Pope Francis' support for trade unions.

But any basis for the university's supposed progressive reputation faded long ago. In late February, the university's student union was the site of the violent arrest of a black business student by Loyola police during a basketball game. A viral video shows the arrest and students demanding to know why the student was being arrested, all while the dean for student safety and deputy Title IX coordinator Jessica Landis looks on.

The first woman and layman university president, Jo Ann Rooney, comes from a long line of high-level corporate and state positions, having won awards while working as a Department of Defense appointee in the Obama administration. In addition to higher education experience, she has also held corporate executive positions, most recently with the Huron Group, a major corporate consulting firm in Chicago, where she consulted for her former employer, the Department of Defense.

The SEIU, as with other unions, is working to isolate the struggle at Loyola. The fact that tens of thousands of teachers were on strike today in Oklahoma was not even mentioned at the noon rally by the SEIU officials, Chicago Federation of Labor Secretary-Treasurer Robert Reiter, or by the religious leaders addressing the

rally. Nor was the expanding wave of teacher strikes throughout the US and internationally.

Amid an upsurge of education and other workers, the unions are seeking to enforce a narrow provincialism to prevent the unification of educators at Loyola with other sections of the working class. In order to forward the struggle, negotiations must be taken out of the hands of the SEIU, and adjuncts and graduate students at Loyola must join their struggle with educators across the city, the state and beyond.



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