

# Under pressure from rank and file, California academic workers union announces vote to strike against campus crackdown

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5 May 2024

In response to last Wednesday's police-abetted Zionist/fascist assault on the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Palestine Solidarity encampment on May 1, UAW Local 4811 announced that it would be holding a strike authorization vote. Local 4811 covers 48,000 graduate students at campuses across the state of California.

The vicious assault at UCLA, the *New York Times* wrote on May 3, "ebbed and flowed for nearly five hours, mostly with little or no police intervention." Despite hours of video footage showing pro-Israel/genocide thugs using chemical sprays and fireworks as weapons against the encampment, as of Friday, the *Times* admitted, "no arrests had been made in connection with the attack."

In its statement announcing the strike authorization vote, the UAW 4811 Executive Board wrote that "armed ... counter-protesters" attacked the encampment, which included "members of UAW 4811." These members, the union wrote, were hit with "sticks," pelted with "bottles and fireworks" and doused with "bear spray."

It continued:

At an emergency executive board meeting this morning, **our union's leadership voted to hold a strike authorization vote as early as next week to give the Executive Board authority to call a strike** if circumstances justify: should the university decide to curtail the right to participate in protected, concerted activity; discriminate against union members or political viewpoints; and create or allow threats to members' health and safety, among others, UAW 4811 members will take any and all actions necessary to enforce our rights.

In an interview with the *Times*, Rafael Jaime, co-president

of Local 4811, confirmed the union plans to file "unfair labor practice" charges against UCLA, essentially accusing the school of discriminating against pro-Palestinian speech by allowing the right-wing rampage on May 1.

The decision is in response to the enormous anger among rank-and-file union members to the police crackdown being carried out by both parties across the country. Among the rank and file, there is growing support for a nationwide strike by both campus workers and industrial workers, including hundreds of thousands of autoworkers in the factories.

The *World Socialist Web Site* welcomes and encourages this sentiment. Last week, it published a statement by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) calling for national and international strike action to force an end to the police crackdown and to the genocide.

## UAW bureaucracy backs "Genocide Joe"

However, while Local 4811 has been compelled to call a strike vote, the UAW bureaucracy is already stalling for time. In the days since the announcement, it has not yet even said when the vote will begin. Even still, the statement added all sorts of hedges and conditions against actually calling a strike unless "circumstances justify." It has also yet to clarify whether a strike would take place across the entire University of California system or just at UCLA.

In reality, all conditions which Local 4811 referred to in its statement have already been met many times over. There is no legitimate reason for this delay, especially given the outcome of the strike vote is a foregone conclusion. Many graduate students have already voted with their feet by participating in the encampments themselves.

In a statement published Sunday on Twitter/X, the Socialist Equality Party's vice presidential candidate Jerry White said: "Not only should the 48,000 members of Local 4811 take immediate strike action to shut the UC campuses and protect the rights of students to oppose the US-backed slaughter in Gaza, but the entire 400,000-strong UAW membership, including workers in auto and defense plants must join them."

Everything depends on the initiative of the rank and file. If the UAW continues to stall, grad students and autoworkers must organize their own rank-and-file strike vote and begin preparations for walkouts anyway by forming rank-and-file strike committees in every workplace.

The reason for the UAW's delay is the bureaucracy's open support for "Genocide Joe" Biden, who is directing the crackdowns from the White House. UAW President Shawn Fain has made appearances with Biden five times since last November and has wholly adopted his pro-war rhetoric. This includes the slogan "Arsenal of Democracy," which Fain has had printed out on sweaters and t-shirts, which Biden uses to mean that American workers must build "aircraft carriers and tanks."

"Although the UAW has adopted a toothless ceasefire resolution, written by his Democratic Socialists of America advisers, Shawn Fain and Co. have blocked strikes at General Dynamics, Allison Transmission and other corporations that build weapons for Israel, Ukraine and other US client states," White continued.

"While delaying any meaningful action, the UAW has taken charge of suppressing workers' voices. At their political action convention earlier this year, the union, over the objection of workers, endorsed 'Genocide Joe,' for president. When workers at the convention objected, they were thrown out.

"This endorsement, which was made over the heads of the rank and file, must be rescinded," he said.

### **Local 4811 officials let cops into UCLA encampment**

This extends from the UAW's top officials in Detroit down to the locals. Video has emerged from the police sweep at UCLA on May 2 showing that the reason the police were able to quickly breach the barriers constructed by protesters is because UAW 4811 officials, who had been designated as security, simply let the cops in.

Denouncing this betrayal, Twitter user @afropessimistic wrote, "So it turns out that LAPD was able to enter the back of the encampment via Tongva steps because our spineless

ass @uaw\_4811 leadership let them! They performatively posed as encampment security and chaotically ordered the human barricade to disperse. Everyone involved must resign."

He added that these "spineless cowards sold out their own members to the ... cops! We've been saying that they're cops ever since they bowed down to the UC during the strike but never would I have imagined that they would make it so easy for the police to arrest their own members. Wow."

LA-based cop-watcher, William Gude, who was at the encampment Tuesday night and Wednesday morning, confirmed that before the UAW officials allowed police through the barricade, "They made a big fuss demanding I leave the steps. Said me standing on the steps puts people's lives at risk. I [kid] you not."

The UAW's support for war is connected with sellouts of major struggles by the working class on behalf of US capitalism. This includes the six-week graduate student strike across the UC system a year and a half ago, which they shut down before workers had achieved any of their demands using underhanded methods. Last year's auto contract, which Fain—and Biden—hailed as a "historic" victory, has led to thousands of layoffs, and it has emerged now that the union quietly agreed to remove restrictions on forced overtime.

Responding to the revelations about the UAW's role at UCLA, Jerry White said: "All UAW officials involved in police sweeps at UCLA or any other university, and every UAW official who aids in suppressing workers' democratic rights, including the right to protest, should be brought up on charges and expelled from the union.

"As the last seven months have shown, appeals to the university or government to defend free speech and end the genocide are less than useless," he concluded. "The defense of democratic rights is a class question. It is only through the mobilization of the working class on a socialist program and perspective, independent of all capitalist parties, that rights won in previous eras can be defended and expanded upon today."



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