

November 22, 2009

Open Letter from Concerned Members of the Faculty to Chancellor Robert J. Birgeneau,

We, the undersigned faculty, are writing to voice our strenuous objection to the use of unwarranted violence by the police forces enlisted by the University of California at Berkeley to patrol the student demonstration outside of Wheeler Hall on Friday, November 20th. It is now abundantly clear that in addition to UC Police, there were squads from the City of Berkeley and Alameda County, and that some of these police forces acted with undue violence at various points during the day, most conspicuously at mid-day and then again in late afternoon when they used batons against students and a faculty member. In some cases this occurred to defenseless people who had already been pushed to the ground, among them several who sustained injuries to hands, heads, and stomachs, and were forced to seek urgent medical care. These abuses of police power were captured on video recordings and in photographs, corroborated by numerous witnesses. They have now been widely circulated on the web and throughout the national and international media. We will send you a composite of those websites and testimonies under separate cover.

These documents clearly show that the students were acting in a non-violent manner when their civil rights were abrogated by police harassment and assault. Such instances of unprovoked police brutality would be appalling and objectionable anywhere, but we find it most painful for these events to have taken place on the UC Berkeley campus, given the important tradition of protecting free speech that you, Chancellor Birgeneau, have only very recently defended. Hence we regard with dismay and astonishment your euphemistic reference to last Friday's violence: "a few members of our campus community may have found themselves in conflict with law enforcement officers." There is no doubt that our students and colleagues did find themselves subject to unwarranted and illegal police brutality. It is therefore incumbent on the Chancellor of UC Berkeley to condemn such actions unequivocally and to make sure that such actions are subject to comprehensive review and disciplinary action.

Accordingly, we the undersigned demand that the university assume full accountability for the actions of the police forces active on campus on Friday, November 20<sup>th</sup>. We call for the administration immediately to convene an impartial and comprehensive investigation of the abuse of police power that resulted, making broad use of available testimony on the part of victims and observers, including photographic images, video and personal narration of those at the scene in order to establish a clear record of the facts. We ask as well that you speak directly and honestly to the students about what has happened. They are entitled to know that the university does not condone acts of police violence such as these; as of this writing, they have received no word from the administration acknowledging accountability for such appalling actions. Indeed, the administration was markedly unreachable on Friday, when faculty were most pressed to take on a mediating role.

We ask that you widely publicize the current protocols governing police conduct at demonstrations, and ascertain whether protocol was followed or abrogated on Friday. The entire community is also surely entitled to know that clear steps will be taken to revise protocols regarding police conduct at student demonstrations--protocols that will be binding on any police

force brought on campus. It should also make clear that disciplinary actions will be taken against police officers found guilty of assault. Finally we ask for a public statement reconfirming the University's commitment to protect the rights of free expression and assembly for students on the Berkeley campus.

We want to underscore how important it is for the campus for you to convene an investigation and to take administrative responsibility for protecting the safety of students as well as their rights of assembly and expression. Friday's failure to do so is a most painful public display of how far UC Berkeley has strayed from its historical responsibility as a national and international institution pledged to rights of free speech and assembly and to the ideals of social justice. It is surely difficult enough to see our reputation as an excellent and affordable university jeopardized through budget cuts and fee hikes. Must we see as well the dissolution of the ideal of protecting free speech for students for whom the very future of their education is at stake?

Signed:

Elizabeth Abel, English

Alice Merner Agogino, Mechanical Engineering

Wali Ahmadi, Near Eastern Studies

Norma Alarcon, Ethnic Studies

Paul Ammon, Education

Albert Russell Ascoli, Italian

Paola Bacchetta, Gender and Women's Studies

Jeanne Bamberger, Music and Urban Education

Patricia Baquedano-López, Graduate School of Education

Joi Barrios-Leblanc, South and Southeast Asian Studies

Brian Barsky, Computer Science

Lisa Bedolla, Education

Emilie Bergmann, Spanish and Portuguese

John Bishop, English

Déborah Blocker, French

Jean-Paul Bourdier, Architecture

Daniel Boyarin, Near Eastern Studies and Rhetoric  
Gary Brechin, Geography (visitor)  
Karl Britto, French and Comparative Literature  
Natalie Brizuela, Spanish and Portuguese  
Wendy Brown, Political Science  
Michael Burawoy, Sociology  
Judith Butler, Rhetoric and Comparative Literature  
Brandi Wilkins Catanese, Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies  
Pheng Cheah, Rhetoric  
Timothy Clark, History of Art  
Catherine Cole, Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies  
Vasudha Dalmia, South and Southeast Studies  
Ivonne del Valle, Spanish and Portuguese  
Prachi Delpande, History  
Clelia Donovan, Spanish and Portuguese  
Beshara Doumani, History  
Robert Dudley, Integrative Biology  
Laurent El Ghaoui, Engineering  
Peter Evans, Sociology  
Jerry Feldman, EECS  
Keith Feldman, Ethnic Studies  
Mariane Ferme, Anthropology  
Louise Fortmann, Environmental Science  
Anne-Lise Francois  
Mia Fuller, Italian  
Peter Glazer, Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies

Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Ethnic Studies, Gender and Women's Studies

Deniz Gokturk, German

Steven Goldsmith, English

Ramón Grosfoguel, Ethnic Studies

Suzanne Guerlac, French

Andrew Paul Gutierrez, Ecosystem Science

Angela Harris, Boalt School of Law

Gillian Hart, Geography

Cori Hayden, Anthropology

Tyrone Hayes, Integrative Biology

Lyn Hejinian, English

David Henkin, History

Charles Hirschkind, Anthropology

John Hurst, Graduate School of Education

Toni Johnston, Education

Andrew Jones, East Asian Languages and Culture

Alan Karras, IAS

Elaine Kim, Ethnic Studies

Patrick Kirsch, Anthropology and Integrative Biology

Georgia Kleege, English

Jake Kosek, Geography

Claire Kramsch, German

Chana Kronfeld, Near Eastern and Comparative Literature

George Lakoff, Linguistics

Katherine Lee, College Writing

Gregory Levine, History of Art

Michael Lucey, French and Comparative Literature

Richard Norgaard, Energy and Resources

Saba Mahmood, Anthropology

Francine Masiello, Spanish and Comparative Literature

Susan Maslan, French

Jennifer Miller, English

Minoo Moallem, Gender and Women's Studies

Davitt Moroney, Music

Carlos Muos, Ethnic Studies

Ramona Naddaff, Rhetoric

Rasmus Nielsen, Integrative Biology

Dan O'Neill, East Asian Languages and Literatures

Abena Dore Osseo-Asare, History

Stefania Pandolfo, Anthropology

Nancy Peluso, Environmental Science

Della Peretti, Education

Daniel Perlstein, Graduate School of Education

Kevin Padian, Integrative Biology

Kent Puckett, English

Robert Rhew, Geography

Juana María Rodríguez, Gender and Women's Studies

Christine Rosen, Haas School of Business

Ananya Roy, City and Regional Planning

Jeff Salbin, Boalt School of Law

Elisa Salasin, Education  
Debarati Sanyal, French  
Scott Saul, English  
Peter Sahlins, History  
Nancy Scheper-Hughes, Anthropology  
Sue Schweik, English  
Ingrid Seyer-Ochi, Education  
Katherine Sherwood, Art Practice  
Kaja Silverman, Rhetoric and Film Studies  
Jeffrey Skoller, Film Studies  
Richard Candida Smith, History  
Sandra Smith, Sociology  
Katherine Snyder, College Writing  
Janet Sorensen, English  
Ann Smock, French  
Shannon Steen, Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies  
Alan Tansman, East Asian Languages  
Estelle Tarica, Spanish and Portuguese  
Barrie Thorne, Sociology, Gender and Women's Studies  
Sylvia Tiwon, South and Southeast Asian Studies  
Soraya Tlatli, French  
Linda Tredway, Education  
Trinh Minh-Ha, Rhetoric, Gender and Women's Studies  
David Tse, EECS  
Susan Ubbelohde, Architecture

Paula Varsano, East Asian Languages

Leti Volpp, Boalt School of Law

Sophie Volpp, Comparative Literature

Anne Wagner, History of Art

L. Ling-Chi Wang, Ethnic Studies

Michael Watts, Geography

Leon Wofsy, Molecular and Cell Biology

Alexei Yurchak, Anthropology