

UCR WOMEN'S STUDIES DEPARTMENT STATEMENT ON RACISM, HOMOPHOBIA, AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH – March 19

The Women's Studies Department at the University of California, Riverside strongly condemns acts of homophobia, hate, racism, sexism, and anti-Semitism that have occurred on the UCSD, UCR, UCD, UCI, and other UC campuses. We stand in solidarity with those assaulted or denied freedom of speech, or otherwise silenced by the vicious attacks.

On February 10, 2010, two UCR students were brutally attacked. They were targeted because of their sexual orientation – for daring to hold hands in public. In early March, racist graffiti was found on a poster at UCR: “a devout Democrat” called for “No More Asians and Mexicans” in California. This horrific act of homophobic violence and cowardly example of racist xenophobia occurred within a wider context of deleterious hostility. A few weeks prior, the UCSD, and the entire UC-system, had to account for several despicable episodes of anti-black racism. In late February and early March, severely queer-phobic graffiti defaced the LGBT Resource center at UC Davis and a swastika was carved on a Jewish student's door.

Concurrently, UC administrators are advocating the punishment of student demonstrators, dubbed the “Irvine-11,” who exercised their right of free speech at a talk at UCI in early February. Instead of following the example of the President of the United States, who, when heckled by demonstrators during a speech at Notre Dame University, defended their freedom of speech, the UCI administration is suppressing freedom of speech, threatening the student protestors – a few of whom are UCR students -- with serious charges and expulsion. This denial of rights contributes to an atmosphere that permits hate crimes, rather than setting an example of universities as defenders of human and civil rights.

As scholars and teachers who are committed to antiviolence, and to intersectional analysis, we do not see these events as separate—they are powerfully connected in what they tell us about dominance and marginalization. They ask us to consider the *daily* experiences of exclusion experienced by queer students, students of African and Palestinian descent, and other minoritized bodies in the UC system.

We believe that these acts are also linked to the dismantling of California's great public education system. As the gates close rapidly on communities of color and low income peoples, the ugly face of structural exclusion reveals itself. These events are not accidental outbursts—they reveal an institutional and cultural climate that creates a deep sense of marginalization for those “different” from a dominant norm. However, now in the current climate of increased economic stress and scarce resources, there is a sense that such enactments of dominance and cruelty can take place with impunity. We demand accountability—not only for the individual perpetrators of these incidents, but to the entire cultural system of the UC which is allowing this to happen. We seek redress and action that is beyond rhetoric.

We affirm our compassion for, and outrage on behalf of all members of the UC community who have been wounded by these attacks. We stand with members of our UCR community who have been traumatized, targeted, and silenced. We publicly offer our support to the particular students who are recovering from the attack. We reach out to the entire LGBTQ community here at UCR and in the wider UC community and underscore our continuing commitment as allies. We do so with the hope that we can together address the daily issues of inequity and structural injustice that permit these expressions of hostility and enforced normativity to happen. We seek a process of healing

which places questions of institutional accountability and social justice at its very core. We ask that the UC administration, including our UCR administration, do all that is possible to restore the rights of those who face denial of them, and to work collectively with students, faculty, and staff to ensure a climate of peace, not simply tolerance and civility.

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