



Struggle-La-Lucha.org

48,000 student-workers in California strike for their rights

written by Scott Scheffer
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Striking UCLA workers march on Nov. 28. SLL photos: Scott Scheffer

Los Angeles – Striking University of California workers – 48,000 strong — rallied throughout the state on Monday, Nov. 28. This highly exploited workforce is represented by Auto Workers Local 2865. This is the biggest strike in 2022 and the biggest-ever strike by UC workers.

Workers are demanding higher wages, improved parental leave and childcare support, reduced housing costs, and support for international scholars. The strikers are “graduate student workers,” who work for extremely low wages and provide important services for corporations and the general public.

The carrot dangling in front of them is the hope that they will eventually land a tenured position. In recent decades tenure and decent wages for educators have been attacked in the entire range of jobs in the education system from public schools to elite private universities.

During the rally at the University of California Los Angeles, Struggle-La Lucha spoke with striker Bineh Ndefru.

SLL: Can you tell us what a victory in this strike might mean for you personally?

Bineh Ndefru: I'm in my fifth year, so a win probably wouldn't go into effect in time to impact me. But for those newer to the system, it would mean people not having to go through their savings like I had to.

I've had to borrow money while being a worker for the university. I've been paid \$1,800 per month and had to pay \$1,600 for rent in university housing. So basically, I've been living on \$200 a month. That's a very common story for all of us.

It would've changed my life a lot. For a lot of people, it would mean maybe visiting their families more often, or having the ability to maybe have some downtime. Some students actually have had to live out of their cars because of the high price of housing in Los Angeles.

On top of all that, I've even had issues with the university not paying me on time, which is not uncommon.

SLL: Can you explain what kind of work and research are done by UC student-workers?

BN: My lab is pretty unique in a way, and there's a variety. For instance, PG&E [giant California utility company] has funded some of our grants to study how to prevent wildfires caused by their equipment.

The California Energy Commission had us study statewide infrastructure projects, so it's contributing to a lot of the risk assessments that benefit California, like earthquake assessments and that sort of thing.

Anyone in this crowd is probably working on amazing research projects that are benefitting the city, the state, and even the whole world in different ways. We bring a lot of value not just to the university but to the community surrounding us as well.

Solidarity with UC workers!



