

Faculty at California State University, Long Beach censured for exposing ties between the university and the military

Marc Wells

19 November 2024

Five faculty members at the California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) received a warning in September from the campus administration for allegedly violating the university's "Time, Place and Manner Policy," (TPM) a collection of restrictions on academic freedom of speech specifically targeted to suppress dissent against the Gaza genocide in particular, and US domestic and foreign policy in general.

The five professors who have been targeted are Araceli Esparza, Professor of English; Azza Basarudin, Associate Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies; Jake Alimahomed-Wilson, Professor of Sociology; Sabrina Alimahomed-Wilson, Professor of Sociology, and Steven Osuna, Associate Professor of Sociology.

The "violation" they committed, according to the TPM policy, is the use of a microphone or megaphone at campus protests against the genocide in Gaza. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that the real reason for their persecution lies in the fact that these five faculty members, referred to by supporters as the CSU-5, were the authors last May of an exposé on what they call the "Golden Triangle" of military, industry and university cooperation.

The op-ed reveals in particular the "financially reciprocal relationship" between military contractor Boeing and CSULB, one of 16 universities across the US to adhere to what is known as the "Boeing Partnership," a program that, as the faculty correctly pointed out, "is a university-corporate alliance that has further transformed CSULB into a public relations mouthpiece for the defense contractor."

The authors of the exposé also observe that, "The CSULB-Boeing partnership illustrates not only how defense contractors such as Boeing, Raytheon, and Northrop Grumman profit from Israel's violence against Palestinians, but also how these massive corporations simultaneously undermine the mission of public universities by harming students domestically and facilitating genocide, militarism, and mass death abroad."

The statement also connects the assault on public education with unlimited military funding: "it is also critical to expose how the complicity of US universities in Israeli militarism and Palestinian genocide extends far beyond investments in stocks. Under constant threats of austerity measures and the steady erosion of state funding in the neoliberal context, large public university systems like the California State University (CSU) system have quietly become embedded with defense contractors saturating every facet of campus life."

This exposé comes at a time of heightened conflict between Boeing, the Biden administration and the International Association of Machinists (IAM) union leadership on one side, and the rank-and-file Boeing workers on the other: the sellout contract forced through by the union leadership earlier this month in collusion with the Biden administration, concerned with the repercussions of unrest for one of the US major defense contractors, prioritizes corporate profits and broader pro-war policies instead of addressing decades of wage stagnation, rising medical costs, and insufficient benefits. As a result of this collusion, more than 2,500 layoff notices have already been issued for US-based workers and the company plants to cut 17,000 jobs globally.

With reference to the relentless attacks on democratic rights that students and faculty have suffered, especially in the last year since the Israeli onslaught in Gaza, the professors underline, "The university-corporate nexus has become all-encompassing, producing deleterious consequences for students, faculty, and staff while undermining the university's mission of promoting the 'public good.'"

The university's "mission" is the product of political control exerted by the Democratic Party in the Golden State. The California State University (CSU) Board of Trustees is a 25-member body responsible for appointing presidents for the 23 CSU campuses, including California State University,

Long Beach.

Members of the Board include ex officio members such as California Governor Gavin Newsom, Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis, the Speaker of the Assembly Robert Rivas, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond, and the CSU Chancellor Mildred García. They all abide by the Democratic Party's imperialist rule.

In this context, there is no worse crime the five CSULB educators could have committed than exposing the crimes of the state and revealing the truth about social relations: while adequate resources cannot be allocated for fundamental social rights, such as public education, health and secure jobs, governments of both big-business parties allocate gargantuan funds for military aggression and imperialist domination. This is why these professors were targeted by a political establishment that is increasingly coming into conflict with democratic forms of rule and resorts to militarism to offset its decline in global economic position.

This is not an aberration:

- In Philadelphia, Keziah Ridgeway, a teacher of African American history, was terminated after expressing pro-Palestinian views and supporting students in projects discussing Palestinian resistance. She faced harassment, including threats and public defamation from pro-Israel groups. Parents and students protested her dismissal, highlighting the chilling effect on free speech?.

- At nearby Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania, 11 undergraduate students face expulsion for using a bullhorn after the school changed its definition of assault to include "loud chanting."

- In New York City, educators were threatened with disciplinary action for engaging in private protests and expressing outrage over restrictions on discussing Gaza during school hours. Efforts to call for a ceasefire were ignored by union leaders like Randi Weingarten, criticized for supporting pro-Israel policies?.

- Similarly, in West Orange, New Jersey, students received death threats for organizing a walkout against the violence in Gaza.

- At Muhlenberg College, Dr. Maura Finkelstein, a tenured professor, was dismissed for supporting Palestinian rights in class discussions?.

California has equally been the target of academic persecution. The repression of pro-Palestinian protests across the University of California (UC) system reflects a deliberate effort by the state and university administration to suppress dissent against US-backed Israel's genocidal policies and align universities with the US military-industrial complex, silencing criticism of the Israeli government and its corporate allies?.

These antidemocratic measures, framed as "safety

precautions," are part of a broader crackdown on basic democratic and constitutional rights to shield imperialist interests and quash opposition to the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

It is significant that, in California like in other US states, this is happening under the auspices of a Democratic Party-dominated university leadership controlled by a Democratic state government. This political position played a crucial role in the recent reelection of Donald Trump: in its support for the genocide in Gaza, the war in Ukraine and the ongoing expansion of the conflict in the Middle East, the Democratic Party enabled the rise of fascism in the United States by subordinating working class interests to corporate, military and imperialist agendas, while refusing to offer any meaningful opposition to far-right forces.

This created widespread disillusionment, leaving the working class politically disoriented and allowing backward and reactionary figures like Donald Trump to exploit anti-war sentiment as well as economic and social grievances, and advance authoritarian forms of rule.

The repression of faculty and student protests at campuses underscores the urgent need for a unified working class movement to oppose imperialist war, defend democratic rights, and challenge the capitalist system, the root cause of war and dictatorship. Divestment campaigns, while well-intentioned, primarily focus on pressuring universities, corporations, or governments to change policies without fundamentally challenging the capitalist and imperialist systems that perpetuate war and genocide.

Universities' resistance to divestment, often citing fiduciary responsibility or yielding to pressure from Zionist groups, illustrates their integration with corporate and political interests. A viable solution requires mobilizing the working class internationally to dismantle these structures, transcending nation-state frameworks and capitalist exploitation, rather than relying on reformist strategies like divestment campaigns.

Only a genuine socialist perspective, one that is completely independent of the influence of Democrats or their pseudo-left apologists, can be used as a strategy in the struggle against censorship, fascism and war.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact