

# Student Labor Action

A report back on activities in March 2010

During this great recession, student and workers have seen that their struggles are even more interconnected than ever before. With massive layoffs, high unemployment and budget cuts across all sectors, working people are struggling to survive each day. But organizations such as the Student Labor Action Project, Jobs with Justice, and the U.S. Student Association have taken this as an opportunity to educate on what brought us here, organize the people being affected by these issues and mobilize to demand our legislators real change that benefits the working class.

March 2010 marked a new wave in student and worker organizing. Student and workers across the country united to address their shared crisis and make changes through collective action.



Student members of the University of California Student Association protested their Representatives in Sacramento to demand a stop to budget cuts and tuition hikes.

## March 4th Day of Action to Reclaim Education

The March madness for student activism started with the national day to reclaim education on March 4th. During this day of action students and workers across the country took the streets, picket their university and demanded action by state and national legislators to prioritize education.

This day of action took the country by surprise and demonstrated the struggle students and workers face everyday in the search for an education and better working conditions.



SLAP at University of Central Florida held a rally in coalition with the college democrats, student government and other student organizations demanding a stop to budget cuts, financial aid and a reprioritization of education in the state.

***"As a direct result of the March 4th actions around the country, the Eckerd administration is working with us now more than ever to create free tuition for classes at Eckerd, free lunches, a meager wage raise, and a student run transportation and tutoring GED program at Eckerd." - John Kenney, Coalition for Community Justice at Eckerd College***

# March 4th Report Back From California

By *Emilo Lacques*

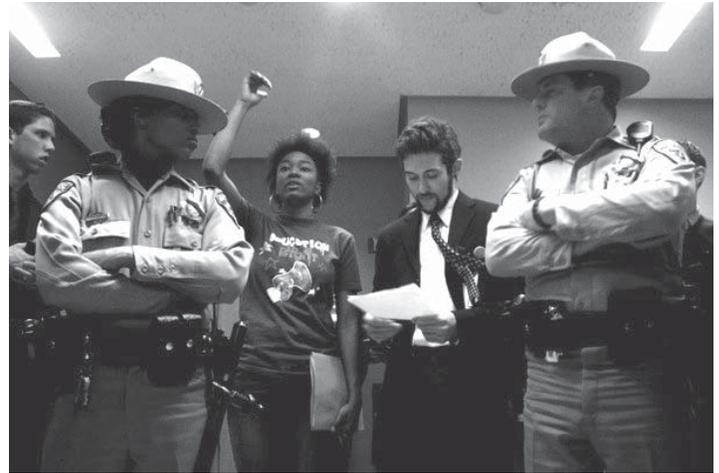
March 2010 was a critical turning point in the national and statewide student movement to defend public education. We have seen a dramatic overload of attacks of public education in the United States by corporate America, lobbyists, big banks, and both state and federal legislators. On November 18-19, 2009, over a thousand students, workers, and community members took a stand against a University of California proposed 32% fee increase. These actions sparked a flurry of demonstrations on different campuses all across the U.S. against budget cuts.

By March, students were fed up. Our fees were going up, our classes were being cut, our low income and underrepresented students were dropping out of OUR PUBLIC Universities at rapid rates. Students began to organize. March 4th emerged as a National Day of Action. Not led by any specific campus or organization, "March Forth for Higher Education" became a slogan and different students began jumping on board from California to New York to Florida to Wisconsin and all over the map.

The demands and targets were diverse and dependent on local battles, but the message was the same: our public institutions of learning are quickly becoming disempowering, privatized, inaccessible places.

At UCLA we had two pivotal days of action just in the first week of March.

On March 2, we staged a Solidarity action demanding Chancellor block to implement the Diversity Requirement after students at UCSD, UC Davis, and other campuses experienced acts of hate, racism, and discrimination against underrepresented communities. On March 4, students came together for an action to defend



public education while demanding passage of the California Democracy Act, Diversity Requirement, and more funding for higher ed, among others. The leading organizations were diverse, from MEChA de UCLA, IDEAS at UCLA, and other activists.

We marched through campus to gather support, rallied on the top of Jans Steps, and blocked off two parking entrances from incoming traffic for a significant amount of time.

Now that students have shown that we have the power to demand the University work for us, it is a critical moment for us to re-frame our messaging on a national scale. It is called a "Movement," because one day or one month of action is never enough. In a threatening economy for working class people, our Universities should serve the PUBLIC in creating a means to progress our country, not to further marginalize us.

We have made big strides in the growth of our actions, but this movement has the potential implications of a historic, cultural and social paradigm shift to reclaim public education in the United States. Will you join us in this ever-changing movement?



# National Student Labor Week of Action

## March 28-April 4

From March 28th-April 4th, students and workers came together to take action on issues such as the Dream Act, fair contracts for campus employees, sustainability on campus and living wages for all.

With over 108 actions in 95 cities across the country, the National Student Labor Week of Action proved once again to be a time to commemorate Cesar Chavez and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. through direct action and solidarity between students and workers across the country.



Students at Temple University held a silent march signifying the silencing of the voices of workers and students by the administration with regards to the nurses' fight for a fair contract at the University hospital.



At Rollins College, students held a whole week where they focused each day on a "ism". From classism to ableism, SLAP held events such as a panel about living wages on campus and other activities where they tackled solutions to these problems facing their community. Students also ran a survey & created a "Wall of Debt".



Students at Miami University held a panel connecting the issues of environmental sustainability with the need for a sustainable workforce through living wages and benefits for campus employees.

## History

On April 4th, 2000, SLAP took the lead in coordinating the first National Student Labor Day of Action to commemorate the life of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Since then, the day of action has expanded to a full week that also celebrates labor leader Cesar Chavez.

On March 31st we celebrate Cesar Chavez' birthday. Civil rights activist, labor leader and Chicano hero, Chavez co-founded the United Farm Workers (UFW) with Dolores Huerta and changed organizing forever. With their innovative and powerful tactics, Cesar Chavez and the brothers and sisters from the UFW struggled for better wages and working conditions in the field of the California, winning landmark legislation including the California Agricultural Labor Relation Act.

On April 4th, we commemorate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King, who was in Memphis, TN supporting the sanitation workers' strike at the time of his assassination, understood the importance of alliance building between labor, students and civil rights activists. His legacy is one of solidarity, understanding, non-violence and justice for all.

*The 2010 Student Labor Week of Action was sponsored by: AFL-CIO, Campus Progress, & the United Food & Commercial Workers*

## March 2010 Student Labor Action

# Victories!

## Historic Student Aid Reform Passes!

On March 30, after decades of organizing, President Obama signed into law an historic student aid reform proposal originally passed by the House of Representatives via the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act. This student aid reform legislation which takes away subsidies given to loan companies and invests them into programs such as the Pell grant and community colleges, is a major victory for students and working families.

This victory has come with hard work from students nationwide who have marched, rallied and lobbied in support of this legislation. On March 16, as part of the U.S. Student Association's Legislative Conference, hundreds of students swarmed Capitol Hill demanding the passage of this legislation and reminding their Senators that they should prioritize students and workers over banks. This effort by USSA has proven to be successful as we see the biggest reform in the student loan industry in the past years.



“Students across the country were able to see their amazing direct-action organizing payoff with comprehensive student aid reform becoming the law of the land,” said USSA President Gregory Cendana. “This is especially critical for working class students and families who have struggled the most in affording their education.”

## Agreement Reached with Aramark

Also in March, the Coalition of Imokalee Workers and the Student Farmworker Alliance signed an agreement with food provider giant, Aramark, after months of organizing to pressure them to respect and support farmworker rights in the fields of Florida.

The second victory was the agreement reached between for the Coalition of Immokalee workers, the Student Farmworker Alliance, and giant food service provider Aramark.

Marc Rodriguez of the Student Farmworker Alliance said, “This is a huge step forward for our campaign, because it means that the CIW now basically has the top players in both the fast food and food service industries on board, and because this is a victory that again proves the effectiveness and clout of the alliance between Florida’s farmworkers and students and youth throughout the U.S... Victory by victory, we’re

carving out a new world of fair wages, human rights, and dignity from the shameful history of exploitation in Florida’s fields. And with each new victory, the justifications on the part of corporations like Sodexo and Publix to not work with the CIW ring ever more hollow.”

