



DEPARTMENT OF ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES  
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Dear Chancellor Katehi and Provost Hexter,

The faculty of the Department of Asian American Studies is deeply troubled by the criminal charges filed against the Davis Dozen, who include eleven students and one faculty member, for their sit-in at US Bank. This action, taken at great risk by the students and our colleague, was not only a fight for the rights of students, but serves as an effective protest against the intensified privatization of public higher education.

The Davis Dozen are not guilty of the excessive charges placed against them. We ask you to request District Attorney Jeff W. Reising to drop all charges against the Davis Dozen. The charges and plea bargain offered by the District Attorney are unjust. By alerting us to the terms of the contract with US Bank, the Davis Dozen has exposed the Administration's complicity in going against the public mission of our university and all that it stands for. Having student ID cards serve simultaneously as US Bank debit cards highlights not only a conflict of interest, but also a collusion, in which UC Davis serves as both marketing tool and profit-making machine that does not serve the students' best interests.

The bank sit-in occurs in light of years of protests against the increase in tuition fees and the neoliberalization of the public university. While the Administration turns a deaf ear to these appeals, the budget cuts and increased tuition fees have greatly impacted all students who attend UC Davis, including many of our students who major in Asian American studies. A number of our own students have had to drop out of school due to their inability to pay the increased tuition and some are forced to take two or three low-wage jobs or take on exorbitant student debt.

As an ethnic studies department inspired by student protest movements and built on the legacy of civil disobedience, we are disturbed that the Administration is not only regulating student dissent through policy and force, but also criminalizing protesters in ways that are contrary to what you call part of the "learning process" (Letter to UC Davis Community dated April 27, 2012). In our classes, civil disobedience is seen as a continuum in which students from an earlier era who challenged racial segregation, were, in fact, breaking the law. The Administration's actions are having a chilling effect on our students in which many are increasingly anxious about the consequences of participating in any kind of political protest activity on campus and fear that they, too, will face criminal charges, or eleven years in prison, if they were to engage in public protest. Our students are not criminals; they are simply demanding the right to an affordable and accessible higher education, one not segregated by class or race.

Part of the public mission of the university is to create and maintain a space for freedom of expression and spirited debate. However, the Administration's actions speak louder than the words

expressed in recent letters and memos to the Davis community. Last November, campus police used brutal force against peaceful student protesters, provoking national and international outrage. Now, the Administration is using the equivalent of legal pepper spray to repress and contain student and faculty protestors: a retroactive move that is neither transparent nor public. The Administration's attempts at claiming to protect freedom of expression while in actuality repressing freedom of political speech and protest is a form of doublespeak; analogous to the policies and task force reports regarding multiculturalism and racism. The student protesters are not fooled by this and, we would like to note, neither are we.

As scholars working in a field that offers students critical skills to challenge the status quo, in which civil disobedience is one strategic mode of action in the struggle for racial, economic, and social justice, we declare our solidarity with the Davis Dozen. We will continue to encourage our students to not only support the Davis Dozen, but also to engage in critical analysis, public discussion, and agitation until access to higher public education can be an equal opportunity for everyone. We are also planning to establish a legal defense fund to assist and support student protestors with their legal expenses in defense of their civil rights. We hope that the Administration will join us in these pursuits, beginning with a public demand that the DA office drop all charges against the Davis Dozen.

Sincerely,

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Darrell Hamamoto, Professor

Wendy Ho, Associate Professor

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