

MEDIA ADVISORY – Embargoed Until Thursday, April 18, 2019

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AFTER USC LEADERSHIP FAILS TO MEET 48 HOUR DEADLINE, COALITION WILL TAKE TENT CITY INTO HEART OF USC CAMPUS

Despite New USC President's Claim That She Wants to 'Make It Right' Under Her Tenure After USC's String of Scandals, Failure to Take Action Proves It Is Business as Usual at USC; Coalition Vows to Take Tent City from Jefferson Blvd. into USC's Trousdale Parkway

LOS ANGELES—A broad coalition of students, academia and various Los Angeles community groups will take their Tent City at the University of Southern California (USC) directly into campus late Thursday morning. The move is set to take place now that the 48-hour deadline has passed for USC leadership to meet with the Coalition about a range of issues affecting the community – from South L.A. gentrification and USC graduate student unionization to the mishandling of alleged sexual assault of USC students and the alleged mishandling of the university's admissions process.

The Coalition's demands were made clear this past Tuesday, when they marched from the Tent City to administration offices at Bovard Auditorium, delivering their demands for reform directly to university leaders via David W. Wright, Interim Senior Vice President for Operations at USC. The Coalition gave USC's administration 48 hours to respond. [The action took place one week after participants announced their demands](#) and called for a meeting with incoming USC President Dr. Carol Folt. Thus far – despite Dr. Folt's assertion upon accepting her new post that she had yet to hear a “voice of complacency” and had only heard calls to “make it right” – she and other leaders at USC have failed to take any action which meaningfully differentiates them from the past, failed generation of USC administrators.

The Tent City at USC appeared with the start of the “Los Angeles Times-USC Festival of Books” this past Saturday. It has remained an epicenter of activism for Angelenos fed up with destructive effects of policies pushed by USC's leaders, both on campus and off. Participants have promised the Tent City will remain at the university's gates until the Coalition's demands are met – including increased access for low-income students, affordable housing and community benefits for residents displaced by USC's lavish construction projects, and an end to allegations of rampant sexual harassment and assault on campus.

Since popping up on Saturday, the Tent City has been buzzing with activity – with participants holding a community Mass on Palm Sunday, listening sessions with local politicians, as well as tenants' rights workshops and legal clinics for residents affected by the rapid gentrification of South L.A. at the hands of USC's civic leaders. The action has drawn elected officials and prominent community leaders from across Southern California and beyond – including Former Senate President pro Tempore Kevin de León and Pastor William Smart, President and CEO of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

WHO: USC Forward, Fight for \$15, the LA Tenants Union, Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE), the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), SEIU 721 as well as USC students, grad students and other concerned faculty

WHAT: Tent City Rally and March into USC Campus

WHEN: Thursday, April 18, 2019 at 11:30 A.M.

WHERE: W. Jefferson Blvd. and Hoover St., Los Angeles, CA 90037

BACKGROUND: USC has lost its way. Instead of being an institution of higher learning focused on values that serve to strengthen their student body and ultimately benefit communities in Southern California, USC is now a source of non-stop scandals ranging from high-level staff allegedly accepting admission bribes and on-campus drug use by the medical school dean to the cover up of decades of alleged sexual assault on students by a USC gynecologist.

Aside from the recent admissions scandals currently making headlines, USC has become a source of greedy policies that are hurting everyone—including students, faculty, local business and residents in the surrounding community. USC continues to drive the widening gap of income inequality in Los Angeles through skyrocketing tuition, bloated administrative salaries, and unnecessary and costly infrastructure projects that are driving long-time residents out of their homes.

With an endowment of \$5.5 billion and assets totaling over \$9 billion, the University has the resources and capacity to be a good neighbor in South LA, and to pay their fair share to support the vital public services that residents rely on.

Indeed, instead of real investment in the graduate workers and faculty responsible for student learning or in the neighborhoods nearby, the university has continued to dump money into lavish infrastructure projects and administrative salaries. USC faculty and graduate workers struggle with contingent, part-time work for low pay along with rampant workplace issues – including alleged sexual harassment and intimidation and retaliation toward those involved in organizing efforts. Moreover, USC's continued development push in South Los Angeles has disrupted the neighborhood around the university, pushing lifelong residents in the surrounding area out of their homes and placing an immense strain on both city and county resources.

USC is one of the nation's premier private research universities and the largest private employer in Los Angeles County. The institution has the resources and capacity to make drastic improvements to the quality of life for its employees while simultaneously behaving as a responsible neighbor in South Los Angeles. Yet under the leadership of former USC President C.L. Max Nikias, the university consistently failed to do so.

“USC is a global leader in academic achievement but it is also a citadel of profit in higher education,” said Bob Schoonover, President of SEIU Local 721, a key part of the coalition creating the Tent City this week. “As a great power in this town, USC has a great responsibility to its students, to its employees and to the surrounding community. That means paying attention when USC's neighbors are mercilessly kicked out of their homes to make way for more luxury housing that nobody in South L.A. can afford, but which USC's civic leaders insist we keep building. That means taking immediate, effective action to ensure that the USC campus is free from sexual harassment and assault. That means paying living wages to USC's employees – something that is certainly within reach for a university sitting on a \$5.5 billion endowment and over \$9 billion in assets. And that means respecting the rights of USC graduate workers and faculty to collectively organize. It's long past time for USC to begin ridding itself of its reputation as a bad neighbor, bad employer, and bad leader. We demand a real investment in student learning. We demand a real investment in the surrounding community. We demand accountability now – and we will fight until we get it.”

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