



**Graduate Assistants United**  
YOUR UNION, YOUR VOICE.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
DECEMBER 15, 2018

## **GAU STANDS IN SOLIDARITY WITH TA'S STRIKING AT UNC-CHAPEL HILL**

GAINESVILLE, FL – Graduate Assistants United at the University of Florida stands in solidarity with the TAs at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill who went on strike to protest racism and with all the campus community members protesting the enshrinement of white supremacy. The UNC administration should count itself fortunate to have such brave leadership from students and community leaders, and we call on the administration to follow the TAs and anti-racist protestors' example at once. The Board of Governors' has done well to reconsider their initial support of the proposal, but decisive action must follow to make UNC an anti-racist community.

When Richard Spencer came to the University of Florida, students, faculty, community members and anti-racist activists from across the South came together to show President Fuchs that his advice, to carry on as usual while white supremacists used our facilities and town to rally support, was misplaced. The University spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to secure our campus, which did not prevent armed individuals from firing at anti-racist activists after the rally ended, and little to make students of color feel safer. An increased police presence on campus, tasked explicitly with protecting a white supremacist icon, can do little or nothing to increase campus 'safety,' and can only serve to damage a culture of free speech and safe learning on campus.

For graduate students, who are seeking a safer future for their students and a more just academic community for themselves and for the faculty with whom they work, striking is an extraordinarily brave act. We recognize the onerous burden fines and low stipends place on graduate students, many of whom live close to the poverty line as it is. These TAs are risking their employment or punitive action by the University, despite many already facing financial hardship as well as the isolation and mental health struggles of graduate school. This strike shows moral leadership, and demonstrates graduate student teachers' passionate commitment to their students and community.

As members of a southern academic community, we know well the challenges which accompany anti-racist organizing in the South. The South is marvelously diverse, and student leaders like those leading anti-racist protests demonstrate that we can face our history without being pulled under by it. Confronting the history of white supremacy at institutions like UNC or UF does not mean enshrining it – it means confronting it, as we confront other historical injustices in our classrooms and in our lives, with an eye to building a braver future.

We stand with UNC activists, and urge the Board of Trustees and Chancellor Folt to do likewise.

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*GAU is the official labor union representing approximately 4,000 teaching, research, and graduate assistants at the University of Florida. UFF, FEA, NEA, AFT, AFL-CIO. For additional information, contact GAU Communication Chair Stephen C. Phillips at [communications@ufgau.org](mailto:communications@ufgau.org) or 352-575-0366.*