

Hello all,

My name is Sabrina Shirazi and I am a fourth year graduate student in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. In the midst of a very intense academic school year, I write to bring attention to an extremely important issue within our campus community: police violence. Below I describe extreme injuries I received from police sent by the university to the base of campus on February 10th, the first day of the COLA graduate student strike. This incident has, until now, gone unannounced, as I have been healing from injuries. Here I go into detail about the incident; please respect any trigger this may bring up for you in deciding if you will continue reading.

During the graduate student COLA strike at the base of UCSC campus, the university called in UC Police and Alameda County sheriffs to “protect” the rights and safety of students and the community. In addition to the event I describe below, several community members, including graduate and undergraduate students, sustained injuries from police officers on the third day of the strike, February 12th, while being arrested.

On the first day of the teaching strike, February 10th, I was standing near a crowd when police rushed the crowd from behind without warning. **I was shoved aggressively and hit with batons by several campus police officers.** I was struck several times on my head and across my body. I was not impeding the police, and they were not trying to arrest me. In fact, I was surrounded by officers and unable to leave when they hit me repeatedly.

As a result of the incident, I suffered a concussion as well as several sprains and strains across my body. The injuries put me on bed rest for weeks. My injured neck could not support the weight of my head and I could not sit upright. Though I received medical care immediately following the injury, I ended up rushing to the emergency room several days later when I experienced worsening pain, along with loss of sensation in one arm from the concussion and various injuries. Injuries to my hip made it extremely uncomfortable to lie down, yet the injuries to my neck required I lie down.

Due to the concussion, I was advised to avoid looking at screens for a period of time and found it impossible to concentrate. I was unable to sit in a chair for weeks, and as a result of these issues I fell far behind on my work. I am still injured 1.5 months later, unable to return to many of my normal activities, and living with physical pain that is a reminder of the events that happened 2/10. I need ongoing treatment that I cannot access currently because of COVID-19 closures.

I am physically small, and could have easily been moved aside by any single officer. I was the only person injured in the crowd that day. Within the area of the crowd I was in, I had the darkest skin and features, and **I suspect I was racially targeted by police.**

Violence by police, and racially targeted violence by police is an issue you are all aware of. The militarization and racism in policing are not only the result of personal views of some specific officers, but also institutionalized within the U.S. policing system. I urge you to not externalize police violence, and recognize that it is an issue here in Santa Cruz and on our campus. We all live in a society in which police violence continues to happen, is covered up by institutions, and is therefore inherently supported by those who allow it to continue.

Please do not respond to this message with aggression toward police. Aggression is what I am pleading to end. Please do be aware that we are not external to the issue of police violence in Santa Cruz, and please be aware of where you may stand in your privilege, or lack thereof, in being in danger of attack by the policing system. I am asking for joint community commitment to demanding change in the way the university polices its community in trying to protect it. I am hoping the University administration are just as disgusted as I am with the performance of police officers on our campus and are working to avoid any incident like this from ever happening at their hands again.

