

INJUSTICE AT CIIS!

www.injusticeatciis.net

***International People's Tribunal on Human Rights in Indian-Administered
Kashmir's (IPTK) Work Disrupted
Due to the Unjust Suspension of Two Scholar-Activists by
California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS)***

Summary:

On July 19, 2011, Professor Angana Chatterji and Professor Richard Shapiro were suspended by the Academic Vice President (AVP) at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS). Chatterji has been working in Indian-administered Kashmir and has made 16 trips since July 2006. She was planning on continuing her work as Co-Convener of the IPTK this summer when she was suspended. The two faculty were notified that they were in a process which may result in their termination, and during the Institute's proceedings, they needed to be 'available,' making it impossible for Chatterji to travel to Kashmir to conduct her research and human rights work.

Professors Chatterji and Shapiro had no previous knowledge of an investigation leading up to late June when they were both initially stripped of some faculty duties and Shapiro of his position as Department Chair. The 7/19 suspension was imposed by the AVP even though the CIIS Faculty Handbook clearly states that this is something the President would do "only if immediate harm to the faculty member or others is threatened by continuance".

The scholarly and advocacy work undertaken by, and education offered by, Chatterji and Shapiro have brought distinction to CIIS. Chatterji's work in Indian-administered Kashmir has rarely received public support from the CIIS Administration even though her work with the IPTK has significantly contributed to the internationalization of human rights violations in Kashmir. The most recent actions of the Administration raises serious questions around academic freedom and what appears to be disregard for the repercussions on marginalized communities around the world where Chatterji's and Shapiro's students conduct their scholarly and advocacy work. Currently, the matter is before a Faculty Hearing Board.

To date, Anthropology faculty and students have felt various actions on the part of CIIS Administration to be disturbing, and believe the targeting of Chatterji and Shapiro as part of the trend in higher education toward a) heightened consolidation of autocratic administrative power and b) increasing corporatization and mediocrity, which devalues and degrades spaces of progressive, political thought. Although CIIS began as a student-focused Institute and one of its ideals is "to further the effectiveness of emancipatory movements such as feminism, social and political liberation, cultural self-expression, and ecological activism", the students who support the suspended faculty are highly doubtful of the Institute's commitment to this ideal given recent events.

An overwhelming majority of the suspended professors' students have rallied in their support and suspect many of their student rights have been violated in these proceedings. More than 35 of these students have retained counsel in order to take legal action against the Institute. In addition, a no-confidence motion was signed by 39 Anthropology students on September 8, 2011 against the AVP and the Dean of Students.

Consolidation of Administrative Power At CIIS

- Academic Vice President (AVP), who is also Dean of Faculty, Secretary to the Board of Trustees, Chief Academic officer, and her newly acquired title Interim Anthropology Department Chair, appears to have initiated her undisclosed investigation contrary to protocol and procedure in the Faculty and Student Handbooks.
- It is noteworthy that Professor Shapiro has been targeted since 2009 when he was vocal in his support of collective governance at CIIS.
- Both Professors Shapiro and Chatterji have been speaking out in favor of tenure. CIIS does NOT have a tenure system. Nor does it have a faculty, staff or student union.
- Anthropology students are seen as “too political” (and described as “cultish”) when demanding and exercising their rights within the Institute. Students believe that members of the Administration blame Shapiro and Chatterji for the students’ politicization. A recent rumor circulated that if Chatterji and Shapiro left, the place would be exorcised.
- Institutional review mechanisms created by faculty and colleagues indicate the department as amply well-functioning; as well, Chatterji received a promotion in 2009 via a faculty promotion process with outstanding commendations. Shapiro’s contract was also renewed for four-years on April 1, 2011 on the recommendation of the appropriate faculty body. The AVP suspended Chatterji and Shapiro, contrary to the indicators of these review mechanisms.
- The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) sent a letter on August 11, 2011 urging the reinstatement of the professors. To date, the professors remain suspended and there has been no public response from administrators.
- The AAUP also offered to send a neutral observer to CIIS to witness the proceedings, an offer CIIS refused.

Corporatization and Mediocrity at CIIS

- This summer, three adjuncts were hired less than three weeks before the beginning of the Fall 2011 semester due to the suspensions and students have found their backgrounds unsuited to teach the curriculum as created by Chatterji and Shapiro, and on which students relied when enrolling at CIIS and throughout their academic career.
- Students have been informed that they can solicit advisors in other academic departments to complete their graduate degrees.
- The Anthropology Department has a prerequisite for community-based applied advocacy research and applied pre-dissertation and dissertation research for doctorate students. The Administration does not appear to value this rigor, and has offered to graduate students in violation of the current curriculum, to shorten the time to degree.
- It is important to note that Professors Chatterji and Shapiro, as the only two full-time faculty, shaped the department in postcolonial anthropology, together with Professor Mutombo Mpanya since 1997. In 1997, the Anthropology Department was also targeted to be discontinued by CIIS.
- Chatterji’s Kashmir work, we suspect, makes the Administration and the Board uncomfortable. Through years of death threats, hate mail, rape threats and physical targeting in India, and even the sedition charges in 2008, CIIS has never made a public statement of support for her work. Yet, they have asked her to ensure the visibility of the Institute’s name at high profile events and when talking to the international press.
- Arundhati Roy’s benefit in solidarity with the IPTK’s work in March 2010, which was used to institute the Peace and Justice Grant for Scholarship and the Arts in Indian-Administered Kashmir, was excitedly supported by CIIS’s President, who also agreed to house the fund at CIIS. Just over six months later (Nov. 9, 2009) and with a new Vice

President of Finance, the President stated it would no longer be possible due to international regulations. To date, the money has remained untouched.

- Professor Chatterji works in marginalized communities in India, with issues of Hindu nationalism, and in Indian-administered Kashmir. We are concerned that her work is viewed at CIIS through Orientalist and Islamophobic lenses, and that CIIS leadership may see her presence as a deterrent to funds from a particular segment of donors.
 - CIIS is beginning a concerted effort to fundraise from the conservative Indian diaspora of Silicon Valley, as of May 2011. In 2002, CIIS rejected funds from a Hindu right-wing foundation when the foundation's president suggested that Chatterji should not teach at CIIS. The faculty that were consulted last time regarding the politics of this funding source were not approached this time to help differentiate between progressive and right-wing funders.

AVP's Allegations Against Shapiro and Chatterji

Plagued by what appears to be violations of faculty rights and a lack of transparency and accountability to institutional protocols, the AVP's undisclosed investigation may result in termination. All institutional review mechanisms have indicated high student satisfaction rates and that the Department to be well-functioning. Yet still, it has circulated that the Administration is seeking the dismissal of Chatterji and Shapiro. Moreover, the AVP has aired allegations against Chatterji and Shapiro in public as if they were uncontested, while the faculty have been restricted from refuting such claims.

Angana Chatterji and Richard Shapiro

Angana Chatterji is a leading and extensively published international social justice scholar and activist. She is a co-convenor of the International People's Tribunal on Human Rights and Justice in Indian-Administered Kashmir (<http://www.kashmirprocess.org>). The first such civil society-based effort in Kashmir, the People's Tribunal has documented legal-political states of exception, disappearances, gendered and sexualized violences, torture, extrajudicial killings, and unknown and mass graves. The Tribunal's work on unmarked and unidentified graves was corroborated by the State Human Rights Commission, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, in July 2011, leading to a formal acknowledgement of the existence of unknown and unidentified graves. The Tribunal's work has been defining the basis for prosecution and psychosocial restitution. Chatterji has labored for social justice around issues of chronic hunger, religious freedom, and land rights. Her scholarship on Hindu nationalism has brought distinction to CIIS. Inside the Institute, Professor Chatterji has advocated within faculty spaces for tenure, unionization, and empowerment of student, faculty, and staff. During Chatterji's fourteen years of service at CIIS, she has only had one grievance against her, of which she was fully exonerated.

Richard Shapiro, Department Chair, has been involved in creating critical, emancipatory, activist and multicultural education, focused on social justice, ecological sustainability, and cultural diversity. Shapiro has been working with education for social change for over 25 years, developing frameworks for critical self-reflection, hospitality to difference, and political activism. He has developed processes, academic curricula, and pedagogical methods for engaging issues of cultural difference and social oppression in ways that are facilitative of individual learning and collective solidarity. Within the Institute, he is a vocal and fierce advocate for collaborative governance, increased student participation, and critical reflection. Prior to CIIS, Shapiro was the Director of Humanities, New College of California, from 1985-95, and a founding member of Todos: The Sherover-Simms Institute for Alliance Building, a Bay Area organization that works with youth, social service organizations and universities, on issues of

social oppression and cultural identity. Professor Shapiro is co-founder of the Jewish-Muslim Friendship Circle in Kashmir, where he has been actively engaged in interfaith alliance with Kashmiris. During his years of service at CIIS, he does not have a single grievance to his name from students, faculty, staff.

Graduate Students of Angana Chatterji & Richard Shapiro

Affected MA and PhD students are of diverse backgrounds. The department has approximately 49% students “of color” and 68% that are LGBTQIQ identified, with, and many students from working class backgrounds. A significant majority of the students of the Department insist that their education continue with Professors Chatterji and Shapiro and demand administrative accountability.

Students in the Anthropology Department use their education and scholarship to focus on social activism around the globe. Students’ academic and scholarly foci include:

- Social and health disparities in the Watts community of Los Angeles, California
- Education reform in communities of queer youth in California
- Refugee rights in Southeast Asia
- Enforced and involuntary disappearances in Afro-Colombian communities in Colombia
- Feminization of labor and its effects on women’s groups in Matagalpa, Nicaragua
- Indigenous rights, militarization, and birthing issues in Israel-Palestine
- Displacement and poverty in rural communities in Haiti
- Gender politics in Afghanistan
- Patriarchy and U.S. national policies
- Mental health issues in the U.S.
- Ecological sustainability in Brazil
- Cultural politics of overseas charitable funding by U.S.-based Hindu nationalist groups
- The prison industrial complex and the criminalization of immigrants in the U.S.
- The constitution of indigeneity, cultural survival, and the role of scarcity in the U.S. Federal Recognition Process
- Reproductive justice and youth advocacy in the U.S.
- State violence against Roma communities in Europe

Demands for Accountability and Justice

- Restore Professors Angana Chatterji and Richard Shapiro to full faculty status by ending the suspension and rescinding the recommendation for termination immediately.
- Reinstate Richard Shapiro’s four-year contract signed on April 1, 2011.
- Any credible and outstanding grievances against Chatterji and Shapiro be dealt with within the regular and established institutional procedures.
- Empower CIIS senior faculty to constitute a body to investigate the role of the President, the Academic Vice President and Dean of Students in the actions taken against Professors Angana Chatterji and Richard Shapiro and students of the Anthropology Department since the beginning of the Spring 2011 semester. The investigative body must be empowered to adjudicate on disciplinary actions which would include the possible termination of employment of the three administrators named above.
- Begin discussion and negotiation for the redress of harm caused to students through the the investigation undertaken by AVP Wexler and Dean Strong.

For more information go to www.injusticeatciis.net or contact studentsofanthropology@gmail.com

To read more about the work of the IPTK: <http://www.kashmirprocess.org/>

IPTK's Report Buried Evidence: <http://www.kashmirprocess.org/reports/graves/toc.html>

Arundhati Roy's article in the Guardian "The dead begin to speak up in India":
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/libertycentral/2011/sep/30/kashmir-india-unmarked-graves>

NY Times Article of the State Human Rights Commission confirming mass graves in Kashmir:
<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/23/world/asia/23kashmir.html?ref=kashmir>