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The collective of students, professors and staff of the
University Paris VIII

The University of Vincennes is opened to all

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For seven weeks, a massive movement has been growing within the French University system, uniting professors, students and staff in a struggle against Sarkozy's new university reform law, the law concerning the "Liberties and Responsibilities of the Universities" (LRU).

The University of Paris VIII Vincennes-Saint Denis, with the support of University administration and personnel, has been on "active strike", offering alternative classes and workshops open to all. Today the movement is at a turning point, revealing the depth of the crisis.

In most of the French Universities, with the exception of our own due to this administrative support, riot police are present on the campuses and their buses line the surrounding streets. Aided by private "security" guards, the riot police have entered the campuses in order to violently break the strikes, occupations and picket lines. Plainclothes police patrol the corridors. During the protests, students have been targeted, beaten and arrested, sometimes resulting in major injuries. Some of the University presidents are therefore closing the campuses preventatively, while others call upon such public or private "forces of order", and create a climate of fear. Despite this situation we are confronted with a near-total media blackout, as to the movement's size and its demands (the abrogation of the law LRU), as well as the violent repression, due to the fact that the dominant media are friendly with the government.

The law LRU was adopted by Parliament on August 10, 2007, in the height of the summer vacation, without consulting the university community. It attacks the foundations of the French University system as a public institution with a scientific and cultural mission. Although the system is arguably far from perfect, it has remained an institution of higher learning that is accessible to all, without entrance examinations or elevated tuition.

This law imposes the logic of the market onto the Universities, on many levels. It forces them into competition with one another for students, financing and prestige, thus turning them into enterprises and creating a classist hierarchization between campuses. The few democratic administrative structures that currently exist will disappear, centralizing power in the hands of the president and a board that will include representatives from private firms. Professors and staff will be threatened with job insecurity, with the new possibility of hiring adjuncts and temporary workers. Even the academic departments are forced to compete with one another for students and financing, allowing private interests to help determine course content, and offering classes in function of the needs of the current job market. The door is opened to elevated tuition. Students thus become clients, and the university an enterprise. We believe that a democratic society needs public universities whose mission it is to

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develop the critical spirit of all citizens, and that access to the university is a fundamental right for all. This is why our movement is essential for the future of the University, in France and beyond.

We are therefore calling upon you to ask for your solidarity and support, by inviting you to take part in our movement. At the University of Paris VIII Vincennes-Saint Denis, a university with a radical history and situated in the richly diverse North-eastern suburbs of Paris, we have set up an "open university". We would like to invite you to come and lead a workshop, consisting in giving a talk and opening up a debate. Your work has inspired us and we have taken it seriously ; we therefore invite you to come and put it into practice with us. Together we can discuss issues relating to the University even beyond the abrogation of the LRU. Your participation would be a great help to our movement, which is in need of exterior support.

We thank you very much, and greatly hope to receive your positive response.

Sincerely,

The collective of students, professors and staff of the University
Paris VIII Vincennes-Saint Denis

Post-scriptum :

[More \(mostly in French\)](#)