



**Professor Paul Fine, Chair
Building Name Review Committee
University of California, Berkeley**

July 19, 2020

Dear Paul and members of the Building Name Review Committee,

We write to share our thoughts on the matter of un-naming Kroeber Hall, which is under consideration by your committee. We are not social scientists by education, but write simply as Berkeley faculty concerned about fairness and the recognition of scholarship by the University of California.

The discussion surrounding the name on Kroeber Hall is exceedingly complex. At least two major factors are involved:

- (1) The established tradition of the University of California to honor its leading scholars and scientists by placing their names on the halls of learning in accordance with strict guidelines,
- (2) The complicated and troubled relations that have existed between the institutions of the State of California and the Native American tribes who have lived here for thousands of years before the arrival of European colonizers; the hardship and suffering of California Native Americans at the hands of the State were officially acknowledged and apologized for last year in Governor Gavin Newsom's Executive Order N-15-19 and steps to repair the damage were mandated.

It is impossible to reach a reasoned decision regarding the proposed removal of Professor Alfred Kroeber's name from the campus building without access to and evaluation of detailed evidence, nor without the input of experts who are acquainted with approved collecting practices in anthropology and archaeology in the early 20th century. This discussion is also taking place at a time when national events are mandating a long overdue examination and correction of injustices that continue to exist in American society. At the same time, the current political climate engenders the risk of actions undertaken in haste and without due process, especially in academic environments which value reasoned decision-making and broad consensus.

Let us briefly summarize what we know to date and indicate also informational items that are either partial or missing. We fully trust that the Chancellor's Building Name Review Committee will assemble and analyze all the facts pertaining to the case and present them to the campus community for discussion prior to making a recommendation to Chancellor Christ.

Over a career spanning six decades, Alfred L. Kroeber (1876-1960) made enormous contributions to the field and profession of anthropology as well as to the University of California. He was recognized by his peers as the preeminent American anthropologist of his time and received many honorary degrees from leading U.S. universities. He founded Berkeley's Department of Anthropology in 1901. He also established and directed the Museum of Anthropology. Like his mentor Franz Boas, Kroeber came to recognize cultures on their own internal terms rather than through a nineteenth-century lens of racial superiority. He was engaged in extensive fieldwork, particularly with Native

American cultures, and published prodigiously. Without Professor Kroeber's pioneering research, much less would be known today about the history and culture of Native American tribes.

When a new campus building was constructed to house the Department and Museum of Anthropology and the Department of Art, it was named in honor of Alfred Kroeber, who was present at the dedication on 5 May 1960. After Kroeber's death later that year, his colleagues wrote in UC's *In Memoriam*: "As an anthropologist, Kroeber displayed a truly remarkable degree of insight, held no bias, welcomed new ideas,... As a person, he was patient, kindly, and tolerant,..., a good listener, and a warm human being."

The proposers for un-naming Kroeber Hall do not question Kroeber's academic accomplishments nor his professional stature. However, they do criticize his collection practices, which we understand were normal for his profession in the early 20th century. Excavation and the examination of cultural items that had been buried in the ground for a long period of time is an essential part of the science of anthropology. UC Berkeley still holds a large collection of Native American artifacts and human remains in the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology. The Native American Graves and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990 mandates the return of these to Indigenous Communities. The campus NAGPRA Advisory Committee works closely with the campus administration to ensure that the process of identification and repatriation, even if it is protracted, takes place in a fair, transparent, and dignified manner. Chancellor Christ has publicly stated: "One of my goals has been to build better relations with Native Communities, and repatriation is absolutely key to that effort."

The extraordinary story of Ishi (1861-1916) has been repeated many times and is documented on the UCSF website by historian Nancy Rockafellar. After Ishi was brought to San Francisco in 1911, he lived in quarters at the Museum in Anthropology in San Francisco. At an offer of relocation by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, he responded that he wanted to stay and grow old there. Ishi provided invaluable information to the UC anthropologists on the customs, songs, and stories of his tribe.

Sadly, Ishi did not live to enjoy an old age. Within a few months of his arrival in San Francisco, he was hospitalized for respiratory infections. He received medical care from the physicians at the UC Hospital which was next to the Museum. A friendship (together with a collaboration on hunting with bows and arrows) developed between Ishi and UC surgeon Dr. Saxton Pope. In December of 1914, Ishi returned to the hospital and had to remain for 62 days. Despite some improvements, his health declined. He died on 25 March 1916. An autopsy was performed: the cause of death was advanced pulmonary tuberculosis. As the proposal acknowledges, Kroeber tried to prevent an autopsy of Ishi. While on travel in New York and being aware of Ishi's deteriorating condition, on 24 March Kroeber wrote to his colleague E.W. Gifford:

"I do not however see that an autopsy would lead to anything of consequence. I might be willing to consent if it were to be a strict autopsy in the ordinary sense to determine the cause of death, but as they know that, I suspect that the autopsy would resolve itself into a general dissection. Please shut down on it. As to disposal of the body, I must ask you as my personal representative on the spot in this matter, to yield nothing at all under any circumstances. If there is any talk about the interests of science, say for me that science can go to hell. We propose to stand by our friends. Besides, I cannot believe that any scientific value is materially involved. ...Please acquaint Waterman with my feelings; and convey them also to Pope, toned down in form so as not to offend him, but without concessions."

The letter arrived too late to prevent the autopsy. Worse yet, Ishi's brain had been removed for preservation, against Kroeber's fully articulated wishes, presumably for possible future scientific

purposes. His ashes were interred and placed in a Pueblo jar in the columbarium of Mount Olivet Cemetery in Colma. While Kroeber clearly advocated passionately against Ishi's autopsy, it is also true that after returning from sabbatical leave, Kroeber arranged for Ishi's brain to be sent in early 1917 to the U.S. National Museum. Why he chose to do this rather than unite the remains, we do not know. The records of the transfer were difficult to trace. But, following a meticulous search in the late 1990's, Ishi's brain was located at the Smithsonian Institution. It was repatriated in 2000 and united with his ashes for a traditional burial in the wilderness. A grievous historical wrong had finally been righted. While it is impossible to know what motivated Kroeber, it is important to note that the previous passage from Kroeber's communication suggests that Kroeber did not have full and definitive authority over such a decision (otherwise, he would have simply instructed the Dr. Pope to cremate the body).

The proposal accuses Kroeber of practicing "salvage anthropology" and promoting a view that California Indians and their culture was nearly extinct. Again, it is important to note that Kroeber lived and worked at a time in which Native American populations, estimated to exceed 3 million people in 1770 had declined to under 250,000 by 1910, largely due to multiple genocidal actions, according to the studies of Cook¹. The demographic conditions were indeed dire and were it not for the resilience of Native Americans, subsequent history would have been even more disastrous. While citing the compelling account of Vincent Medina on the impact of salvage anthropology, the proposal neglects to mention that Medina himself acknowledges that Kroeber regretted his assertion of near extinction for California Indians when he realized that it was being used to justify further abuse of the remaining populations. More importantly, the proposal does not mention Kroeber's extraordinary role, at an advanced age, in serving as the lead expert witness for the California Indians land rights before the Indian Claims Commission. Quoting Omer Stewart²:

"Kroeber spoke or submitted to cross-examination for three hours a day for ten days. It was a masterful performance by a gifted scientist and talented, energetic scholar. Because of timing and emphasis, change of pace, and dozens of other practices which kept the interest of the Commissioners and others in the court room, Kroeber was an exceptionally impressive witness. The fifteen main points covered included a definition of anthropology, an explanation of ethnological procedures, an evaluation of ethnogeography and demography, a characterization of California Indian political-territorial groups, an exposition on land use for food and other purposes, *etc.* Heizer added ethnogeographic details and the evidence for length of occupancy from archaeology. Gifford and Barrett presented details for particular areas from their own decades of experience. Cook and Cutter testified regarding evidence from Spanish documents. All of the witnesses demonstrated great erudition; Kroeber, however, was the most significant presence; he seemed at all times the "ideal witness"."

In fact, Kroeber testified before this commission in direct opposition to some of his own former students, which demonstrates that, even by the standard of his time, he was on the right side of history.

A California Indian Tribal Forum was convened at UC Berkeley on 13-14 April 2017. It brought together UC representatives and members of Native American communities. President Napolitano and (incoming) Chancellor Christ were in attendance. The main objective was to advance the dialogue between the campus and California Native Americans, particularly in relation to the holdings of cultural objects, human remains, and ethnographic materials. A report was written, for use by UC Berkeley administrators and committees working on Native American issues, and also for use by tribal representatives. Recommendations were made regarding the inventorying and disposition

¹ S.F. Cook, *The Population of California Indians 1769-1970*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1976.

² <https://digitalassets.lib.berkeley.edu/anthpubs/ucb/text/kas025-013.pdf> (accessed on 7/17/20).

of Native American human remains and artifacts, collaboration between UC and California Indian tribes, and educational and outreach initiatives. Grievances about Kroeber's collection practices were noted in the report. But, the matter of the name of Kroeber Hall was not addressed.

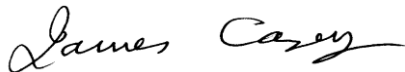
The present proposal refers to Gerald Vizenor in connection with the un-naming of Kroeber Hall. We could not find any evidence that he ever made such a proposal to the University of California. However, in a fictional work, *Ishi and the Wood Ducks*, published in 1995, he does have a scene about names of people and things, and there is some dialogue about renaming Kroeber Hall for Ishi.

In summary:

(a) Even to our non-expert eyes and with only the benefit of a precursory review of readily available records, it is clear that the present proposal to un-name Kroeber Hall is substantially incomplete and, in significant ways, unjust to Kroeber. A decision of the gravity of what is contemplated by this committee, especially at a great university like Berkeley, should be based on a much more comprehensive, even-handed, historically contextualized, and thoroughly documented analysis of Kroeber's record.

(b) Removing a person's name from an existing campus building implies intent to dishonor the person's legacy. In the case of Kroeber, this strikes us as unwarranted or, at the very least, unsupported by the facts that we are acquainted with. We ask the committee to deliberate upon whether Kroeber – as a person and a scholar – deserves this dishonor based on the entirety of his record or whether he is, to some extent, a proxy figure in an ongoing painful struggle of California with its past. A crucial role of the University of California is to help guide all the people of our state in understanding and learning from our complex and often painful history. To this end, it is difficult to imagine how this role would be advanced by effectively disowning Kroeber's seminal contributions, especially if done for reasons other than Kroeber's own record.

With appreciation for your invaluable work,



James Casey



Panos Papadopoulos