

To the Building Name Review Committee:

We are Native students currently enrolled in various programs at University of California, Berkeley including: Berkeley Law, School of Social Welfare, Berkeley Letters & Science, Environmental Science, Policy and Management, Engineering, etc. We welcome the Native American Advisory Council's proposal to un-name Kroeber Hall as an opportunity for UC Berkeley to take concrete steps towards healing its relationship with California Tribal Communities and fostering a more welcoming environment for current Native students.

We were disappointed by the pushback against this opportunity, particularly given the history of Berkeley and its Anthropology department. The violence perpetrated against the Indigenous peoples of what is today California should not be discounted or minimized by faculty of this University in order to preserve a fictionalized benevolence of their discipline. These defenses fit into a long culture on campus that normalizes white fragility and pressures Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students, staff, and faculty to remain silent about institutionalized racism and their own experiences. Whether or not current Professors acknowledge our concerns, UC Berkeley harmed Indigenous communities before, during, and after Kroeber's tenure, and this history continues to weigh heavily on California Indians and current Indigenous students, staff, and faculty.

When we think of Ishi, we think of ourselves, we think about our grandparents, and the ancestors we lost to genocide. We are reminded that institutions like Berkeley were not made for us or our ancestors. We consistently have to present ourselves in white spaces to succeed and survive, not only for ourselves, but for our communities that continue to be adversely impacted. The story of Ishi may seem complex, but for us it is all too familiar. Our colleagues have chosen to use racism-evasive responses (Beeman, 2015) for the treatment of Ishi. We view this as a perpetuation of Kroeber's legacy of harm against Indigenous people. It is important to acknowledge the racist ideologies that ultimately justified the ways in which Ishi was treated during and after his life and the ways that these ideologies are manifesting currently. As Native students, these logics are harmful and seek to further perpetuate colonial violence against contemporary Indigenous communities.

When deciding to pursue higher education, many of us were weary of choosing UC Berkeley due to its particularly controversial history and current practices with Indigenous people. As a diverse community, some of us chose to enroll here to specifically address the harms perpetrated by Kroeber and UC Berkeley. While others chose to enroll here despite the University's history, knowing we would need to engage in this work and our colleagues' white fragility around it.

As a land-grant institution, Berkeley was built from over 150,000 acres of Miwok, Yokuts, Gabrieleño, Maidu, and Pomo lands, among many others, which were stolen and granted to the state of California through the Morrill Act. Income from the sale of these lands constituted as much as a third of the University's annual operating expenses in the late 19th century (Lee & Ahtone, 2020). Thus, Berkeley's academic prestige-- including that of its Anthropology Department-- was achieved only through Indigenous land theft, genocide, and other colonially violent practices. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge how the Anthropology Department specifically grew to fame for its practices of stealing ancestral remains, a practice normalized under Kroeber's leadership.

Because of this history, UC Berkeley's administration, students, faculty, and Anthropology Department continue to benefit from stolen land and the genocide of Indigenous peoples. Berkeley's lack of improvement on the repatriation process demonstrates that this is not a distant legacy, but an

entrenched and continuous reality. Native students at Berkeley have long voiced these concerns and the proposal to un-name Kroeber Hall and cleanse the campus of celebratory reminders of this past is not “woefully misinformed and in the pop style of social media ‘cancel culture’” (Scheper-Hughes, 2020) but is consistent with a long legacy of Native advocacy.

In November of 2019, during Native American Heritage Month, Oscar Dubón, Vice Chancellor for Equity & Inclusion, stated “it is also a time to acknowledge the university’s fraught relationship with Native communities and to celebrate the work being done to heal that relationship and better support members of Native groups on campus.” Berkeley further commits not only to “increase overall diversity and access to a Berkeley education” (Public Affairs, 2020) but also “create a campus where all Berkeley students feel respected, supported, and valued” (UC Berkeley Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, n.d.). As Native students, we view the un-naming proposal as one way that the University can fulfil these promises to support us, and future Native students on campus.

We ask that Berkeley stand by this statement and un-name Kroeber Hall. The un-naming of Kroeber Hall should not be mistaken as an erasure of history, nor is it an attack on the anthropology department as a whole. Instead, it should be seen as an actionable step towards the commitment this institution has made to their Native American students, the Tribal communities it serves, and the Ohlone communities whose land we currently occupy and continue to benefit from. These Ohlone communities include but are not limited to the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area and the Confederated Villages of Lisjan.

Some have suggested that the building be re-named Ishi Hall to honor local Tribes. We believe that the University should respect the sovereignty of local Tribes and consult with them to find a new name. It is not appropriate to speak on behalf of all “California Natives” or assume naming the building Ishi Hall will honor them. This information can only be gleaned through meaningful consultation with these Tribes, an act we highly encourage the relevant committee to pursue.

We would like to conclude by noting that this proposal is only a step towards reconciliation and that there still remains much work to be done to repair the University’s fraught relationships with Native peoples. We encourage the University to continue this work to truly make this campus a more just and equitable place for all BIPOC students, staff and faculty.

Sincerely,

All UC Berkeley Native student organizations

The American Indian Graduate Student Association

The Berkeley Native American Law Student Association

The Indigenous and Native Coalition- Recruitment and Retention Center

## Works Cited

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