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To: UC President Michael Drake

RE: Proposal to Remove the Name of Kroeber Hall

Dear President Drake,

On July 1, 2020, the UC Berkeley Building Name Review Committee (BNRC) received a proposal to remove the name Kroeber Hall from our university building. The BNRC completed a thorough review of the proposal and voted unanimously to remove the Kroeber name. At the recommendation of the BNRC, and in keeping with the University of California's *Policy on Naming University Properties, Academic and Non-Academic Programs*, I am writing to request the removal of the name Kroeber Hall from our university building.

Per the BNRC, Kroeber Hall is named in honor of Alfred Louis Kroeber, considered one of the most influential American anthropologists in the first half of the 20th century. After studying under Franz Boas, Kroeber was a recipient of the first PhD in anthropology from Columbia University and was the founding member of the Department of Anthropology at UC Berkeley, serving on the faculty from 1902 to his retirement in 1946. During his time at UC Berkeley, he also served as the Director of the UC Museum of Anthropology. He authored more than 500 articles and books, Professor Kroeber was a leading scholar of indigenous peoples, including the Native American peoples in California. One of his major works is entitled the *Handbook of the Indians of California* (Bureau of American Ethnology of the Smithsonian Institution, 1925).

According to the BNRC and the un-naming proposal, Alfred Kroeber engaged in activities that negatively impacted the Native American members of our communities on campus, the Bay Area, and beyond. The BNRC cites the following key reasons for un-naming Kroeber Hall.

- Kroeber collected or authorized the collection of the remains of Native American ancestors from grave sites and curated a repository of these human remains for research study. This practice, labeled "Salvage Anthropology" by some scholars, is now illegal. The proposal argues that although this practice was not illegal when Kroeber engaged in it, it was immoral and unethical, even for the time.
- Kroeber and colleagues took custody of a Native American man called "Ishi," who they allowed to live in the Museum of Anthropology; Ishi was given a janitorial position at the museum and used as "a living exhibit" for museum visitors. He was also taught racial slurs that were used to refer to Asian and African Americans.

- Kroeber's claim that the Ohlone people were culturally extinct contributed to the decision by the Federal Government to delist the Ohlone from the national register of Native peoples, leading to the Muwekma Ohlone tribe having no land and no political power.
- Given this history, Kroeber is a public symbol of the discrimination against Native Americans. A building named in his honor is an ongoing affront to Native Americans generally, an emblem of hostility to Native American members of the UC Berkeley community, and is not in keeping with Regent's policy 4400 listed above.

Kroeber's views and writings clearly stand in opposition to our university's values of inclusion and our belief in promoting diversity and excellence. In light of the consequential decision to remove a name from a building, the BNRC is tasked to conduct a thorough review and evaluation of the proposal and community feedback.

The BNRC received over 595 comments and evaluated all information, including emails and letters. Of the 595 responses, 85% were in favor of un-naming Kroeber Hall. The BNRC highlighted that "many of the responses were short and included rationales echoing the points of view in the proposal, related to decolonizing the campus and making the campus a safe and welcoming space for Native Americans and other people of color."

Several individuals who supported un-naming provided additional nuanced perspectives. They acknowledged the problematic aspects of Kroeber's legacy, but also highlighted his contributions to the field of anthropology and his support for Native Americans. Some of these respondents also felt that the negative aspects of Kroeber's legacy were being overstated or given more weight than they should. They referenced the norms of the time period and the fact that the Department of Anthropology did not submit a joint comment on the proposal. Additional details can be found in the attached BNRC recommendation.

Individuals who supported keeping the Kroeber name included some members of the Department of Anthropology and other departments on campus. These comments focused on several points. These included: (a) the belief that all buildings named in honor of individuals who contributed to Berkeley should be kept as history should not be erased; (b) the un-naming process is fundamentally flawed and reflects political correctness; (c) hindsight is problematic and we should not be judging Kroeber and others by contemporary standards; (d) Kroeber was far from the worst of his time; (e) the proposal had errors indicative of shoddy scholarship and did not accurately reflect Kroeber's legacy; and (f) the un-naming process will lead to many other buildings on campus being renamed, with someone listing more than 10 other buildings named after individuals whose histories were not without some blemish.

The BNRC highlighted two arguments that stood out in this group, which were Kroeber's views on the equality of all groups and his support for Native Americans: "During the long, ugly and violent history of California and its UC universities with respect to Native Californians, AL Kroeber was an ally, not an enemy. Beyond his meticulous writings, audio transcriptions, photos, conferences, his co-authoring of books and articles with his Native Californian informants and colleagues, Kroeber went to federal court as an expert witness on behalf of a California Indian land rights lawsuit, 'Indians of California, Docket No. 37 on June 23, 1952....Kroeber, who was very old at this time, responded to a cross-examination three hours a day for ten days in which he supported the land rights of the Indians. He argued that all the land in California, not just particular identified sites of Californian bands and tribes, belonged to Native Californians. His strong testimony helped win the case but it took decades before the tribes received small reparations for the plunder of their lands. (see Omer C. Stewart, Kroeber and the Indian Claims Commission Cases) <https://digitalassets.lib.berkeley.edu/anthpubs/ucb/text/kas025-013.pdf>."

Kroeber's testimony in support of Native American groups was acknowledged by one of these groups but described as "too little, too late." There were also conflicting views about Kroeber's involvement in the gathering of Native American remains and were cited in the BNRC's recommendation. The following contrasting claims from two submissions: "As for the accusation that AL Kroeber was involved in excavations of Native California graves, Julian Stewart's 50-page obituary of Kroeber in the 1960 journal, *American Anthropologist*, wrote that 'Kroeber was never a physical anthropologist, and, although he summarized basic information in his book, *Anthropology*, his publications on the subject were negligible. He had no predisposition to be a field archeologist.' "

"Some commentators on the Kroeber Hall un-naming debate have suggested that Alfred Kroeber had minimal interest in archaeology and did not participate in excavations of human remains in California; that the bulk of excavation of burials took place prior to 1909 before Kroeber took over administration of the department; and that the department and museum under Kroeber's leadership (1909-1946) reduced its involvement in digging up Native burial sites. My research suggests a different assessment."

Conclusion

After reviewing all of the proposal information and community feedback, as well as weighing the multiple viewpoints, all of the voting members of the BNRC agreed that Kroeber's name should be removed, with weight being given to the negative impact of the name on the Native American members of our communities on campus, in the Bay Area, and beyond.

Based on the thorough review process, community feedback, and information received, I support the Committee's proposal to remove the name of Kroeber from our campus building. Attached is the proposal for your consideration. I include two documents in support of this proposal: our Building Name Review Committee's recommendation, and the proposal to remove the name from Kroeber Hall.

I believe that removing the Kroeber name from our campus - and acknowledging our historical ties to Alfred Louis Kroeber - will help Berkeley recognize a challenging part of our history while better supporting the diversity of today's academic community. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,



Carol Christ
Chancellor

Attachments:

- The UC Berkeley Building Name Review Committee's Recommendation to the Chancellor on the Kroeber Name
- Proposal to Remove the Name from Kroeber