

Reading Response #5: UCSD Campus Climate Reflection



Figure 1: (originally captioned "*Socially dead, but politically active.*")
UCSD students rallying in protest at the Warren quad the night of the 2016 Presidential Election upon the results being announced.

November 8, 2016. UC San Diego. Photo courtesy: Armaan Ali.

When declaring the acceptance of my admission to UC San Diego, I made assumptions that I would be among others who were very much like myself in regards to public opinions and common ethics. I thought everyone would have the same values, the same viewpoints, the same goals and aspirations, the same everything really. I was absolutely (now prematurely) thrilled to be on a campus where everyone else shared the same virtues as me; to be on a campus where everyone else both respected and agreed with what I value as a person.

Figure 1 perfectly depicts my initial thoughts on the climate on campus: a black and white photo of 500+ students; in unison, passionately demonstrating their beliefs, beliefs that each of them share; colorblind to any distinctions of race, ethnicity or gender. I was there when the photo was taken, surrounded by people I had never met, but whom I didn't consider strangers. Each of us were passionate of the same belief and unquestionably supportive of one another, no one felt like stranger that night. It is that night, in that photo, when I believed my assumptions of UCSD being this completely united,

inclusive, progressive, and whole-heartedly liberal campus to be undeniable. But it's upon reading Angela Kong's dissertation that I realized my assumptions were premature.

In Chapter 4 of her dissertation, Kong challenges my initial thinking of UCSD as an all-inclusive, tolerant, progressive university. Kong wrote of the series of incidents from only 5-6 years ago concerning the "Compton Cookout", beginning with a black-ghetto themed frat party, leading to a public broadcast addressing offended black students as "ungrateful n*****s", then escalating to a noose being hung on the 7th floor of the library as an act of terrorizing, and even a KKK hood being draped on the Dr. Seuss statue outside of Geisel. I was absolutely astonished reading this section of the dissertation, I honestly found the entire incident unbelievable. I had almost completed my first quarter at UCSD, a place that I characterized as safe, welcoming, and progressive, a place that I began to characterize as my home, and yet I discovered that only six years ago racism boldly existed on campus; it truly made me think twice on assumptions.

To be candid, I read that section of Kong's dissertation with my jaw dropped. Both the boldness of the hateful actions and the utter existence of such hate absolutely stunned me. But then I reassured myself that those events took place six years ago, that both society and UCSD has grown since then, and that earlier this month myself and 500 other students joined in expressing our disdain towards the racially offensive and vulgar sentiments of our upcoming U.S. president. But then I remembered that earlier this year there were chalk slogans of "NO SACTUARIES SCHOOS OR CITIES" and "BUILD THE WALL, DEPORT THEM ALL" were written outside the Raza Resource Center (The Washington Post). Then, I remembered that 16% of the escalated number of violent incidents against minorities has occurred on college campuses (The Chronicle of Higher Education).

Chapter 4 of Kong's dissertation ultimately made realized that my assumptions of UCSD being different from any other place I've known, of UCSD being a place a place of acceptance, of tolerance, a place that I was beginning to call home, were naive. Chapter 4 made me realize that my perception of the campus climate drastically differs from what it is; that instead, UCSD is a divided campus, and ultimately that UCSD is not as colorblind as neither I believed it to be nor the photo depicts it to be.

Works Cited

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