

## STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF UCSD LEFT REGARDING THE EVENTS OF 6 OCTOBER 2017

Friday afternoon, returning from class, one of our members happened to pass by the lower portion of Library Walk, a few feet from Silent Tree. There he found organizers, including non-students, from the organization calling itself "Young Americans for Liberty". They had prepared a large beach ball, 5 feet in diameter, and were encouraging people, in the name of the 1st amendment, to write whatever they wished on the surface of the ball. Apart from the usual phrases from Far Right dictionary, several slogans were plastered on its surface of an extremely dangerous and despicable nature, including #ropegang, a slogan used to identify people wishing to ejaculate semen on the faces of women, and anti-immigrant slogans. In addition to these, obscene slogans condoning gang rape appeared on the ball. Motivated by indignation at this offensive and dangerous language, our member punctured the ball with a short blade. After being accosted by an organizer, who admitted to being a non-student, he departed.

The puncturing of the sphere was an admittedly poorly-considered attempt to symbolically protest these intolerable slogans and to make it known that such sexist and racist language will not be respected by a campus with as long a history of defense of free speech as this. These reactionary, opportunistic, and hypocritical slogans did not, and do not, constitute a free exercise of rights. The vitriolic inscriptions on the ball have nothing to do with the first amendment, which only concerns government or public infringement of free speech and not the actions of private citizens; on top of this, the statements themselves cannot be justified nor condoned as they promote vile and demeaning attitudes toward women, immigrants, and other minorities. The organizers of YAL did not explicitly underwrite or condone any such language, but permitted it as a defense of legal rights, and did not engage with this language in a condemnatory way.

Thirty minutes later, in reaction to these events, when several of our members, including the member who punctured the balloon, were sitting in Groundwork Books, the same non-student organizer entered, on the phone with an unidentified source, and proceeded to attempt to intimidate our members, take photos of us without consent, and threateningly claim to be calling the police, which he subsequently did. A friend of ours, a longtime elderly volunteer at Groundwork and in the UCSD community, refused this individual entry into our space and rose to his feet, asking him to leave our space. The individual refused and grappled physically with our associate, who recently celebrated his 80th birthday, inflicting lacerations on our associate's arm with his fingers [photo enclosed], while attempting in bad faith to shout out to bystanders that he was assaulted by our aging associate.

This individual had brought several other individuals and they had surrounded Groundwork Books. When our member attempted to leave, he was stopped by these individuals as well as an off-duty employee of the university. At Mandeville hall, some of our associates, including the member who took this action, were blockaded by these individuals while UCSD Police were summoned. While we waited for them, these organizers did their best to intimidate us, flexing muscles and loudly claiming to be self-defense trained in an absurd attempt to impress upon our members that we were in danger.

Our member states from memory that:

“When UCSD police arrived, I cooperated and was detained and handcuffed in accordance with standard procedure with someone carrying a knife. They searched my possessions and asked me some standard questions to which I replied freely and without violation. At this time I was NOT arrested, but detained by police pending the investigation of the circumstances. The three officers, Officer Moss, Officer Cummings, and one other officer, restored order and distanced the individuals attempting to intimidate us so that the affair could proceed according to the law. I was questioned further and was invited down to the officer’s car for further discussion, along with the individual accusing me, who continued to insist that his right to perform some “citizen’s arrest” allowed him to deprive me of my liberty and rights. The police dealt clearly and openly with both of us after we were removed from the scene of the blockade, and acted without malice in our respect. After some more questioning I was released **without being arrested**, and informed that at the current time no criminal charge would be filed against me by UCSD police. I was allowed to depart unhindered. The other individuals whom my accuser had brought with him were distanced by UCSD police for my safety prior to my return to Groundwork books.”

UCSD Left condemns this attack on a community space while acknowledging the poor decision-making of one of its members in destroying YAL’s beach ball on library walk. We affirm that while free speech exists on the UCSD campus, it is often used by reactionary and anti-progressive individuals and groups to advance an agenda which further marginalizes women, people of color, immigrants, and other minorities who rightfully belong and live at UCSD and participate in the community. To invade not only a bookstore but a community space and cause harm to a respected and elderly man in response to such an action plainly displays how little concern certain individuals have for the rights and privileges associated with knowledge and free access to information.