Political History of UCSD

Welcome!

Welcome to SPARK's people's orientation tour! This is an uncensored student-written tour that will take you through parts of UCSD's history and campus that are censored by UCSD in their orientations, websites, and public image.

TRITON STEPS

Black Winter & Compton Cookout

- February 15 2010: Fraternity PIKE organized an off campus "Compton Cookout" party.
    - Participants were urged to dress in stereotypical ways, and promised chicken, watermelon, and malt liquor
- Anti Black racism escalates. Student-run "Koala TV" airs program supporting the cookout, calling students ungrateful N****rs. Noose is found in Geisel Library.(Source)
- UC Administration condemns party. Students feel administration isn't doing enough in response.
- February 24, 2010: Students walk out of a meeting with administrators and come to these "Teach Out Steps", where students, professors, and community members came to show support and list demands to administration, which included more funding and institutional support for underrepresented students' admissions, access and retention, as the UCSD undergraduate class was made of less than 2% Black undergrads — which is at 3.6% in 2024.
- February 26, 2010: 300 students, staff, and faculty sit in at Chancellor Mary Anne Fox's office because of outrage for events & conditions at UCSD that allowed this to happen.
- The TV Show Dear White People was based off of the Compton Cookout.

LIBRARY WALK

Campus Architecture (Price Center)

- This is Price Center, considered a student hub and center of campus. When it was being constructed however, it faced massive opposition from students who felt that it was "conceived, drafted, and packaged by the administration without regard to due process and campus election regulations" (page 50).
    - Chancellor ignored over ⅔ student approval of existing Student Center in survey
    - Vice Chancellor adopted proposal over objection of 90% of students reviewing proposal
    - Needed 25% votes to pass referendum, only got 21% — but Vice Chancellor passed the proposal regardless, arguing that it was 'merely an increase of existing fees' (which required less votes)
- Students were enraged at the administration's hypocrisy — marched to Price Center's grand opening (April 1989)

    - UCSD police tried to block protestors, chased protestors holding megaphones (many police slipped and fell on wet grass, to the amusement of protestors)
    - 4 students were arrested, one person was singled out and charged by the city attorney — creating bad PR for the UCSD police department & Price Center
    - much of this history unknown today

Gaza Encampment

- This is the field where the Gaza Encampment of May 2024 was, as a part of the National People's University movement.
    - The encampment was launched on May 1st, 2024, and lasted for 5 days, with daily agendas filled with workshops, assemblies, meals, art builds, film screenings, food, and Muslims & Jewish religious ceremonies hosted by MSU and Jewish Voices for Peace etc.
    - Students at the encampment demanded the University completely break ties & divest from the Zionist entity (including all Israel-affiliated organizations, private defense contractors, the Department of Defense, companies named complicit in the BDS movement)
- May 6, 2024: at 5:30AM - UCPD, SDPD, and CA highway patrol raided the encampment, arresting 64 protestors, spraying students with pepper spray, kneeling on necks of students, and placing snipers atop the student health building.
    - Students were held for hours in Price Center, which was closed for the day and set up for police operations, indicating advanced planning and collaboration between UCSD and SDPD/CBP.
    - 261K spent in one day to dismantle encampment
    - $2 million dollars spent by UCSD on encampments / police at campus protests throughout school year
- Following the encampment, UAW filed an Unfair Labor Practice and held a Strike 4 Palestine against UC's failing to protect UAW workers and violating their rights via police brutality), which led to an increase of political activity — daily People's University programming with teach-ins, pickets, art builds, general assemblies. The strike was eventually issued a temporary restraining order by Orange County Superior Court Judge Since then, the school has banned both Students for Justice in Palestine and Jewish Voices for Peace, and all arrested students were put under a year-long probation with the threat of filing charges should they 'act out', a move intended to quell student voices.
- Additionally, over the summer of 2024, the UC Regents passed policies that banned departments from speaking out politically, and established "Time Place and Manner" policies that designate hours and specific locations where free speech is "allowed" on campus with the approval of campus administration.

Jacobs School of Engineering

- Jacobs school of engineering is home to some of the most insidious partnerships between universities and technologies used to surveil, imprison, and kill POC locally and globally.
    - For example - Computer Science and Engineering's Professor Ryan Kastner, whose project on detecting and navigating underwater objects was funded directly by the Israeli Ministry of Defense.
- Jacobs school is home to the Jacobs Corporate Affiliates Program–the program that
    - 1) gives the military industry direct access to recruit UCSD students
    - 2) facilitates research collaborations between arms dealers and researchers,
    - 3) grants each company a seat on the Executive Board–allowing them to contribute to research agenda decisions, and
    - 4) grants them access to UCSD facilities

The corporate affiliates of the Jacobs School include General Atomics, Northrop Grumman, Shield AI, NAVWAR, Lockheed Martin, RTX, and Collins Aerospace — some of the biggest war profiteering companies in the world.

- In particular, General Atomics funds more research at UCSD than any other defense contractor. A General Atomics Predator drone refined by UCSD researchers is used to surveil migrants along the border & in other occupied regions in the world, like Palestine.

Jacobs school of engineering, whose website claims to "leverage our world renown to pursue engineering and computer science for the public good", is actively partnering with the very entities making money off of genocide. The Jacobs partnerships form a key link in the military industrial complex, pro
viding research, funding, and student labor to power the US war machine.

Point out TPM board!

MARSHALL COLLEGE

Lumumba Zapata College/Third World Liberation

Marshall College's history has been one of debates between students, faculty, and school administration. The planning of UCSD's "third college" had started in 1965 with the intention to create a college with a focus on history and liberal arts. In 1969, students and faculty affiliated with and in UCSD's Black Student Council (BSC) and Mexican American Youth Association (MAYA) created a set of demands for this new college, which they advocated to be called the Lumumba-Zapata College.

The Lumumba-Zapata Coalition saw the university as the "ideological backbone" of an oppressive social system that thrived "on military technology and imperialist profit". It demanded that the university build a college based upon a curriculum that teaches students a critical view

on economics, imperialism, public health, and urban and rural development. Lumumba-Zapata College would have a 35% Black and 35% Brown student makeup. This college would also have an administration held accountable by an autonomous student board.

On May 7th, 1969, following the University Senate's refusal to recognize the demands, thousands of students walked out in protest into Revelle Plaza, where several people spoke, including grad student Angela Davis. Later, students (with alleged help from Professor Herbert Marcuse) broke into the registrar's office, where they stayed until an agreeyable resolution was written up and passed.

This resolution stayed in place until 1972, reflecting several of the coalition's demands, including the Black and Brown student makeup. In '72, the UC Regents claimed that they had never agreed upon an autonomous student board and forced the change of Third College into one without powerful student leadership.

There is some evidence on campus of this history. For example, departments like Urban Studies and Planning came as a result of this struggle, but even the more performative aesthetic reflections of the Lumumba-Zapata movement have been going away in recent times. Half of the Latin-American and African architecture-inspired buildings have been demolished in the last two years and the vaguely activism-related names of buildings like "revolutionary" and "voice" have become known as R and V.

WHILE WALKING TO REVELLE

Kumeyaay History

- While the school likes to say indigenous land acknowledgements before events and claims to "hold great respect for the land and the original people" of the land, their actions often directly contradict this statement.
    - In 1976, Kumeyaay ancestral (9500 years old) remains (young male and slightly older female) were unearthed during an excavation at the UCSD Chancellor's House.
    - Despite the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990 that requires repatriation of remains if they are culturally identifiable AND the Kumeyaay Cultural Repatriation Committee's claim to the remains in 2006, UCSD responded with a statement in 2008 that the remains are "culturally unidentifiable", refusing to return the remains.
    - After the remains were repatriated in 2011, it was challenged by 3 UC professors, who argued that there wasn't sufficient evidence that remains are related to the Kumeyaay, insisting that they should be preserved for future research. Since then, it has been housed at the San Diego Archeological Center, and hasn't been returned to the Kumeyaay.

UC's Thirty Meter Telescope

- Additionally, the UC continues to disrespect lands and culture of Indigenous people through their research projects and construction.

- The University of California was a founding partner of the Thirty Meter Telescope, to be built on Mauna Kea, a sacred site on the Big island of Hawaii. The construction of this telescope has faced immense resistance from Indigenous Hawaiian people, who claim that this project is a desecration of their culture.
    - TMT spokesperson claims that there are no historical artifacts or burials, and discredited Native Hawaiian claims that the land is sacred
- Despite multiple lawsuits, the Supreme Court of Hawaii ruled that construction could continue. In July 2019, Native Hawaiian resisters staged a protest to block the road up to the mountain to stop construction, and 38 elders were arrested by riot police. However, the protest lasted for months, with thousands of people gathering to protest the telescope. Ironically, due to funding cuts at the National Science Foundation, the project is stalled at the moment.

UC Regents

So… who controls the UC? The UC is controlled by a board of 26 members: **the Regents**.

The UC Regents are the governor-appointed governing board that establish university policy, land management, and control all investments and operations of the UC. While the UC is the largest employer in California, the UC Regents are undemocratically chosen (handpicked by the governor for 12 years), and the UC is not subject to many of California's labor laws due to their status as a "public trust". Thus, they have a unique amount of unregulated legislative and economic power that most corporations and branches of the state government do not possess.

- Infamously awful in negotiating with labor unions
    - UAW strike Fall 2022 (largest academic strike in history)
    - AFSCME striking - who is in afscme
        - Bargaining in bad faith
- Regents have been key in suppressing student speech and the Pro-Palestinian movement
    - July 2024 - Regents ban departments from making political statements on the websites
    - Aug 2024 TPM policies banned public speech (restricting it to certain 'free speech zones', where permission to demonstrate must be granted by the UC)
    - June 2025 - Regents ruled that UC Student Governments can no longer divest or boycott Israel or ANY OTHER COUNTRY,
    - Now leaking names to Trump administration (Berkeley over 160 names & data)

Revelle Plaza

Revelle was the first college constructed at UCSD, so Revelle Plaza is home to much of the student life and early protests at UCSD.

- When it was the center of campus, Revelle Plaza was home to many protests, sit-ins, flag-burnings, debates, and other types of political activity.

- In 1977, students conducted a sit-in at Chancellor McElroy's office (which was in Revelle) when he tried to ignore reports and cut costs at the daycare for campus parents, outsourcing the campus childcare center to an outside franchise. After 3-days, 21 students arrested, and massive protests against the chancellor, the Daycare Committee voted to give $25,000 to the existing daycare, and the students got what they wanted. Today, however, there is no daycare at all for student-parents. This, along with the tuition hikes in the mid 80s throughout the 2010s, has made the campus hostile to non-traditional and poor students.

Anti-War Protests

- Revelle was the site of numerous protests against UCSD's Vietnam war complicity — including body bag die-in and draft protests in the quad, and a sit-in at the contracts & grants office.
    - Urey Hall was taken over by anti-war protestors protesting it as a center of University's complicity with the Vietnam war (because Urey housed a lot of professors with Department of Defense contracts)
    - Draft card burnings -
- Revelle Plaza was also the site that George Winnie Jr (a ucsd grad student) died after setting himself on fire with a sign "In God's name, End this war" - in protest of the Vietnam War.

South Africa Apartheid

- Galbraith Hall was the site of the former library and the longest student occupation in UCSD history. In 1985, Free South Africa coalition members began a sleep-in at the library, renaming it the Winnie Mandela library. This sleep-in occupation of the library lasted for over a month. Throughout this time, there were rallies reaching 2,000 people in a nationwide coordination of universities. One day, they segregated Revelle Cafeteria for a day to symbolize forced mimic South Africa's apartheid practices. In Oct 1985 students were arrested for posting flyers calling for a campus-wide strike — but they struck anyway, canceling 600 classes one day. Students publicly burned stock certificates of companies with ties to the South Africa apartheid regime and demanded divestment from South Africa from UC Portfolio, which held 6.3 billion dollars in 1985. Of the UC's investments, 40% (roughly 2.4B worth) had operations in South Africa (page 7).
- In 1986, after immense pressure within and outside the UC, the UC Regents voted to divest $3.1 billion from companies doing business with apartheid South Africa, a monumental victory for the UC students and the movement that was growing economic pressure.

Old Student Center

Co-op history

- Though there are four student cooperatives on campus, do you know which ones these are?
    - Che Cafe, G-Store, Food Coop, and Groundwork Books
- UCSD used to be home to many more cooperatives, including the Print Cooperative, Recycle Cooperative, and Farm Cooperative. Throughout the school's history, in part due to active pressure from the University, and competition with the Price Center, most of these cooperatives closed down.

Che Cafe

- Over that way, beyond Galbraith and the power plant, is the Che Cafe, a student and San Diego community member operated cooperative space that is a vital part of the San Diego Punk scene. While the space started as a Coffee Hut in 1966, the collective has only existed since 1980 after being turned over to the Student Center Board following the Hut's bankruptcy. Since then, it has been a major part of the San Diego punk scene, with bands like Green Day, Fugazi, and Le Tigre performing there throughout its history (*I have broken my nose there twice -Jaden*).
- The University has never been fond of the Che. In 2000, UCSD changed the locks to the cooperative without the consent of the Che's members and volunteers. People locked themselves in to the Che in protest, and eventually it was ruled that the University had no right to change the locks.
- In 2014, the Che Cafe was once again put in danger by the university, after the University Centers Advisory Board stated that the Che needed to close (and possibly pay 1.5 million dollars) in order to renovate the space. The Che was then decertified, but continued to use the space until being handed an eviction order on March 17th, 2015. For 120 days, 24/7 "students, alumni, and community members" occupied the space until a new agreement between the cooperatives and the University was established.

General Store Cooperative

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Food Cooperative

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Groundwork Books Collective

- School changing locks / threatening to close
    - School shutting down many of them + building of price center moved people away from student-operated center to commercial center

CALL TO ACTION

Thank you for coming to our tour! We hope this has opened your eyes to the rich history of activism at UCSD and uncovered some of the more hidden, insidious practices UCSD has had in student suppression and partnerships. UCSD's history is always evolving, and you as a student have the opportunity to be a part of this! In the student courtyard behind us, there are a variety of orgs who are involved in advocacy, organizing, and mutual aid projects. We encourage you to check them out and join an org that feels right to you!