

A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF “DROP THE I-WORD” CAMPAIGN: A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THE END OF THE USE OF THE TERM *ILLEGAL*

WHEREAS, we, as a University, take great pride in the diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds represented at University of California, Santa Cruz and our commitment to enhance our great legacy of preparing leaders from all segments of society to make significant contributions all over the world; and

WHEREAS, the University of California, Santa Cruz is a community which requires the free and open exchange of ideas and the widest possible range of opportunity in the pursuit of knowledge in order to thrive; and

WHEREAS, we, as a University, are committed to maintaining an objective, civil, diverse and supportive community, free of coercion, hate, intimidation, dehumanization or exploitation; and

WHEREAS, the campus is dedicated to the promotion and protection of an environment that values and supports every person in an atmosphere of honesty, cooperation, professionalism and fairness as reflected in our UCSC Principles of Community¹; and

WHEREAS, we, as a University community, strive to create, foster and maintain an environment that provides support for students to feel safe and respected which will in turn enhance their ability to be successful; and

WHEREAS, many students and faculty understand that immigrant rights is an urgent issue which has been clouded by increasingly hateful and hostile public discourse promulgated by social institutions such as the media and government; and

WHEREAS, the word “illegal” (hereafter, the “I” word) is not neutral, it is racially charged, and has been promoted by restrictionist advocacy organizations like Numbers USA² and the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR)³ founded by eugenicist John Tanton⁴; and

WHEREAS, Frank Luntz, a Republican Party strategist, recommended operatives promote the use of the term “illegal immigrants” in a 2005 memo⁵, explaining that it would encourage an understanding of immigrants as criminals and create politically useful division among voters. With clear direction to use “illegal immigrant,” the shorthand slur has become just as common among media pundits and political campaigns; and

WHEREAS, we are aware that certain racially derogatory language used in media, political discourse, and other institutional settings has historically bolstered the foundation for racially harmful actions, including racial profiling practices, punitive policies targeting socially marginalized groups, hate crimes, and violence; and

WHEREAS, the use of the “I” word and its derivatives, when referring to people dehumanizes, and divides communities, contributing to punitive and discriminatory actions aimed primarily at immigrants and communities of color; and

¹ <http://www.ucsc.edu/about/principles-community.html>

² <http://www.numbersusa.com/content/>

³ <http://www.fairus.org/site/PageServer>

⁴ Center for New Community: The John Tanton Network and the Anti-Immigrant Movement in America <http://www.newcomm.org/content/view/2131/108>

⁵ Luntz, Maslansky Strategic Research. “Respect for the Law and Economic Fairness: Illegal Immigration Prevention.” October, 2005. <http://bit.ly/cH62eg>

WHEREAS, undocumented students at UC Santa Cruz and across the UC system have expressed their concerns and fear with the recent appointment of Janet Napolitano, former US Secretary of Homeland Security, as the new University of California President; and

WHEREAS, a coalition of UC undocumented student organizations and allies released a statement that emphasizes the need to create a safe campus environment for all students, given the recent political climate of our University; and

WHEREAS, Napolitano has responded stating she would set aside \$5 million for resources such as trained advisers, student service centers and financial assistance for the estimated 900 undocumented students currently enrolled on UC campuses, about 95 percent of them as undergraduates, because they face many bureaucratic and economic issues that other students do not - and often need help navigating the system⁶; and

WHEREAS, the racially derogatory “I” word endangers basic human rights including the presumption of innocence and the right to due process guaranteed under the US Constitution⁷; and

WHEREAS, the “I” word is legally inaccurate since being out of status is a civil rather than criminal infraction; and

WHEREAS, journalists have an obligation to use neutral language that promotes democratic dialogue and upholds professional ethics and standards, and the term “illegals” is incorrect and inaccurate usage, as well as unfair and offensive; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Student Union Assembly believes: No human being is illegal; Human beings need to be central in immigration discussions in order to move toward a more civilized and humane tone in public discourse and policies on immigration; Foreign nationals, undocumented immigrants, immigrants without papers and immigrants seeking status are examples of terms we can use that do not dehumanize people. We can all stop unintentionally fueling racial profiling and violence directed toward immigrants when we Drop the “I” word.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that as a community we: affirm the dignity and human rights of all persons, use language that reflects our most core values and promote racial equity, justice and unity for a brighter future.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the SUA will call on Chair Shaz Umer to communicate this position to University and elected public officials in the form of a publically available letter; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the SUA will encourage administration and faculty to attend Diversity and Inclusion Certificate Program courses provided by the Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the SUA will support efforts to educate students on campus about the Drop the I-Word campaign and join communities across the country in asking all media organizations and journalists to uphold ethical and professional journalism standards by **dropping the “I” word today.**

⁶ <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/article/30279>

⁷ Dave Bennion. “‘Illegal Immigrant’ Is the Real Euphemism.” July 02, 2009. <http://bit.ly/eJpxNR>