

President Mark G. Yudof
Office of the President
University of California
1111 Franklin St., 12th Floor
Oakland, CA 94607

Dear President Yudof,

The UC San Diego Native American Council in association with the Native American Student Alliance respectfully submits this letter to request the repatriation of the human remains.

We will not go into a detailed timeline regarding the current situation nor will we address the protracted history of said remains, which we are well familiar with. We write instead to urge you to move forward with the repatriation of these remains of these individuals from a humanistic point of view.

These were individuals who were laid to rest many years ago with great love, care and dignity. Their belongings were laid gently next to them. They were grieved and wept over as they were laid to rest on the bluff overlooking the great ocean and what is now the land of the Diegueño (Kumeyaay) people. Even though they made the journey they deserve to be reburied on the lands of the people they were laid to rest in, the Diegueño (Kumeyaay).

We would ask that you take into consideration the need of the Native American peoples of this continent versus the need of three professors whose primary agenda is to enhance and further their academic careers on the bones of our ancestors. For too many years we have been treated with shame and disgrace, rounded up like animals and forced onto reservations to perish. We were then placed at the mercy of the men of God who came in black robes with many religious affiliations, who sought to annihilate our people by banning and creating laws to make practicing our culture, religion and languages illegal and punishable by their laws.

In all the history of mankind there has never been a group of people who have been more studied, alive and deceased, than we native people have been. Even at first contact, when capturing land, genocide and colonization of culture was the primary concern, observations and artifacts were collected and studied. This sensitive cultural issue of the anthropological study of human remains persists. Groundbreaking work by scholar Vine Deloria and publications by Professor Larry J. Zimmerman clearly and succulently articulate why this practice of studying human remains is an appalling practice for Native peoples. The memory of researcher Joseph Mengele, who conducted horrific experiments on captured people of Jewish descent, comes to mind when contemplating the lack of humanity and dignity Native communities have endured. And although we have endured our Holocaust as well, however we still endure the act of horrendous examinations conducted on the remains of our people.

Through these years of extreme change we have maintained our integrity, dignity and continue to live our lives as children of the Great Spirit and respect all, regardless of color, creed, or religious affiliation.

In the real world of science and medicine, there is a procedure called an autopsy which is conducted after death to determine a cause of death. The pathologist gathers tissue and blood samples and preserves these and returns the body for appropriate burial by bereaved family members. The pathologist does not need to hold the body beyond the five days let alone a few millennia to determine cause of death, and the pathologist can continue to use the preserved tissue and blood samples, with the approval of the family, to conduct further research. Why does it have to take so many years and many researchers to examine these remains?

These remains were once human beings, like you and I. They lived and died as we all must do at the end of our journey. We are sure that enough samples have been taken to satisfy and contribute to the future research of these three academics.

It is time for the remains to return to the lands of the Diegueño (Kumeyaay) where they were laid to rest and they need to be repatriated to the Diegueño (Kumeyaay) for proper reburial. Just as your ancestors lived and died and were laid to rest, we ask that the same process be granted to these individuals whose remains we discuss, still here today, with no resolution.

We ask that you consider this simple request from a humanistic perspective and allow them to once again, be laid to rest with love, dignity, respect and have their belongings gently lain beside them again. We will again grieve for their passing yet we will be joyful that they now lay in quiet repose as was the intent of their families.

We thank you for the opportunity to express our thoughts and for your consideration of this request for the dignity of all.

With respect,

Native American Council, UC San Diego

Native American Student Alliance, UC San Diego