

The Phoenix Coalition to Free the UC
www.FreeTheUC.org

Press Alert - For Immediate Release

What: Student tree-sitters descend from redwood tree to accept arrest by UCPD

Where: at Sather Gate (and the “Phoenix Redwood Tree” next to Sather Gate), Sproul Plaza, UC Berkeley campus

When: Wednesday, April 25th, 12:30pm

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Wednesday April 25th, 2007 – At 12:30pm, UC Berkeley students Jason Ahmadi and Mike Schuck plan to return their feet to the ground after a one-week occupation of a Redwood Tree on Sproul Plaza on behalf of The Phoenix Coalition to Free the UC. After UC Police threatened them with arrest yesterday, the two students decided to ‘turn themselves in’ to the police and accept arrest on behalf of the Coalition and its mission to democratize and demilitarize the University, and divest it from unethical regimes and corporations. Phoenix Coalition members will also hold a dance party on Sproul Plaza at noon immediately before the descent of the tree-sitters, and pass out literature about a planned May 1st school boycott and walkout in support of immigrant rights.

Schuck and Ahmadi report that the past week has been a tremendous opportunity to raise consciousness among students about love, nonviolence, and the need to change UC Berkeley into the University it should be. Their presence in the trees has helped create greater compassion, awareness, and determination for change, and helped generate momentum and support for The Phoenix Coalition’s objectives, which are to **democratize** the University’s decision-making bodies (including the UC Regents which are appointed by the Governor), **demilitarize** all aspects of the University’s functions especially its current nuclear weapons laboratory, and **divest** the University from unethical corporations and regimes. In sum, the Phoenix Coalition seeks to “free the UC.”

About the Phoenix Coalition: The Phoenix Coalition seeks to transform UC Berkeley from an elitist, corporate, militaristic, autocratic institution into a responsible, just, equitable, diverse, and democratically governed body that educates and works for the common welfare. Launched in March 2007 by a broad cross-section of the student community, the Coalition seeks to overcome systemic and structural problems within the University, as well as redress specific issues. Some of the Coalition’s biggest concerns include stopping UC’s pending deal with British Petroleum, ending nuclear weapons development, enforcing ASUC regulations that bar military recruiters on campus, fair wages for UC employees (especially custodians), saving the Memorial Oak Grove, and reform of the UC Police Dept. so it will stop harassing nonviolent protestors and create a safe climate for students (especially women). Further details can be found at: www.FreeTheUC.org.

The Phoenix Coalition is comprised of a variety of student groups and community organizations who focus on the above problems individually, including: Association of South Asian Political Activists (ASAPA), Berkeley Copwatch, Berkeley National Organization of Women (BNOW), Berkeley Stop the War Coalition (BSTW), Fiat Pax, Student Coalition to Save the Oaks (SCSO),

Students Organizing for Justice in the Americas (SOJA), and Stop BP-Berkeley. By joining together, individuals, student groups, and community members believe they can accomplish significant change that they could not on their own.

In the future, The Phoenix Coalition will assemble a list of specific demands and present them to the UC administration, while organizing a variety of events and actions.

Members of The Phoenix Coalition explain the reason for their new movement as follows:

“The University of California is out of control! UC Berkeley is about to accept half a billion dollars from British Petroleum -- an oil company with a history of ecological and human rights abuses -- without student input or oversight. The UC refuses to pay workers equitable wages and benefits that were promised to custodians and other workers. Meanwhile, hundreds of millions of dollars are funding the destruction of native Oaks at the Memorial Grove. Military recruiters are allowed at our career fairs despite ASUC resolutions barring them from campus. The UC has just agreed to design the next wave of nuclear weapons, further endangering all life on this planet. An architect of the Bush administration’s policy of legalized torture is allowed to teach constitutional law at our school. Cal gear is still made in sweatshops, as the University stands idle while Nike closes union factories. Student tuition has risen dramatically. Meanwhile, social sciences continue to languish, education that promotes sustainability and peace is underfunded, third-world studies is almost nonexistent, and Cal still does not have an adequate multicultural center. The vast drop in minorities studying and working at Cal is a direct result of cuts in recruitment funding. The UC Police Department is used to harass nonviolent protesters and houseless people with no oversight, while students, especially women, do not receive the resources necessary to stop violence and rape and create a safe climate on campus. Despite student, faculty, and community abhorrence of these University practices and mentalities, student tuition has risen dramatically to fund unethical programs. The UC Regents, who govern the University, are not accountable to the students or to Californians in any way. The UC is, in the words of one of its administrators, ‘a feudal state.’”

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website: <http://www.freetheuc.org>

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