



**ASSOCIATED STUDENTS, INC.**  
California State University, Los Angeles

### **Community Letter in Support of Naim Reece**

Dear Cal State LA Community,

We present this letter to you to express our support for Cal State LA student Naim Reece, who currently faces unjust charges for exercising his right to protest. Naim has been profiled and targeted for his participation in protests during two campus events; the Ben Shapiro event on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016, as well as a student walkout and march, held on November 10, 2016, opposing the results of the presidential election. Associated Students, Inc. of Cal State LA stands in solidarity with Naim Reece and support his right to protest and exercise his First Amendment rights. In addition, we stand with the student groups who feel they have been silenced in their efforts to address concerns regarding incidents of hate speech on our campus. We request that the Cal State LA University Administration immediately address these student concerns.

With a student body consisting of over 28,000 students coming from diverse backgrounds, we believe that every student should have the right to express their political views. Although we encourage an environment which inspires a marketplace of ideas and thorough dialogue between differing opinions, we also encourage dissent and protest of those positions which are meant to divide and antagonize marginalized communities. Criminalizing and profiling students, like Reece, shows a censoring of political thought and freedom. We urge the University Administration to not only stand with Reece in his right to protest, but also offer financial support to cover the legal costs set upon him.

Furthermore, we ask that the University Administration recognize that events which entertain ideology that targets marginalized communities, significantly impact our students in many ways. We understand that the charges against Naim Reece are not being pursued by the University, however, we believe the University could have taken better measures to ensure the safety of our students.

We deeply care about the mental health of our students. Having an atmosphere and environment that threatens the mental stability and security of the student body deeply concerns us. We will not endorse ideologies which threaten and attack the diversity of our campus and adversely affect the mental health of our students by making them feel unwelcome, silenced, or unsafe.

California State University, Los Angeles prides itself on being one of the most diverse universities in the nation. We cannot continue to pride ourselves on our diversity if we do not uphold values of inclusion. We ask the University Administration to consider what upholding diversity truly means, especially in the face of divisive rhetoric. Further action must be taken to protect the marginalized communities, we say we are proud to serve.



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Nationally, college students of color are subject to a double standard on campus free speech regulations. Although engaging in similar free speech activities as their peers, students of color have been penalized through campus conduct codes and the criminal justice system. At various universities, institutional free speech and bias policies are inequitably applied to students of color in a manner that increases the harm toward historically marginalized communities. We are calling on Cal State LA to proactively ensure the legal protection of the students we represent. The following recommendations should be adopted to protect students:

- The university shall continue to proactively inform students, staff, and faculty of their legal rights;
- The university shall create policies that detail the extent to which the institution can provide legal support and how it will respond to the external political and legal climate;
- The university shall create partnerships with legal clinics to inform students on their legal rights, specifically with respect to international human rights, civil rights, immigration rights, and visa support.

We look forward to engaging in an action-driven conversation with the University to ensure that our campus community will be safe from external threats. The University must do a better job in assessing divisive events that happen on campus and how they negatively impact students' ability to learn in a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment. We firmly believe that by taking student concerns seriously and working together we can proactively achieve inclusivity.

Please stand with Naim Reece.

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David Zitser, ASI President 2017-18