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News

Copies of California Patriot Stolen; Publication Staff Allegedly Harassed

[Break-In May Be Reaction to Article in February Issue](#)

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Police at UC Berkeley are investigating the theft of 3,000 copies of the California Patriot, a conservative campus monthly, as well as the alleged harassment of the publication's distributors.

The bulk of the papers were stolen during a break-in at the Patriot office in Eshleman Hall late Monday night. The loss is estimated to be between \$1,500 and \$2,000.

Patriot Editor Kelly Thomas said there is no definitive way to pinpoint the thieves' identities. But others on the Patriot staff said the theft was likely in response to an article in the just-released Patriot that calls the Mexican American student group MEChA a "student funded hate group."

The article, "MEChA: Student Funded Bigotry and Hate," blames the group for impeding "advances in civil rights toward a colorblind American society" through "anti-American hate" and "a mentality that leads its adherents to believe anyone who is white and male is to blame for any historical injustice."

MEChA is a national student movement that concentrates on political, social, educational and cultural issues that pertain to the Chicano movement.

Patriot staff and members of the closely affiliated Berkeley College Republicans also said they were surrounded and harassed Tuesday as they handed the publication out on Sproul Plaza.

A flier circulated around campus Tuesday falsely attributed to the college Republicans statements opposing any investigation into the collapse of Enron.

Some members of the staff received death threats, though that is nothing new to members of the two groups.

"We talk about controversial issues, and we take controversial stances," Thomas said. "But we are open to debate about those issues, and that is the whole point. It is not to squelch one side or the other."

The Patriot filed a report with police yesterday, but police officials have little information about the investigation, which is still in its infancy.

"The issue is free speech on campus. You may not agree with us, but Jesus, let us say it," said Robb McFadden, chair of the college Republicans.

MEChA denies any involvement in the incidents and "condemns harassment," said Livia Rojas, a leader in the group.

Thomas said there is likely no way for the Patriot to recoup its losses because the press run was not insured.

The Patriot is a nonprofit group, funded entirely by private donations.

Copies of The Daily Californian have twice been reported stolen in the past year, following the publication of material some groups of students deemed controversial.

Speeches on campus sponsored by the college Republicans and the Patriot have also twice been cut short when audience members became unruly during the talks.

Last March, a talk by conservative writer David Horowitz about reparations ended abruptly when a member of the audience engaged in an argument with Horowitz.

But McFadden said he thought students on campus moved beyond censorship in the days following Sept. 11, when both groups opposing and supporting the U.S.-led war on terrorism shared the steps of Sproul Hall to demonstrate.

"I thought we were beyond this. It is just so shocking and immature," he said.

Chancellor Robert Berdahl has in the past defended the importance of a free exchange of ideas, including at a campus vigil the week after the September attacks.

"Truth can only be approached, it can only be realized, by the exercise of free and open conversation, a discussion free of rancor, a discussion liberated from the strictures of dogma, a discussion emancipated from the demands for the acquiescence of others," he said.

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