

Santa Cruz Sentinel

Editorial - As We See It:

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In Santa Cruz -- and UC Santa Cruz in particular -- there exists a wide acceptance and tolerance for protest. Labor protest. Social protest. Animal rights protest. It's part of the landscape.

Saturday morning, in what appears to be the work of animal rights extremists, the home of a UCSC researcher was firebombed and the vehicle of a nearby colleague also was destroyed by a firebomb.

In the wake of the events the community has rallied together with a strong and clear message: this is not protest. This is terrorism.

The researcher whose house was bombed -- while he, his wife and two children were at home -- is a molecular biologist who uses mice to study brain functions. UC Chancellor George Blumenthal says the university is careful to follow federal guidelines regarding animal testing.

But frankly, the university's track record or the work of the researcher is not the issue here. The issue is crossing the line from meaningful protest to violent acts that have no regard for life.

It is rather ironic -- and moronic -- that people who would claim to save the lives of animals would do so at the expense of the lives of people.

There are a number of individuals and groups who support animal rights in responsible and ethical ways. They have shown you can make your point and advance your cause without resorting to physical harm.

We wish we could attribute these recent acts to a few on the lunatic fringe -- and that may be the case -- but coupled with attacks earlier this year in Santa Cruz and similar incidents at UCLA and UC Berkeley this spring, we fear that some people, or groups, are turning their protests for animal rights into a war against scientists and universities.

And that's the way it should be approached. People who firebomb homes are criminals, not protesters.

Through rallies, letters to the Sentinel and online forums, people have spoken eloquently, passionately -- and sometimes forcefully -- in a united voice against these acts. If the people who committed Saturday's firebombings thought they were going to find a haven of support in Santa Cruz, they are sadly mistaken.

This is a community with a long history of dissent and peaceful protest. We will not accept or tolerate promoting causes with violence and destruction.