

## Letter to the editor

Dear Editor:

I have never written a letter to the paper before, but I am sad to say that recent events have left me with such a “disturbed feeling” that I felt it necessary to share with the public.

As a teacher in the San Diego community about to begin a new school year on Sept. 5<sup>th</sup>, it was my intention to spend a relaxing weekend enjoying all the amenities that San Diego has to offer: beach, sunsets, time with friends, etc. However, my Labor Day holiday experience left me with such a negative experience and feeling inside that to this day I am still unable to shake the negative feeling or let go of it.

From where I live, the most pleasant and convenient beach for me to access for swimming, snorkeling, sun bathing, and “R-n-R” is Children’s Pool in La Jolla (possibly known as Seal Beach or Casa Beach).

Until Sunday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>, it had been several years for me to actually get all the way into the water and snorkel. The last time I snorkeled was several years prior, when my grandmother took my family on a reunion cruise (before passing away). Being back in the water was incredible and exhilarating and seeing all the sea life was breath-taking—to see all the plants and animals was extraordinary! My next day at Children’s Pool, however, was not so exhilarating. In fact, it was unbearably unpleasant.

Although the sun, water, and beach were lovely, it was less than beautiful and tranquil at the beach. I am not sure what title I should give them...environmentalists, animal activists, or seal advocates?? Nevertheless, despite their title, I personally believe that they engaged in non-civil and unprofessional behavior which may in fact be detrimental to the welfare of the seals.

As a teacher, I believe in “freedom of speech” and “freedom of expression”, however, I am seriously concerned that not only were the actions of the environmentalists/advocates hostile and unprofessional, they may actually be negatively affecting the seals—which are the very things they are trying to “protect”—ironic in my opinion. It is one thing to post signs advocating for the seals, but it is another to verbally abuse individuals and to physically intimidate spectators/beach go-ers by obstructing their passage to the beach. Personally, when I went to the beach, I said nothing to the (advocates/environmentalists) and smiled at them, but was later greeted with negative/rude comments--hateful comments might be a better descriptor (e.g., Go Home, Leave!, etc.).

My Oceanographer and Marine Biologist friends have also expressed concerns to me that the “seal advocates” may actually be engaging in behavior that may be harmful/disturbing to the seals, rather than supportive. Personally, I believe that my presence in the water and on the sand was less offensive to the seals than the comments and repeated/unison **chantings** I heard: “Go home”, “Don’t come back”, “BOOOOOO”,

and of course the most unprofessional and humanely unacceptable things I overheard were, “We want seals, not whales” insinuating that some people’s physical bodies were less than perfect or too fat. Actually, I heard even ruder comments and verbal attacks which I feel/believe had no intention other than being malevolent and mean (and in no way supported the seals). Frankly, such attacks and such derogatory comments are not only juvenile and unprofessional in my opinion; they are simply tacky, vindictive, and flat out hateful.

Truthfully, I actually can respect (and continue to research) both sides of the situation/argument. However, I do not respect ANYTHING or any actions that are detrimental to the well-being of people, animals, or the well being of the environment, nor do I respond to arguments that are **verbally or physically assaultive and/or abusive**.

My hope is that as rational adults, we can all come to an agreement about the future of the Children’s Pool. With summer months close at hand, I wonder what the “conditions” will be like at The Children’s Pool this year.

Worried, an SD teacher

P.S. I wish to remain anonymous for several reasons, but the main reason is simply that I am afraid of repercussions on the part of the seal advocates.