

Letter from YCT-UT Chapter Chairman Lorenzo Garcia

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to inform The University of Texas at Austin and the UT community that I have decided, after speaking with my members, to call off the illegal immigration event that the university chapter of Young Conservatives of Texas had planned for Wednesday.

After the University President and the Vice President for Diversity and Community Engagement released statements denouncing the event we planned as violating the university's honor code, I spoke with our chapter's members, and they are both concerned that the university will retaliate against them and that the protest against the event could create a safety issue for our volunteers.

I acknowledge that the decision to include issuing \$25 gift cards during the event was misguided and that the idea for the event was intentionally over-the-top in order to get attention for the subject. It is a simple fact that illegal immigration is a concern in this country and that it is one we must face. Estimates suggest that around 12 million people are living in the United States without documentation. President Obama wants to address the issue during his final term, and students on college campuses, conservative, liberal, or somewhere in between, should not be silenced when they attempt to make their voices heard about an issue that is so important to our futures.

I have been shocked at the uproar over the event's premise and at the personal attacks against me. Today, opponents of YCT have claimed that I am being used as a front man. I have been called an "Uncle Tom." I have received emails and comments via social media filled with obscenity. The reactions of some who claim that YCT is creating a demeaning or degrading environment on campus have been truly disgraceful.

I have always viewed The University of Texas as a place where students could express their opinions—whether or not they were popular. Even though our event will not go forward, UT students, our state, and our nation need to have a serious discussion and debate about the issue of illegal immigration. I believed that our event would spark this discussion on campus, and though we will no longer be holding the event, I hope that the publicity surrounding the event will create debate among students.