

FREE SPEECH SHOWDOWN

PHOTO MICHAEL PAPIAS & GIBSON CHU STORY EIMI CAROL OLSON-KIKUCHI DESIGN ANDREA CHAU

Invited by Berkeley College Republicans, or BCR, Breitbart News editor and controversial right-wing speaker Milo Yiannopoulos arrived in Berkeley on Feb. 1 and was scheduled to speak that evening at UC Berkeley's student union building.

Since the announcement of his visit, many students and faculty went at lengths to have the event canceled; however, the campus issued a statement claiming that although Yiannopoulos is "a troll and a provocateur," the first amendment of free speech must be protected at a public university. As a result, campus officials and UCPD worked closely with BCR in an attempt to create a safe space for political discourse.

Despite such efforts, chaos broke out before the much-anticipated event could even begin. In an email statement the day after, Chancellor Nicholas Dirks claims that "more than 100 armed individuals clad in Ninja-like uniforms" engaged in "violent destructive behavior designed to shut the event down". Apparently unaffiliated with the university, these armed and masked individuals flooded onto campus and disrupted what had originally been a peaceful protest by throwing projectiles, rocks and fireworks into

the building, and lighting items on fire outside the venue. The decision to cancel the event was made two hours before his scheduled talk due to safety concerns, and Yiannopoulos was escorted out of campus.

President Donald Trump responded to the protest with a tweet implying the possibility of cutting federal funds to Cal: "If U.C. Berkeley does not allow free speech and practices violence on innocent people with a different point of view - NO FEDERAL FUNDS?"

The event and its subsequent cancellation sparked a flood of dialogue on free speech both on and off campus. In a statement issued hours later, BCR declared the Free Speech movement "dead," while others claimed otherwise, stating that hate speech is not and should not be protected by the federal government. While some students were disappointed at the measures taken to cancel the event, others were satisfied with the results and argued that it was the only way to prevent what would've been such a targeted and dangerous attack on minority groups. Somehow, more than 50 years after the Free Speech Movement in 1964, the battle to define free speech is still alive.



“IT IS TRAGIC
THAT THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE
FREE SPEECH MOVEMENT
IS ALSO ITS FINAL RESTING PLACE”

-BERKELEY COLLEGE REPUBLICANS



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