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OP-EDS

FRIDAY, JANUARY 27, 2017

In defense of Milo Yiannopoulos



BY [PIETER SITTLER](#) AND [TROY WORDEN](#)

LAST UPDATED JANUARY 27, 2017

The Berkeley College Republicans have suffered much criticism and abuse for inviting Breitbart tech journalist and provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos to campus Feb. 1. In light of recent events here and at previous stops on Mr. Yiannopoulos' "Dangerous Faggot Tour," we believe that an explanation is in order.

We invited Mr. Yiannopoulos precisely because he raises taboo political topics that our club believes are necessary for, and essential to, a complete political debate — and he uses humor and satire while doing so.

In order to fully develop intellectually, we must not hear solely from those with whom we agree and those who make us feel good — we must have our views challenged. Berkeley College Republicans are in fact the real thinkers on this campus precisely because they have the courage to stand up to

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UC Berkeley's reigning ideological orthodoxy and to form their own opinions in the midst of a tidal wave of hegemonic liberal thought.

What is more, any view that deviates from the liberal status quo these days is considered "hateful" and "bigoted." It is nigh impossible for a Berkeley College Republican to disagree with one of his liberal peers and still expect respect afterward — his outstretched hand of friendship is often left hanging in the air.

Yes, we acknowledge that Mr. Yiannopoulos is controversial. But where was all this outrage when Louis Farrakhan, a vehement anti-Semite and Black separatist, spoke at UC Berkeley? The double standard being applied by the campus community and self-styled "anti-fascists" is as disturbing as it is irrational.

In any case, the views Mr. Yiannopoulos will express Feb. 1 are not necessarily those of the Berkeley College Republicans, and we disavow any violence or hurt that may occur as a result of his coming to campus. But he is an influential journalist who refuses to be censored, gives a voice to repressed conservative thought on American college campuses and voraciously defends all speech, whether it comes from the left or right. In the past, Americans have fought and suffered for their right to express themselves; what we are doing here is no different, because at the end of the day, we know it is right and just that people's feelings should take a back seat to open discourse, facts and free speech.

And what do we say to people who are offended by Mr. Yiannopoulos?

The Berkeley College Republicans believe that we should err on the side of more speech instead of less. Our campus is not a "safe space," and true to Cal's motto, "Fiat lux," light will be shed upon issues in ways that some may find uncomfortable. Moreover, because of the levity Mr. Yiannopoulos often introduces in his speeches, he is liable to be easily misinterpreted and misrepresented. Students should use the critical thinking skills they are supposedly taught at UC Berkeley to discern which of Mr. Yiannopoulos' comments constitute humor and which of them substance.

Donald Trump was sworn in as the 45th president of the United States on Jan. 20. Liberals can no longer simply cover their ears and shut their eyes to reality, for there will no be escaping conservative politics any longer. It is time to mature and realize that you will encounter people with whom you may not agree, but the adult, educated, reasonable thing to do is to ignore them and move on if you cannot otherwise befriend them or tolerate their company.

On Feb. 1, do not what you have done in the past. Do not illegally release the personal information of our members with the intent to harm. Do not steal or destroy our private property. Do not insult, yell at, spit on, intimidate or otherwise physically assault us. Do not attempt to shut our events down with threats and acts of violence — rather, peacefully protest outside or sit in a seat for which you procured a ticket, stand when called upon and ask Mr. Yiannopoulos an earnest question in expectation of an earnest answer.

Pieter Sittler is the internal vice president and Troy Worden is a member of the Berkeley College Republicans. Contact the opinion desk at opinion@dailycal.org or follow us on Twitter



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