

Speech by far-right Milo Yiannopoulos canceled at UC Berkeley amid protests

Our reporters
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The University of California, Berkeley canceled a talk by Milo Yiannopoulos, a senior editor of Breitbart News, amid protests by thousands of students Wednesday night.

The largely peaceful protest was accompanied by a section of anarchists who ignited a gas lamp, starting a blaze, threw fireworks at police and event organizers, and physically assaulted Trump supporters. Berkeley police fired tear gas, rubber bullets and noise grenades at the crowd. Police also declared a lock-down of the campus, telling students to leave campus, as they brought in larger detachments of riot-squads from outside police agencies to crack down on protesters.

Wednesday night's event was the final stop in a nationwide college campus speaking tour for Yiannopoulos. Yiannopoulos is an extreme right-wing provocateur who presents the "Christian world" in a struggle for power against Islam. The 32-year old gay man titled his tour "The Dangerous Faggot."

Stephen Bannon, Trump's chief strategist and a major figure in his administration, was formerly the head of Breitbart News, which has ties to fascistic and white nationalist organizations.

At multiple other campuses, including UC Davis and UCLA, Yiannopoulos's events were canceled. On Tuesday night he spoke at California Polytechnic University. His speech was largely a diatribe against abortion rights. He appealed to "Western Civilization" to end abortion and attacked Muslim immigrants. "Islam is always wrong," he told the crowd.

At one of Yiannopoulos' speeches at the University of Washington on January 20, a protester was shot and seriously injured, apparently by a Trump supporter.

He told the BBC in an interview earlier this year that his alt-right supporters were motivated by hostility to political correctness. Yiannopoulos laces his attack on

"offense-taking and grievance-holding culture" with xenophobia, racism and right-wing nationalism. In one speech, he said, Muslim immigrants "were going to bring their delicacies with them: pork chops, yoghurt, and gang-rape." He has repeatedly advocated banning Muslims from entering the United States and Europe. He stresses that "Islam, not radical Islam, is the problem."

Such comments are in line with the early policies of the Trump administration, including the ban on refugees and immigrants from seven predominantly-Muslim countries announced last weekend.

Wednesday night's scheduled event at UC Berkeley was hosted by the UC Berkeley college Republican club, a registered student organization on campus, and was not directly sponsored by the university. Leading up to the event, students expressed opposition to Yiannopoulos and his political views. Hundreds of teachers and faculty signed a letter asking the university to shut down the event.

Several Trump supporters in attendance at the protest and the event were maced or assaulted, including a young woman who was being interviewed on ABC News. At one point a car sped through a crowd of protesters with one masked protester banging on its windshield. Later a man was mistaken for the driver and pepper-sprayed by a member of the crowd. Shop windows, cars and ATMs were bashed in the city. A Starbucks near campus was also looted. A loosely organized coalition calling itself ANTIFA, standing for anti-fascist, has been blamed for much of the violence.

Self-proclaimed anarchist groups, referred to as "black blocs" for the color of the masks they wear, are an open door to infiltrators from the police seeking to use violent actions by individuals to discredit protest movements and set people up for arrest. This occurred

in Oakland during the Occupy movement in 2011 and 2012.



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