

## **BOYCOTT THE ALT-RIGHT @UCBerkeley September 24-27th**

### **A letter from UCB Faculty to the Campus and Berkeley Community**

While there has still not been an official announcement from campus administrators, we are learning that from September 24th to 27th, the University of California at Berkeley will provide a platform to [Milo Yiannopoulos, Ann Coulter, Stephen K. Bannon, Breitbart media and their far right audience](#). A series of explicitly violent Alt-Right, militia and pro-Fascist [events are also, again, being scheduled for Civic Center / MLK park in downtown Berkeley on those days](#).

Once more, signs point towards an escalated and uncontrollable confrontation both on and off campus during these four days. The history of these events has been chilling. Since Inauguration Day, [Alt-Right followers have shot someone at the University of Washington, stabbed two people to death on public transport in Portland, stabbed to death a college senior in Maryland, beaten numerous nonviolent protesters at the University of Virginia, and most recently murdered a peaceful protester with an automobile in Charlottesville](#). Most immediately troubling, given Trump's decision to end DACA, is that these forces have publicly expressed their intent [to specifically target "sanctuary campuses" and disclose the identity of undocumented students](#). As concerned faculty members, we cannot remain silent while students, staff, colleagues, and fellow community members are threatened.

**Therefore, as faculty committed to the safety of our students and our campus, we are calling for a complete boycott of all classes and campus activities while these Alt-Right events are taking place at the very center of UC Berkeley's campus.** As faculty we cannot ask students and staff to choose between risking their physical and mental safety in order to attend class or come to work in an environment of harassment, intimidation, violence, and militarized policing. The reality is that particularly vulnerable populations (DACA students, non-white, gender queer, Muslims, disabled, feminists, and others) have already been harmed, and are reporting increased levels of fear and anxiety about the upcoming events, the increased police presence on our campus, and how all this will impact their lives and their studies.

It is not just physical violence that our campus faces from this media circus. Many of these provocateurs' [most committed audiences are online, and the Breitbart media machine uses that audience to harass, cyberbully, and threaten anyone who speaks out against them. Students and faculty on our campus have already had their lives threatened for speaking out against Milo and his followers.](#) **Online threats are real threats**, and if we allow this intolerant and bullying version of free speech to take over our campus, then it can only but come at the expense of the free speech rights of the Berkeley community as a whole. In fact, campus safety concerns have already [forced the Anthropology Department to cancel a public talk during "free speech week."](#) This makes clear that the administration understands the imminent threat to campus safety while also revealing that the loud demands of the Alt-Right has the effect of silencing members of our campus community.

We recognize that as a public institution, we are legally bound by the Constitution to allow all viewpoints on campus. However, there are forms of speech that are not protected under the First Amendment. These include speech that presents imminent physical danger and speech that disrupts the university's mission to educate. Milo, Coulter and Bannon do not come to educate; they and their [followers come to humiliate and incite](#). If the administration insists upon allowing the Alt-Right to occupy the center of our campus for

four days to harass, threaten and intimidate us, as they did during Milo's visit in February, then faculty cannot teach, staff cannot work and students cannot learn.

We refuse to grant the Alt-Right the media spectacle that they so desperately desire. This strategy responds to the concerns voiced in [the letter authored by the chairs of the three departments most impacted](#)--Gender & Women's Studies, African American Studies and Ethnic Studies - [and also follows the lead of the SPLC advice to ignore these agitators](#). As faculty, we reject both the administration's rhetoric of false equivalency that all speech - including "hate speech" - merits value and respect and also the impulse to see direct confrontation as the only strategy of resistance. A boycott of all campus activities during these days is the only responsible course of action.

Therefore we are calling upon faculty to take the following steps:

1. **Cancel classes and tell students to stay home. A boycott of classes affirms that our fundamental responsibility as faculty is to protect the safety and well being of all our students.** While we understand the argument that canceling classes might be seen as a penalty to students who want to learn--by holding class when some students CAN NOT attend by virtue of their DACA status and the imminent threat that these campus events hold, faculty who DO hold classes are disadvantaging DACA students and others who will feel threatened by being on campus.
2. **Close buildings, close departments and let staff stay home. If the campus is unsafe for student learning then it is unsafe for staff members to work.** We should work with campus maintenance and building managers to close as many departments and buildings as possible, starting with those in the immediate vicinity of Sproul Plaza. No one should be forced to work surrounded by men with clubs, police with guns and the sting of teargas.
3. Faculty who decide to hold class during this week, in the face of these explicit threats, **should not penalize students who are afraid to come to campus.** It is unfair and discriminatory for faculty to schedule exams or require attendance during this week. Such an expectation forces students to choose between their physical safety, their mental well being, and a grade. Consider making a video lecture available, give the students a take-home assignment, or creating another alternative class plan. **If you decide you must hold class, please do it away from campus, away from the Telegraph Avenue point of campus entry, and away from Downtown.**

The Administration, in failing to halt these events, has left concerned faculty with no other choice than to act to prevent further harm to our community. We urge you to join us in keeping our students and our campus safe by signing on to this call for a campus-wide- boycott.

In Solidarity,

Signed:

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