



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on May 4, 2017

Berkeley City Leaders Propose Stopping Violent Protests With Bubbles and Yoga

Berkeley city officials have proven once and for all just how far removed from reality they are by proposing utterly ridiculous ways to respond to the “antifa” — allegedly anti-fascist — protests that have been ravaging the city.

The University of California, Berkeley has been the scene for violent protests in recent months in response to certain conservative guest speakers slated to appear on campus. The antifa activists who claim to be anti-fascist have employed some rather fascist methods, including violence, vandalism, and disturbing the peace, to infringe upon the First Amendment rights of those with whom they disagree. The disturbances resulted in the shutdown of an event hosting Milo Yiannopoulos on February 2 and forced the cancellation of an event to host conservative pundit Ann Coulter on April 27.



So how do Berkeley city leaders intend to address the activists? Apparently with “quiet conversations,” “empathy tents,” “bubbles,” and “laughter yoga.” Seriously. You can’t make this stuff up.

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Alternative news site Heat Street obtained an e-mail dated April 20 by Downtown Berkeley Association CEO John Cainer via the Public Request Act in which Cainer proposes having “quiet conversations” with the violent protesters to stop them from disrupting upcoming events.

“Do you think there is a possibility of having quiet conversations with leftist activist groups to see if they would be willing to stand down and not show up for May 2 and/or other events?” Cainer asked officials. “I know it is probably a long shot, but there would seem to be little risk in quietly doing so.”

While Cainer’s proposal flies in the face of realism, it does not go quite as far as that of Berkeley volunteer Commissioner Phoebe Anne Sorgen, who suggested the use of empathy tents, which were actually provided on April 27 in anticipation of Coulter’s visit.

“Envision Wavy Gravy, bubbles, singing, laughter yoga! Occupella. Buddhist Peace Meditators. Fencing with sponge noodles,” she wrote. “Will Edwin set up the Empathy tent? How about a volleyball game in the middle of the park and/or a square dance? Will Code Pink pls bring peace symbol cookies to pass out, and daisies.”

If the reader did not know better, he or she would almost believe Sorgen’s e-mail was meant to be satirical, tongue in check. But alas, it was not.



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Sorgen clearly misunderstands the protesters and their violent intent. In fact, Sorgen even went so far as to defend them. “Don’t malign the black bloc,” she wrote. “Tho they have their bad apples and provocateurs take advantage of the (tear gas protection) bandana look regrettably, most were ok and, as usual, they also provided the medics last time.”

Besides the absurdity of this rationale, the response by the Berkeley city leaders begs the question, would they be quite so tolerant of violent protests if they were coming from the Right? Do you think Sorgen would say the Alt-Right is not so bad once you get to know them?

Absolutely not. In the same e-mail in which Sorgen suggests that critics should not malign the black bloc, she maligns the “Bikers for Trump” group who sought a permit to rally in Berkeley, by writing, “They say they’re nonviolent yet they publish veiled threats.” Whether that’s true of Bikers for Trump is unclear, but I suppose Sorgen prefers blatant threats that come to fruition through violence done by the likes of antifa over anything that comes from the Right.

The fact that city leaders are proposing any response to the protesters other than arresting and detaining them is absurdly laughable. Ultimately, what they are suggesting amounts to nothing more than negotiating with terrorists. The antifa activists have used terror to provoke fear in anyone who holds an opposing viewpoint and intimidate others from speaking out against the leftist agenda.

The rioters have justified their actions by labeling the speakers they oppose as fascists who are unworthy of First Amendment rights and deserving of abuse. The problem with this justification, of course, is that they can label anyone they’d like as a Nazi and therefore make that person a justifiable target of their rage.

What good is a First Amendment that protects only speech with which everyone can agree? And does such speech even exist? Certainly not in today’s hypersensitive culture, but if it did, it would not require protection since it would be acceptable to everyone. The First Amendment is to protect free speech, however objectionable.

In a press release by the rioters, they claim that they had good reason to shut down the Yiannopoulos event, for example, because his speech is dangerous. “Students are right to SHUT IT DOWN because yes, it’s dangerous. Fascism is dangerous to humanity. And you, if you oppose this with everything you’ve got, will have the honor of being dangerous to fascism.”

Apparently, the fact that it is much more dangerous to be present at an antifa protest where you face the risk of being pepper-sprayed, kicked, and punched for wearing a Trump hat is lost on these protesters, or maybe it isn’t. The press release says anyone who participates in their protest has the “honor of being dangerous to fascism,” so it is honorable to commit acts of violence in the name of anti-fascism.

In other words, fascism is wrong unless you are using it to combat fascism? At least, that’s what this group seems to believe. Speech should only be free if it meets the standard set by the Left. Dare to assert your right to free speech and risk being assaulted.

And while the antifa protesters are not believed to be actual students at UC Berkeley, their mentality has become the prevailing attitude on many college campuses, including UC Berkeley. Students writing for the *Daily Californian*, Berkeley’s student publication, wrote that “tolerance” and “academic freedom” are “not meant to be boundless” and in fact require “limits.” And those limits are only to be determined by the Left, which has proven itself to be oh so intolerant.



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Conservative pundit Ben Shapiro, whose scheduled speech at Cal State-Los Angeles was also shut down last year as a result of campus protests, summed it up perfectly when he said that campuses are encouraging the mentality that speech that you don't like is a "microaggression" that can be responded to with a "macroaggression." He also notes that the mentality is not an uncommon one. "I've had riots against me at Cal State-Los Angeles. We had a near riot at Penn State last year," Shapiro said. "It's becoming a lot less uncommon than you would hope it would be, certainly."

Shapiro also told Fox News' Martha MacCallum that part of the problem is that college administrations do not allow campus police the ability to shut down violent protests such as the one at Berkeley. In fact, reports from the Yiannopoulos protest indicate that the police were rather impotent while the violence went on.

Berkeley police Sgt. Sabrina Reich later defended the non-interventionist policy stating that police involvement would have provoked serious injuries and increased violence. Further, Reich told Fox News that if the police would have made more arrests, they would have had to give up crowd control duty to escort the arrestees to jail. "It was a crowd-control situation," she claimed. "We steered clear of individual action."

Campus Police Chief Margo Bennett made similar assertions, indicating that having officers move in on the protesters would have caused "a lethal, horror situation."

"We have to do exactly what we did last night: to show tremendous restraint," she said.

But John Bakhit, a lawyer for the union representing about 400 of the system's police officers, contends that the opposite is true and that the decision to adopt a "hands-off" approach put both police and students in danger. He argues that officers should have been permitted the discretion to make arrests. "The frustrating thing for the police officers is that they weren't allowed to do their jobs," he added.

Sadly it seems that Berkeley city leaders have no intention of allowing police to do their job and would instead rather provide safe spaces for the angry violent protesters.

So the next time you plan to attend a conservative rally in Berkeley and fear confrontations with protesters, you should bring some bubbles and see if they work against pepper spray.



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