



UC Berkeley Blocks Appearance by Conservative Speaker Ben Shapiro

The University of California, Berkeley, no longer even tries to pretend that free speech exists on its campus. On Wednesday, the school's administration canceled a September 14 event hosted by the Young America's Foundation (YAF) and the Berkeley College Republicans at which conservative political pundit Ben Shapiro was scheduled to speak. The administration claims it is because there is not an "available campus venue," but has yet to provide evidence that any other events are taking place on campus on that date.



In the letter from UC Berkeley officials to the College Republicans sent on Wednesday, officials claim, "Ben Shapiro is welcome on our campus, and we are committed to supporting his, and your, rights to free speech." But the officials included a caveat, stating that the campus can only host Shapiro "when events are held at a time and location that allow for the provision of any required security measures."

The letter did not provide any alternative times, dates, or locations.

YAF is skeptical over the reasoning provided by UC Berkeley. "Berkeley's inability to find a lecture hall more than two months in advance is laughable," the organization said in a [statement](#).

This is not the first time that Berkeley has elected to cancel a speech so that the campus would not be held responsible for guaranteeing the safety of its speakers and students.

An event featuring right-wing gay provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos was canceled in February after violent protests by Antifa ("antifascist") demonstrators. The *Daily Caller* reported that protesters at Berkeley "broke windows, set off fireworks, and threw smoke bombs and flares, creating a dangerous environment for students and the public." They wore masks and started a large fire just outside of the building where Yiannopoulos was supposed to speak, and set off fireworks and hurled rocks at police officers. At least six people were injured in the violence, and yet campus police did not intervene. The police later defended their actions by claiming that interference would only have served to inflame tensions.

The violence at Berkeley over the scheduled appearance of Yiannopoulos caught the attention of President Trump, who tweeted, "If U.C. Berkeley does not allow free speech and practices violence on innocent people with a different point of view — NO FEDERAL FUNDS?"

That tweet was nothing to balk at, as UC-Berkeley received \$370 million in federal research funding during the 2015-2016 school year. But the Trump administration has taken no such action against the school, even as it continues to undermine the First Amendment-guaranteed rights of its students.

Conservative writer Ann Coulter's speaking engagement at the school was also canceled earlier this year, prompting YAF and the Berkeley College Republicans to file a lawsuit in federal court against the



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on July 20, 2017

school, stating that it violated the groups' rights to free speech, due process, and equal protections.

"Though UC Berkeley promises its students an environment that promotes free debate and the free exchange of ideas," the suit says, "it had breached this promise through the repressive actions of University administrators and campus police, who have systematically and intentionally suppressed constitutionally-protected expression by Plaintiffs ... simply because that expression may anger or offend students, UC Berkeley administrators, and/or community members who do not share Plaintiffs' viewpoints."

According to YAF, UC-Berkeley has shown preferential treatment to liberal speakers while placing restrictions on conservative ones.

"An endless stream of liberal speakers continue to be granted opportunities to speak, unobstructed by time, place, or manner restrictions while conservatives are continually treated unequally, and repeatedly relegated to the margins of campus activity," YAF explained in the statement.

Critics contend that the campus has used bureaucratic obstacles to infringe upon free-speech rights of conservatives. UC Berkeley officials told the College Republicans, for example, that campus police would need to perform a security assessment that could potentially "rule out certain hours for the event."

In response to the cancellation of his September speech, Shapiro issued a statement in which he said, "Using ridiculous pretexts to keep conservatives from speaking is unsurprising but disappointing."

Notably, Ben Shapiro gave a speech at UC Berkeley in 2016 with no security problems. In fact, several left-wing students were present in the audience, the Daily Wire reports, and asked questions peacefully, even allowing Shapiro to give a complete response without so much as an interruption. The event was proof that it is quite possible for conservatives to speak on a liberal campus without violence or protests and that the two sides can engage in peaceful debate without the need for safe spaces and masks.

It's remarkable how much can change within one year.

Photo of UC Berkeley campus by [Zpwilliams](#)



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