

## Stop assaulting conservative speech on college campuses

By Andrea Seastrand

Of all of the rights enshrined in the U.S. Constitution, none is more important than the right to free speech. That importance is signified by the fact that it appears in the first of the 10 amendments, and before freedom of the press and the rights to assembly and to petition the government.

The framers of the Constitution recognized that without free speech all of the other rights are endangered if not destroyed. That's why freedom of speech is never allowed in totalitarian societies. If you were a citizen of and attempted to speak against Stalin's Soviet Union, Hitler's Germany, Mao's China or Castro's Cuba, you were liable to be imprisoned, tortured or executed.

So it should concern all of us, regardless of your political beliefs, that free speech by conservatives has been under assault on our nation's campuses. In recent months:

- Speeches by Ann Coulter, David Horowitz and Milo Yiannopoulos have been canceled at UC Berkeley, home of the "free speech movement" in the 1960s. Yiannopoulos' attempt to speak was thwarted by a riot that caused \$100,000 in damage to campus buildings.
- A speech by Charles Murray at Middlebury College was disrupted and a professor accompanying him was hospitalized after being attacked by protestors.
- A speech by Heather Mac Donald at Claremont College was shut down by chanting protestors.

Fortunately, Yiannopoulos' speech at Cal Poly on Jan. 31 was allowed to take place. But that was due in large part to officers in riot gear stationed on rooftops and patrolling the Performing Arts Center, which was surrounded by fences, floodlights and a SWAT vehicle, along with a show of force from campus police, San Luis Obispo police, State Parks, California State University police and California Department of Corrections officers. A college campus had to be turned into an armed camp to allow one man to give an hour-and-a-half talk.

A portion of the ratcheted up security expense at these events is usually paid by the sponsoring organization. This amounts to a "heckler's veto," making it cost-prohibitive for a student club to bring conservative speakers to campus. Most of the expense is picked up by the universities and law enforcement agencies – in other words, taxpayers like you and me.

Political leaders such as Governor Jerry Brown should be speaking out against this assault on our constitutional republic and pocketbooks. Brown also could send in the California National Guard to prevent or respond to riots like the one in Berkeley. But so far our governor has had a *laissez faire*, "let them eat liberal cake" attitude when it comes to free speech on campus.

Which is why former state Senator Jim Brulte, chairman of the California Republican Party, wrote a letter to Brown on April 21, pleading with him “to stand up for free speech on our University of California campuses.... UC Berkeley may not censor conservative speech simply because liberal students and off campus agitators oppose hearing conservative ideas and concepts, and the First Amendment protects the speech of ALL Americans.”

Fortunately, not all Democrat leaders are like Brown. [Senator Bernie Sanders could not disagree more with Coulter on the issues, but believes she should be allowed to speak on campus.](#) “Obviously Ann Coulter’s outrageous — to my mind, off the wall,” he said. “But you know, people have a right to give their two cents-worth, give a speech, without fear of violence and intimidation.” It’s too bad that the liberal news media, which values freedom of the press, doesn’t also champion free speech to the same extent. Ironically, much of the media engaged in a good deal of hate speech against Yiannopoulos while denouncing his so-called “hate speech” and urging that he be disinvited from speaking on university campuses. Apparently the liberal news media believes that the right to free speech is precious, and should not be squandered on someone peddling hatred, bigotry and meanness.

But, of course, the right to free speech is precious precisely because it applies to those engaging in unpopular speech. If free speech applied only to those peddling love, tolerance and goodness as perceived by a liberal editorial board or whatever powers that be, it would essentially be meaningless. That’s why the [ACLU in 1978 defended the right of Nazis to march in a suburb of Chicago where many Holocaust survivors lived](#), although they were peddling hatred, bigotry and meanness.

As long as the speech does not incite violence, all of us should stand up and declare, in the words of Evelyn Beatrice Hall, “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.”

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