

It's Not Your Speech, Milo

Understanding the UC Berkeley Protests

CrimethInc.

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On Wednesday, February 1, noted misogynist and Islamophobe Milo Yiannopoulos was scheduled to speak at the University of California at Berkeley. Fierce protests forced the university to cancel the event, prompting much handwringing about free speech. For more on the relationship between speech and action, consult our earlier text, This Is Not a Dialogue.

“There’s a big difference between words and action.”

— *Milo Yiannopoulos*

Milo, things might have gone differently in Berkeley on Wednesday night.

If a Trump fan had not just murdered six people in a mosque in Quebec City,

If one of your supporters had not just shot a protester at your talk in Seattle,

If your fans had not deceitfully portrayed those attacks as the work of Muslims and “left-ists” in hopes of inspiring more attacks like those,

If 28,000 security personnel had not been deployed in DC to impose Trump’s inauguration on an unwilling populace, attacking children and disabled people with tear gas and pepper spray and concussion grenades,

If Trump were not in the process of turning the US into a closed fortress, blocking US residents at the border and trapping millions of refugees in warzones created by US foreign policy,

If deportations were not already tearing families apart by the million,

If thousands of people had not already died trying to cross the US border to rejoin their loved ones,

If the police were not murdering over a thousand people every year in the US and imprisoning 2.5 million more,

If the CIA, FBI, NSA, and Department of Homeland Security were not conspiring to monitor all of our communications and identify dissidents to be weeded out at the earliest opportunity,

If there were no such thing as rape or misogyny, no queer-bashing or transphobia, no shootings in black churches,

And if you weren’t doing everything in your power to legitimize all these atrocities and mobilize people to support them,

Then perhaps people wouldn’t have gone to such lengths to shut down your speaking event at UC Berkeley.

If there had never been a Holocaust — as many of your loyal fans maintain — and there had never been a Third Reich at all, nor a Trail of Tears nor an East India Company nor a Congo Free State, if your precious Western Civilization had not littered the world with corpses and enslaved the survivors over and over again, then perhaps people wouldn’t take all this stuff so *seriously*.

But let’s be real: if not for all those things, you would never have had a speaking date at Berkeley in the first place. You would just be one more petty, prejudiced, forgettable schlub.

If not for all the resources the super-rich have invested in fomenting conflict along lines of race and gender to distract us — resources which you admit are directly funding your operations — you would be nobody, nobody at all.

And then it wouldn't be necessary to fight you.

But the fact is, there is a war on, and the ones who pull your puppet strings are the aggressors. Everything you've been calling for in barely coded language is taking place now: the deportations, the clampdown on international migration, the violent subjugation of women, the attacks against Muslims and queer and trans people. You know very well that your agenda can only be imposed by means of horrific brutality.

That's why it's not just a question of free speech.

Words are actions. You know this yourself. If you believed words had no effect, would you have invested your whole life in writing and speaking? No, you know your words have power, you know that you have the power to mobilize people to *harass*, to *attack*, to *kill* — or to fall in lockstep behind those who will. You know that you are accomplishing this, and *you love it*.

Not everyone who is complicit in violence and murder has to get their hands dirty. Spoiled brats like you have always been able to recruit for the death squads without ever touching a gun. The state needs bootlicking toadies as well as killers. That doesn't make you less responsible.

“Milo encouraged people in New Mexico to call ICE on suspected immigrants. He planned to do the same here... and livestream it. A few broken windows is well worth saving some people's lives, homes, and jobs.”

— Kitty Stryker, participant in Berkeley protests

Now let's talk strategy, Milo. You feel on top of the world right now, but the game is changing.

You made your name by antagonizing liberals. Your shock jock antics took advantage of everything reactionary about liberal identity politics. Democrats who assumed they could take the gay vote for granted didn't know how to respond to a self-described gay man who called Trump “daddy.” Under Obama, you could pretend to be a rebel taking on the establishment. It was your one gimmick — it still is — and you milked it for all it was worth.

It's a different ballgame now. Your daddy is in the White House, controlling the same NSA and drones and economy that your fans resented under Obama. It will be hard to maintain that rebel image now that you're just the low-ranking stooge of a reigning tyrant.

There's something else, too. You've made some enemies who play by different rules. Yes, I'm talking about the anarchists who shut you down in Berkeley.

The liberals you love to antagonize are a lot like you: they want to use the state to accomplish many of the same things, only more politely. You accuse them of wanting a “nanny state,” but you want a daddy state, a state just as invasive and controlling. You complain about liberal censorship out of one side of your mouth while calling for more policing out of the other side. Both you and your liberal adversaries are counting on men with guns to do the dirty work for you.

As long as Obama was in office, you could count on the Democrats to go on expanding state power, while blaming them for everything unpopular about the state. Now, *you* are the one associated with state power, and you've run afoul of people who *actually* oppose the state — people who are accustomed to taking matters into their own hands rather than running to daddy. People who recognize that the violence and oppression you are recruiting for will only be stopped by direct action.

Your gamble is that a little anarchist resistance will galvanize the passive citizenry into supporting a state crackdown. You take it for granted that most of the people you are trying to hurt will stick to protesting powerlessly while you organize violence against them.

Maybe this strategy will work, and maybe it won't. The fact is, things are getting more and more difficult for more and more people. We have less reason than ever to behave ourselves or rely on liberal solutions. Right now, anarchists remain a small minority. But if society continues polarizing — if people recognize that the only way to defend themselves against you and the puppeteers who pull your strings is to take direct action — then there may be a lot more people alongside us soon.

It might even be too many for the authorities to control — just like it was in Berkeley. And if that happens, the daddy state won't be able to protect you.

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