



Late charges like this are a conventional way of stopping incorrect speech, but someone produced a credit card and the surprise fee was paid.

A crowd of 250 protesters showed up at Faculty House denouncing Connerly as a bigot and an Uncle Tom. One demonstrator shouted, "Let's force our way in," or words to that effect. Nobody tried, but the protester's shout became the source of a lot of official concerns about safety for the next day's speakers and their audience.

These safety concerns ended up pushing the Saturday speakers off campus.

University officials said they had no idea that Accuracy in Academia had invited college students from around the New York area. What would happen if 700 or 800 people, perhaps many of them disruptive, showed up to fill a 200-person hall? A hand-wringing session was held at the home of Columbia's president, George Rupp.

Did the university decide to move the event to a larger hall or give the speakers a bullhorn and let them speak to a standing crowd in Columbia's enormous quadrangle? No. That would have made sense. Instead, Columbia decided to cut the crowd at Faculty House down to size by banning everyone who didn't have Columbia ID.

Unsurprisingly, Accuracy in Academic's leaders said, "No thanks." It would have meant stiffing all non-Columbia invitees, perhaps two-thirds of the crowd. The leaders concluded they were being manipulated by an unprincipled administration, and so they moved the talks to a sidewalk off campus as a protest.

The demonstrators understood a form of censorship had been imposed. That's why they chanted lines that included "Ha, ha, you're outside," and carried signs that said, "Access denied — we win."

As it happens, my speech was going to be about the lack of free expression on the modern politically correct campus — how colleges use speech codes, conduct codes and sexual-harassment rules to intimidate and silence dissenters. It didn't need many changes to fit Columbia's conduct. I said that the crowd was witnessing a sophisticated version of the heckler's veto.

If I'm wrong about this, and if Columbia and its president turn out to believe in free speech after all, they can show it by making sure that Accuracy in Academia is invited back on campus, minus the rule changes, the extra fee and the heckler's veto.

A banner for Citysearch.com Event Finder. It features the Citysearch logo (a stylized 'c' with a magnifying glass) and the text 'citysearch.com Event Finder' in white on a black background. Below the text is a yellow rectangular area, likely a search input field or a placeholder for search results.

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